

WHO WE ARE

Social Farms & Gardens is the UK-wide network of community farms, gardens and growing spaces. Our vision is to see people and communities reaching their full potential through food growing and nature-based activities as a part of everyday life. Our mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment through food growing and nature-based activities.

Together, we empower people to take on land and transform it into spaces that boost health and well-being, social connection, improve equitable access to nature and build resilience. SF&G is the infrastructure that connects, curates and amplifies the work of communities to create positive change grounded in the latest evidence and real-world practice.

We believe every community deserves an outdoor space and activities that connect people with place and nature. Together, we can improve our well-being, build equity, foster climate resilience, and tackle the many interconnected challenges we all face.

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

Our communities are facing many challenges - poor health, climate change, nature loss, disconnection and loneliness, and the cost of living. These intensifying pressures are straining communities and deepening inequality.

Farms, gardens, and growing spaces led by and for the community offer a powerful response. When communities take control of and manage spaces together, they can nurture health and well-being, strengthen social ties, connect with nature, build pride in place and increase local resilience.

In an uncertain world, the network becomes more vital. SF&G facilitates connections that empower communities - of interest and geographical - across the UK to work together, share resources, and advocate for the support they need to face current and future challenges as a movement.

OUR THREE STRATEGIC GOALS

To achieve SF&G's potential, we will be focusing on three key goals over the next 5 years.

1. STRENGTHENING THE MOVEMENT

TO MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY-LED FARMS, GARDENS AND GROWING SPACES AS A FORCE FOR RESILIENCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, CLIMATE JUSTICE, HEALTH - EMPOWERING AND STRENGTHENING OUR NETWORK AS A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE.

A decentralised distributed network

SF&G is a distributed network committed to a shared purpose. Our relationships are reciprocal and collaborative, with members working towards common goals and supporting the broader movement.

The curator

SF&G is the curator and connector, responsive to its members' needs. It plays a role in supporting peer-to-peer learning and exchange and convening and facilitating positive change.

Collective voice

SF&G nurtures coherence in the movement with common aims, enabling a growing network to thrive on one another. SF&G serves as an advocate for the entire network, strengthening its collective voice.

2. MAKING THE CASE

TO PUT COMMUNITY-LED LAND USE AT THE HEART OF POLICY SO THAT ITS FULL POTENTIAL TO PROGRESS COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING, PUBLIC HEALTH, CLIMATE AMBITIONS, NATURE RECOVERY, AND LOCAL FOOD RESILIENCE, IS RECOGNISED AND BUILT INTO LOCAL, NATIONAL AND UK GOVERNMENT POLICY.

A robust evidence base

SF&G is the recognised network for collaboration with academia and respected partners, continually strengthening the evidence base, fostering a more conducive policy framework, and attracting funding by evidencing our network's credibility.

Cross-party advocacy

SF&G is the recognised conduit for the movement, ensuring all political parties hear the voice of members across all UK nations, and demonstrates practical solutions to key policy issues.

Ensuring joined-up policymaking across government

SF&G joins the dots across different government departments in health, food, environment and economic development to develop greater policy coherence in community-led land use.

3. RADICAL INCLUSION

TO NURTURE AND ADVOCATE FOR AN EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY GROWING MOVEMENT WHERE NO ONE IS STRUCTURALLY EXCLUDED BECAUSE OF THEIR BACKGROUND, IDENTITY, RACE, DISABILITY OR CLASS. RECOGNISING THAT COMMUNITY-LED LAND USE IS A FUNDAMENTAL MEANS OF PROMOTING EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

A diverse organisation

SF&G staff team and trustees represent the diversity of our communities and seek out underrepresented voices. The organisation respects the differences between individuals and communities. We are more powerful, effective and resilient when we come together in harmony with nature.

Outside spaces where no-one feels like an outsider

The membership is diverse, providing a safe space for everyone. There are opportunities for people from all backgrounds to thrive, get to know one another and build their individual skills. Everyone is empowered to contribute and represent their community and the wider movement.

Challenging structural barriers

In partnership, we challenge exclusionary ways of operating in community growing spaces; specifically, access to land, site design, decision-making, service delivery, policy and organisational development. We realise the positive impact of joined-up working over competition and division.

HOW WE WORK

We believe in the power of people working together to bring positive change to our communities.

This power has transformed urban spaces, provided meaningful work, created community-led responses to the climate and nature crises, and contributed to positive government policy.

WE ARE:

Caring and approachable - we care about people, community, nature and our planet. We all have unique sets of skills and experience to respond to the needs of our community and our planet. We work in partnership to create a diverse movement where everyone has a safe space and is valued.

Sharing and generous - together, we are impactful. We create opportunities to celebrate one another's successes and learn from our collective experience. Active participation in the network helps each farm, garden, and growing space thrive.

Innovative and determined - we share inspiration and ambitious ideas to push boundaries. We find creative ways to build a better, more connected world that is rooted in community.

Proud of our collective impact - we find joy in working collaboratively for positive change that creates more vibrant, vital and resilient local places, contributing to a brighter future globally.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS LOOK LIKE

Our members are very diverse. They include community managed farms, community gardens, school farms and gardens, care farms, allotment-based projects, community orchards and composting projects. All our members use connection to land and nature to improve lives in profound and powerful ways.

OUR MEMBERS INCLUDE:

City Farms

Educational green spaces - with livestock and gardens - that connect city people with farming, food production and the natural environment. Our movement started with the first City Farms set up in the 1970s.

Community Gardens / Orchards and Allotments

Green and growing spaces established managed by and for members of a local community. These projects bring people together, and create safe spaces where people can enjoy the outdoors together.

Care Farms / Social Farms

Farms providing structured programmes for people with additional needs (e.g. learning difficulties, physical disabilities or mental health). These projects embed co-production with beneficiaries and contribute to health, education and social care outcomes.

Urban Agriculture / Food-Growing Enterprises.

These include market gardens, urban food production, hydroponic or indoor growing initiatives, and community-benefit food enterprises. They are focused on local food production with a strong social and environmental mission, including working with volunteers.

Therapeutic Horticulture/Animal Assisted Projects

Projects delivering therapeutic gardening, or animal/equine assisted interventions/programmes e.g. wellbeing programmes, or interventions within health, mental health or social prescribing pathways.

School Farms, Educational Farms

Schools or colleges operating farms and gardens for curriculum learning, alternative provision, vocational training, and SEND support.

Other nature-based projects with a community aspect

Our membership is broad and includes many organisations and projects that share our member's mission of connecting people with land and community, but don't fit into the above categories.