North of England Development Officer X2

These two new roles are supported by the National Lottery Community Fund

Employer:	Social Farms & Gardens
Programme focus:	Space to Grow - Growing Community Gardening as a Catalyst for Climate Action.
Hours:	0.5 (18.75hours) per week. To include Tuesday mornings.
Start Date:	January 2027 or sooner.
Salary:	Starting salary of £32,148
Pension:	5% of salary for standard contracted hours after successful completion of a 3-month probation period.
Holiday:	33 days, pro-rata of annual leave per year, including bank holidays, plus two wellbeing days pro-rata.
Contract:	36 months, subject to passing the three-month probation period.
Location:	The post holder will deliver work in one or more of these regions in England, North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, with a focus on a hub city, town, or series of cities and towns. The location will be finalised when the new roles are appointed and can be changed. The role is designed to be remote working, with frequent local travel to community gardens, mainly by public transport, and also some travel across the UK.

Details of the areas can be found at the end of this document.

Manager: Learning and Development Manager

Responsible for: Contractors, volunteers

This role **does not include any expectation or opportunity to deliver practical gardening activities** or to train people on practical gardening topics. These aspects of the programme are delivered by our member network and the RHS.

Overview

Social Farms & Gardens (SF&G) is seeking two part-time Development Officers. These are new roles at SF&G and are part of the new Space to Grow programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Climate Action Fund.

Each officer will develop a network of community gardens in the North-West or the North-East or Yorkshire and Humber. The network may be in place already, or there may be un-networked community gardens. Either way it needs to be an area that would benefit from support. The Development Officer will assist community garden groups to strengthen each other and share skills and insights though training and networking events on key topics including organisational development, community engagement and climate action.

This is a chance to develop a community garden network in the area you are located or know well, or where you have connections. The application and interview are an opportunity to 'pitch' the area where you think the local community gardens will really blossom with the support of a Development Officer.

We know from our wider work that a network like this works when there is a clear geographic focus, for example a large city, a small city or a group of cities and towns. These do not have to be in one local authority area. Ease of travel between the gardens is important, so gardens can connect in person and participate in in-person events. This is a climate-focussed programme so we emphasise appropriate travel.

The Community Garden Groups (CGGs) will range from small volunteer-led groups, to gardens with paid staff and building, and includes 'secondary purpose' community gardens such as community centre gardens.

This work is part of Space to Grow, a new programme which will see garden groups support each other locally, regionally and across the four UK nations.

Space to Grow is delivered in partnership with the RHS and Hubbub to help 20,000 existing community gardens expand their reach and impact, inspire the nearly 15 million who want to garden in their community to get started, and help secure land for growing in areas with limited access to green space. The partnership is seeking to future proof the community gardening movement by widening participation, growing skillsets, strengthening networks, working with local authorities and giving groups opportunities to influence decision making.

About Social Farms & Gardens

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.

SF&G Strategic Priorities
https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/sites/default/files/2026-03/SF%26G%20strategic%20priorities%202026-2031%20FINAL.pdf

SF&G website
https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do

Role Description

The main activities of the role are to support Community Garden Groups to:

- **Design and deliver professional development in-person training events for other community gardens.** Each training day will see 8-20 CGGs taking part, including staff, volunteers and trustees, with one or two gardens leading the training alongside SF&G, with associated payment. Topics will focus on CGG organisational development, community engagement and climate action. While they are not about how to garden but some will focus on how the network of CGGs respond in a changing climate. Through the training days SF&G will support the CGG network to build their capacity in all aspects of training including accessibility. Training days focus on organisational development. Approx 7 a year,
- **Hold small sociable networking events** for CGGs to showcase climate action, biodiversity and social cohesion, health and wellbeing examples in their work, meet others, and engage local stakeholders. The events will draw on CGG skills in engaging underrepresented or disadvantaged people, as they bring together people from a wide variety of backgrounds into their spaces to showcase climate action in practice. These are light-touch fun events that help grow local networks, and provide an access point to the programme for newcomers. Host CGGs are paid. Approx 5 a year.
- **Join forces to hold larger showcase events** to communicate the multiple impacts of community gardening.
- **Build up an understanding of the local policy environment and opportunities for CGGs,** including how CGGs gain appropriate permission to use land for CGGs and what barriers might exist to spaces making climate change adaptions.
- **Assess Community Gardens for climate change adaption,** using an existing template.
- Have the option to **design and deliver training and webinars** using their own skillset if this meets the needs of the project.

The postholder will also:

- Be well supported by the wider SF&G team, who have experience in this type of programme delivery.
- **Advise and signpost CGGs to relevant advice and information**, through email, phone calls, web applications and in-person visits to community gardens. The main focus is on organisational development and networking for CGGs, and on climate action.

- **Be part of a team developing SF&Gs 'Community Land Advisory Service'** in England, which helps CGGs and landowners work together to access land for community growing.
- **Tell the story of the impact of CGGs and community gardening networks,** representing SF&G and the Space to Grow programme at internal and external events and online communications including social media and regular bulletins.
- **Support and seek to improve SF&G's work** through effective communication, administration, data management, monitoring and evaluation and reporting.
- **Communicate regularly with staff based in other parts of the UK, and with Space to Grow programme partners, which** include the RHS, Hubbub, Community Garden Support (in Northern Ireland), the programme inclusion partners The Sub-Saharan African Association, and Thrive, and the monitoring and evaluation partner Wavehill.

General duties:

- Work effectively and considerately with other Social Farms & Gardens employees, volunteers and our members to promote the aims and objectives of SF&G and present a positive image of SF&G and the programme to members and the public.
- Abide by Social Farms & Gardens policies and endeavour to follow good working practices at all times.
- Take responsibility for your own safety and ensure that colleagues and visitors are not exposed to danger.
- Undertake such other duties as may be reasonably requested by your line manager or the Director, including completing appropriate training.

PERSON SPECIFICATION – Capabilities

We are looking for candidates that can demonstrate the capabilities below. These can be demonstrated in your personal statement with non-workplace examples, work examples, or volunteering examples.

Aptitude for network building, bringing people together to feel part of a movement.

Passionate about growing the positive impact of community gardening, including as a catalyst for climate action.

Training design and delivery, demonstrated through examples of training that you have helped shape, with information on how you selected topics, how you included different learners, and how you assessed if the training was meeting the needs of the learners. If you have relevant qualifications, please let us know. You do not have to have led the training.

Event organisation, demonstrated through experience of identifying host organisations/ venues, organising equipment like projectors, organising refreshments, creating invitation lists, promotion of events, welcoming and facilitation, feedback and follow-up with attendees. You do not have to have been the main organiser.

An anti-racist and equality-focussed approach, with knowledge of how to apply this to training and events programmes.

Administration and IT skills for everyday office work. We use MS Office, and Civi CRM for customer relationship management. The induction will include information on how to use this specific CRM. Related to this - **Presentation, newsletters and social media skills**, using templates, and with support from the wider team.

Confident communication skills including presenting to small groups, online meetings, networking events, speaking one-to-one in person and on the phone. Listening skills.

Willing to get out and about and visit CGG, and attend partner meetings with occasional overnight travel (expenses covered). **Be equally happy at a desk.**

Self-motivation and able to work without supervision, through with plenty of support, as part of a supportive team dispersed across the UK.

Recruitment Process:

Apply by:	10am Monday 23 November 2026.
Interviews:	Options of: Wed 9 December afternoon. Thursday 10 December morning Friday 11 December
Start date:	January 2027
Questions to:	Learning and Development Manager Amber Alferoff amber@farmgarden.org.uk or call Amber on 0776 1920 776

To apply please submit these three documents by email to hradmin@farmgarden.org.uk

Please put your initials and 'North of England Development Officer' in the subject box.

1) **A cover page with personal details**, template provided.
2) **A Personal Statement giving specific examples of your experience for each element of the Person Specification.** Your Personal Statement should include information on all relevant experience.
3) **A CV.** This is for reference if your personal statement demonstrates that you meet the capabilities described in the person specification.
4) Also complete an anonymous **Equal Opportunities form** online: Social Farms & Gardens equal opportunities monitoring form - England recruitment – Fill in form

Once submitted, the CV and Personal Statement will be anonymised to minimise bias.

Social Farms & Gardens is an equal opportunities employer that understands that the best employees may not always be the best at job applications. We try to make our recruitment and interview processes relatively stress-free. We welcome suggestions and requests about the application and interview process.

About your Personal Statement

This is our main source of information about you.

The Personal Statement is **not** a brief overview or a cover letter. The statement is usually around 750 to 1000 words in length, though could be longer or shorter. You can include lists to keep the wordcount down. Please do state your relevant experience rather than referring to your CV.

The personal statement is where you introduce yourself, tell us why you are interested in the role, give an overview of your background, and give examples of skills and experience that show you have the competencies in the role description.

This is also where you will describe the area of North West, North East or Yorkshire and the Humber that you think would blossom with a Development Officer to help develop a local community garden network. This area can be a city, a town or a series of cities, towns and villages. Travel is part of the role.

There may be a loose network that would gain a lot from having a Development Officer in place, or you may feel a network needs to be established from scratch. Please do let us know what you think.

If there is a well-established and effective community garden network in an area, we are unlikely to base a new development office role there, but maybe the next area over would benefit?

About the Interviews

We will hold in-person interviews at Heeley City Farm in Sheffield. If invited you will come to the farm for about an hour on one of the interview days.

We will provide key questions and a task to prepare in advance to those we invite to interview.

We will hold a short follow up interview online with the leading candidates before making our final decision.

Interviewed candidates can claim travel expenses for attending the interview.

Please email applications to HRAdmin@FarmGarden.org.uk

November 2026

Appendix: List of local authorities in the North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humber.

Darlington, County Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North of Tyne, North Tyneside, Redcar and Cleveland, Sunderland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Tees Valley, Allerdale, Barrow-in-Furness, Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Blackpool, Burnley, Bury, Carlisle, Cumberland, Cheshire East, Chorley, Cheshire West and Chester, Copeland, Eden, Fylde, Greater Manchester, Halton, Hyndburn, Knowsley, Lancaster, Liverpool City Region, Liverpool, Manchester, Oldham, Pendle, Preston, Rochdale, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, Sefton, St. Helens, Stockport, South Lakeland, Salford, South Ribble, Tameside, Trafford, Westmorland and Furness, Wigan, West Lancashire, Wirral, Warrington, Wyre, Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Doncaster, East Riding of Yorkshire, Greater Lincolnshire CCA, Hambleton, Harrogate, Yorkshire and The Humber MCA, Kingston upon Hull, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Richmondshire, Rotherham, Ryedale, Scarborough, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Selby, Sheffield, Wakefield, York. Source: MySociety website