



# Regenerate NPT: Project Closure Report

Project Organisation: Pontardawe Arena

Project Name: Community Food Growing Pilot

Project Start Date: 05.06.2021 Project End Date: 31.01.2022

Date of Report: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Attached Documents List: Project Activity Report (PIP)

There is a mandatory requirement to complete this document at Project Closure. The purpose of the report is to provide a project level document evidencing how well the project has performed against the original Business Plan delivered by the Local Partnership and Local Action Group during the lifetime of the project, and how it has contributed to the aims and objectives of the Local Partnership's Local Development Strategy. Project performance against the planned/approved costs, delivery timescales and Key Performance indicators will also be detailed. **Please try and keep within the maximum word count.**

## 1. Background: (briefly detail the background to the Project – 250 max)

The primary objective with this initiative was to increase community well-being by supporting the community to discover the skills and benefits by growing their own food while gaining transferrable skills to increase employability and reduce poverty.

Secondary objectives for the project included positive changes in diet, increase in fitness, and an enterprise element focussing on creating a crop surplus and local disposal.

The project involved steerage from the Glantawe Riverside Park Team to assist in developing planning processes to grow food, create a seasonal growing plan, use of hand tools, use of a polytunnel to both plant seeds, and expand the local growing season to grow temperature sensitive crops.

We commenced the project from a blank site in June 2021, purchased and erected a polytunnel, dug and created surrounding growing areas outside and were able to successfully start harvesting a crop by August the same year.

Engagement with school children forms a critical component of the project, to demonstrate that growing food is easily achievable, and does not have to come from supermarkets wrapped in plastic. Being unafraid to touch the soil and sample fresh produce is a critical part of their cognitive developmental process.

The project was founded on the requests from Park users to found a gardening project, with the aim of quickly getting to a point of cyclical self-sustainability where the project can be taken over by the community. Forming and up-skilling a core volunteer group would need to be a priority in order to achieve that.

2. Project Outcomes as per application	Was this achieved? What supporting evidence is there of achievement? If not achieved, why not?
The project will create a small farming and educational facility that will positively impact on the community's ability to create healthy lifestyles	This was achieved with our Welsh Roundhouse as the picturesque and inspirational heart of a compact farm. Our volunteer team actively embraces the hitherto unaccustomed outdoor lifestyle, and visibly find joy, friendship and physical accomplishment in being part of this important project.
The creation of a distinct self-empowered group who can positively improve their own well-being and that of others.	We have gained a solid core volunteer team that not only benefits from increased well-being from onsite sociological interactions, but has successfully cascaded the knowledge and enthusiasm in other projects both privately and community based in homes and other local sites. We have provided the volunteers with 24-hour access to the project, and have one who has become a Trustee of the charity. We can confidently say that the project is very firmly being controlled by the volunteers who are very much invested in its future success and development
Production of food free of chemicals.	We use no pesticides or artificial herbicides on site – we commenced a composting regime early in the project and have developed habitats where natural predators such as hedgehogs, frogs and toads can minimise pest invasion. We also have developed complementary planting of equally natural pest discouraging tactical species such as garlic and nasturtiums.
Creation of a commercial methodology creating a planning process for surplus foods that will fund future year.	There will be a dual need to be satisfied in this project, firstly the group in a very short time is developing the confidence and infrastructure to have appropriate knowledge in order to enjoy the predictability of crop types and yields. Secondly, the group will decide on which crops will satisfy local needs and become a commercial crop. Implicit in this is to understand the volume of land needed to become commercially viable, and to possibly expand the growing area outside the current "Farm". They have established awareness of the project during 2021, together with a community need to be able to shop directly on site, while confirming a partnership with a local organic supplier who is happy to take any surplus crop.
Consolidation of partnerships with other organisations and groups to foster and encourage cooperation in future years.	We have developed partnerships with other gardening groups in the area and are actively sharing knowledge, products such as seedlings, and organisational methodologies. We also have volunteers who have joined other local gardening groups and are spreading our practices and knowledge further afield.

Regular publication of progress in Social media to encourage others to take part in the project	We regularly post on our Facebook Pages and have a very active WhatsApp group set up and run by the volunteers themselves.
Acquisition of increased knowledge to ensure future increased crop success.	Since the project inception June 2021, to the present, it is fair to say that all have experienced a very sharp learning curve that has resulted in a remarkably short time in a group that is far more knowledgeable and capable than when they started. This has been accomplished by on-site information programmes, sharing of knowledge and a great deal of problem-based learning developed in response to encountered problems. This is a continual process, and it is exciting to observe the enthusiasm and application of solutions to develop crop types and yields.
Learning from mistakes and using that knowledge to move forwards.	This is a normal component of life in this project, perhaps the most difficult problem to overcome in many people has been the concept that it is actually ok to make and embrace mistakes, and make it a normal part of a learning process.
<b>3. Strategic Achievements:</b> (outline what the project has achieved in terms of alignment with LEADER Themes and Priorities and any contribution to national strategies - 300 max)	
<b>Theme:</b> 1 (Adding value to local identity and natural cultural resources <b>Priority:</b> Green NPT, Enterprising NPT and Accessible NPT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The project will create a small farming and educational facility that will positively impact on the community's ability to create healthy lifestyles <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>b) The creation of a distinct self-empowered group who can positively improve their own well-being and that of others. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>c) Production of food free of chemicals. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>d) Creation of a commercial methodology creating a planning process for surplus foods that will fund future year. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>e) Consolidation of partnerships with other organisations and groups to foster and encourage cooperation in future years. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>f) Regular publication of progress in Social media to encourage others to take part in the project <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>g) Acquisition of increased knowledge to ensure future increased crop success. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> <li>h) Learning from mistakes and using that knowledge to move forwards. <b>Yes, Achieved.</b></li> </ul>	
<b>4. With regards to your comments at application stage, how have you managed this project in terms of sustainability?</b> (What plans have been put in place to maintain the project once it is completed? 400 words max)	
<p>As said in the EOI application, "The primary objective is to increase community well-being by supporting the community in discovering the skills and benefits by growing their own food" which, as said is basically what it's all about.</p> <p>We felt that people want and need knowledge to experience the satisfaction in growing, cooking and eating their own produce, we also understood that modern living means that people don't always have that knowledge, room or the normality of growing their own food.</p>	

The fact that we needed to provide initial resource, both in knowledge and facilities was inescapable, however, the enthusiasm we have experienced in the relatively short term of this project has been quite overwhelming – a small community has developed that is gaining an increasing momentum of its own and is creating something that is greater than the sum of its parts, which is something we hoped for, but is quite exciting to actually see come to fruition.

The early part of the project was driven by the project managers and offered knowledge and resource that removed barriers present in domestic growing efforts. We provided an inspirational space and focussed on empowering the volunteers in taking risks and “having a go” at what must have appeared a daunting prospect.

At all stages, the volunteers were a critical component of the planning and development of the programme and we are careful to ensure that ownership was equally shared, in fact biased more towards the volunteer group. This freedom to choose without fear of failure or criticism, within a supportive and non-threatening environment has produced a tightly cohesive group that is fiercely defensive of what they have achieved at this Community Farm.

Some of the people taking part are actually growing and eating fresh vegetables for the first time in their lives, others find the solace and natural pastimes a critical refuge from the pressures of life. Some have taken up the mission of food growing to their own homes and to other groups in the area, others have learned to cook over an open fire, and regularly do so on volunteer days. They are actively planting seed and raising seedlings eager to get the new growing season started.

The volunteers have taken undeniable possession of this project and as one has become a Trustee, we are confident that this enthusiasm will continue into the future unabated

#### **5. Project Beneficiaries:**

The inhabitants of the general area around Pontardawe, including Alltwen, Trebanos, Ynysmeudwy, Godrergraig. This includes the many school children, volunteers, and interested passers-by that have taken part in the project.

There is every reason to propose that this involvement will increase in years to come, as the Farm concept develops internally and in rolling out to other areas in the community.

#### **6. Cross Cutting Themes:** If relevant, briefly describe how your project contributed to the following themes:

##### **Equal Opportunities:**

We simply exclude no-one in our projects and practice a true philosophy of equality of opportunity.

##### **Sustainable Development including Economic, Environmental and Social**

The project is gradually gaining in knowledge and ability to produce and generate seeds/seedlings that will make the project substantially self-sustainable as much as possible.

##### **Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion**

We believe that by creating a positive, non-critical and empowering environment that all who come and contribute to the project have increased their sustainable well-being which directly impacts on social exclusion and subsequently on individual poverty. Poverty comes in many

forms, both financial and sociologically, this project has the potential to be duplicated in other areas to magnify the effects experienced by our volunteers.

**7. Conclusion Summary:** Please provide a summary on the project's performance, identifying any key issues that need to be addressed:

**a) Summary**

As a project for engaging the community in a food growing project, I believe it fair to say that it has been a resounding success both in a practical and a sociological sense. We also are convinced that the volunteer group, who are the new project owners will be successful in taking the concept into the future.

In a wider sense, this has been a key project for me and the charity as a whole, and has been an important test bed for implementing the results of behavioural research carried out over the past 10 years regarding wider and individual community well-being. The natural and environmental impact on well-being when engaging with the outdoors is widely accepted as being positive, but arguably little understood when considering long term and sustainable well-being mechanisms.

There was fortunately a groundswell of interest both nationally and locally in eating more naturally which is perhaps a rejection of the normalised supermarket homogenised and plastic-coated food display methods? We felt the opportunity of combining our behavioural research knowledge within this phenomenon would be of such a benefit to the community – which it debatably has proven to be.

My/our aim following this project is to make this knowledge available to the wider public and businesses which could mean greater understanding of what influences more permanent well-being methodologies.

**b) Key Issues**

Developing a volunteer team to potentially create a sustainable methodology  
Gaining knowledge and infrastructure to maximise chance of success.  
Empowering the volunteer team and increasing both team and individual well-being

**c) What went well?**

Pretty much everything from our perspective, yes, there were some problems encountered, but nothing that we felt was unpredictable.

**d) What didn't go well?**

Again, nothing much really, the project was a well-managed exercise that organically developed along fairly predictable lines – the one thing perhaps that the participants were unhappy about was the amount of pest damage which led to natural pest control methods and the creation of habitats for natural predators.

**e) What could have been done differently?**

Again, not a great deal – I/we are very experienced in delivering projects and this was a good example of a project that was managed and financed well – we focussed on desired outcomes and feel that the project was successful in achieving these. The project also has a really good chance of achieving future sustainability using the low-cost model they are currently running with.

8. TO BE COMPLETED BY LEAD BODY:				
Project Performance – Financial & Indicator Achievements: (detailed performance against approved timescales and budget expectation, including reasons for all variances)				
a) Performance indicator achievement against targets approved: Final position:				
PI Reference	Approved Target	Total Achieved	Justification for underachievement	How has achievement been evidenced
LD.CL.004	Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported			
	1	1		Project Implementation Plan (PIP)
LD.CL.007	Number of stakeholders engaged			
	5	5		Registration forms/emails/pictures
LD.CL.008	Number of participants supported			
	70	186		Attendance sheets/registration forms
R.24	Number of Jobs created			
	1.2	1.2		Confirmation letter
NPT01	Number of communities engaged			
	3	3		Emails, Attendance sheets
NPT02	Number of groups engaged			
	2	2		Emails, Attendance sheets
NPT03	Number of children and young people participating in the project			
	60	148		Attendance sheets/registers
NPT04	Number of women participating in the project			
	10	19		Attendance sheets/registration forms
NPT05	Number of Welsh speakers participating in the project			
	2	97		Attendance sheets/registration forms
NPT06	Number of older people participating in the project			
	10	14		Attendance sheets/registration forms
NPT07	Number of individuals with disabilities participating in the project			
	3	22		Attendance sheets/registration forms
NPT08	Number of projects aimed at environmental enhancement sustainability			
	1	1		<i>Project aims to create a natural growing area, using natural pest control measures using indigenous species. By creating natural habitat areas.</i>
NPT09	Number of under-employed individuals participating in the project.			
	1	7		Attendance sheets/registration forms
b) Pilot Activities/Projects: Outlining all of the stages and activities, including the timelines. To promote externally and link to the Wales Rural Network Website. Attached x <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable for this project <input type="checkbox"/>				
c) Feasibility Studies: To promote externally and link to the Wales Rural Network Website. Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable for this project <input type="checkbox"/>				

d) Project Closure Financial Position against original approved: (following final claim)				
Timescales	Original Approved		Adjusted Approved	Final Closure Date
	From	To	31.01.2022	31.01.2022
	05.06.2021	18.12.2021		
e) Summary of Financial Performance				
		Original Approved	Adjusted Approved	Final Claim
Total Project Costs		£27,377.96	£42,284.84	£42,284.84
RDP Funding		£20,600	£33,825.84	£33,825.84
Levered Funding		£6,777.96	£8,459.00	£8459.00
Intervention Rates	% RDP	75%	80%	80%
	% Match	25%	20%	20%
		Cost Heading	Justification for under/overspend	
Under/overspend				

**9. Handover contact details:** For post project monitoring and evaluation activities, Welsh Government will require contact details of staff who may be able to provide assistance.

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**Document Retention Procedures:** Documents (which includes all evidence relating to your project) must be retained in a suitable format for a period of 10 years following the end of the current LEADER programme – this means at least until 2031.

Signed:  Robert Clapham Date: 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022  
(Project Lead)

Signed:  Date: 22/02/2022  
(RDP Manager – Lead Body)

**Post Project Activities by the Local Partnerships and Local Action Group:**

Define what activities need to be undertaken by the Lead Body after the project has been closed include any post project follow up actions which may need to be undertaken following project closure:

Completed PCR to be forwarded to LAG & WRN