

Windmill Hill City Farm Strategy 2017-2020

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This strategy has been created by the staff and board of the organisation with input from members, volunteers and service users. It aims to strike a balance between continuing work that is underway and instigating new areas for the organisation to explore. Whether new or established, we aim to ensure our work makes a vital contribution to our local community.

Thank you for your interest in and input to Windmill Hill City Farm.

Introduction

Windmill Hill City Farm was founded in 1976 as the first city farm outside London. In the years since, it has grown to offer a range of activities that involve people from across the city and has become a key provider of services and facilities to its local community. The local context is one of an inner-city area with pockets of disadvantage sitting side-by-side with relative affluence – the city farm aims to offer something to all local people.

From its origin, Windmill Hill City Farm was built through volunteer action and the organisation will continue to put volunteer activity and community involvement at the heart of what it does. It is in essence a local organisation, however it aims not to be parochial tackling global issues through local action and personal development of the people engaged here. It was founded with a high regard for improving the environment (both locally and more widely) and it will continue to put environmental sustainability of its own operations high on the agenda, aiming to become exemplary in this respect.

To achieve financial sustainability it will give priority to generating income and improving operational efficiency rather than reducing costs by cutting activity. The financial model combines project-based activity with more continual earned income. Access to the site is free and the organisation is committed to that remaining so.

The external context in which we are developing this strategy is one that has economic and social challenges. The age of 'austerity' has taken a toll on local authority funding where there are greater demands on social services at a time when there are less resources available to meet them. The decision for the country to leave the European Union continues to be divisive and to fuel social tension. There is a potential role for the Farm in acting as an agent of social change, leading the way for our community to increase its resilience and self-reliance in such a climate.

Locally there are also new opportunities and challenges. For example, major infrastructure developments (Bedminster Green, Bristol Arena) are likely to 'gentrify' the neighbourhood causing the profile of the local population to change. This in turn raises questions about who 'our community' actually is and how we go about serving them.

The financial context in which we operate continues to make it harder to win grant funding from the local authority or charitable sources. Many social services are being put out to tender, often within structures that make it difficult for smaller or local organisations to bid for. The organisation faces increasing pressure to earn its income through direct trade with individuals or businesses, raising challenges about how to continue services to those who cannot afford them.

This strategy sets out a 3-year vision of the main ambitions and targets for the organisation. It is primarily concerned with the 'why & what' of its aims rather than the 'how', which will be dealt with in the operational plans for each year. The strategy has to address three audiences:

- ◆ Staff and board of trustees
 - To give a guiding document against which new decisions can be tested to ensure a consistent direction is maintained and that everyone has a shared notion of what that direction is. This does not preclude changes in direction, but makes them conscious ones rather than drift.
- ◆ Service users, members, volunteers and friends
 - To share the direction of the organisation and to provide a vehicle by which their voice can be heard in setting that direction.
- ◆ Funders
 - To give assurance that the organisation has articulated its ambitions and knows how to go about achieving them.

Vision and Mission: Overview

Overall aim

The lives of local people are improved through the services and facilities that the organisation offers.

This aim is embodied in the charitable objects that form the legal underpinning of the company. The full objects were updated in 2016 and are included at the end of this document. In summary, they give us the following purposes (1-4 reflect the objects directly, 5 underpins all of them).

- 1) Engaging in education, particularly on food, farming and the environment (interpretation, information, courses, training, educational visits, nursery and childcare)
- 2) Delivering health and social care (mental health, learning difficulties, addiction recovery, older people)
- 3) Providing a community facility – in particular a city farm and gardens (attract general visitors, produce food, gardens, café, opportunities to take part, get involved)
- 4) Community development (increasing the capacity of local people to participate in society volunteering, events, build community cohesion, membership and supporters)
- 5) Strengthen the organisation (diverse, robust income, communications, staff development, environmental credentials, use of technology).

Our activities are described under each of these headings, however most of them advance more than one of these aims.

Values

The organisation operates with the following principles.

- ◆ Its activities put volunteer activity and community involvement at the heart of what it does.
- ◆ It engages in diverse activities with each area feeding into and drawing on the others.
- ◆ It takes positive steps to include and involve all members of society.
- ◆ It works in partnership with other organisations to achieve greater outcomes.
- ◆ It sets high standards for the sustainability of its activities.
- ◆ It aims to properly reward its staff, provide them with development, involve them in setting direction, stimulate and engage them.
- ◆ Is clear, focused, open and transparent about its aims and objectives.
- ◆ Is led and managed well to deliver its work effectively.

Windmill Hill City Farm is...

- ◆ A farm for the local community to share.
- ◆ A place that inspires, informs and educates people, that is busy with visitors who have a wide range of backgrounds and experience, and that reaches out to all people in our community.
- ◆ A beacon for sustainable living, where people can experience, see, understand and learn about animals and plants, their environment, and food production.
- ◆ A space for people to visit, enjoy, play, relax and to meet people.
- ◆ A sanctuary for people and nature.
- ◆ An organisation that is both responsive to and a leader within our community.

Realising our aims

The following section outlines the specific aims we wish to achieve over the three years of the strategy. For convenience sections are set out with separate headings, however many aspects of activity overlap across sections and are dependent on each other for success.

Engaging with and educating people

Ambition and aspiration

To provide an outstanding educational resource to a broad spectrum of learners that includes both informal learning and formal course provision.

To use our authentic farming environment to be a regionally recognised centre of excellence in outdoor learning.

Development of existing work

- ◆ Farm, gardens and café
 - Improve levels of interpretation around the animals, gardens and heritage of the site
 - Established strong relationships with schools (resources, activities, partnerships)
 - Expand the range of adult courses delivered (with partners like WEA)
 - Develop the educational messages in the café around positive food choices.
- ◆ Children and families services
 - Provide high quality of care to children, services to young people and activities for families, using the unique environment effectively and imaginatively
 - Support families in need through free or subsidised activities and places
 - Provide entertaining and engaging activities for families

New areas to explore

- ◆ Develop a programme of food-related hands-on courses in the café.
- ◆ Explore the possibility of becoming a regional centre for outdoor learning that brings together a range of training, education and activity in outdoor spaces
- ◆ Explore provision of accredited courses (eg NVQ)
- ◆ Expand childcare provision including the possibility of running a nursery off the existing site.
- ◆ Expansion of provision for young people – 11 to 20 years.

Health and Social Care

Ambition and aspiration

To provide exemplary facilities and services that aid therapy or recovery for people in need.

To improve our understanding of local needs and to create a service that responds to it and becomes recognised as a centre for health and wellbeing work.

Development of existing work

- ◆ Engage with system changes to ensure ongoing sustainability of the H&SC programme by adapting to, and taking advantage of, the re-organisation of local authority funding
- ◆ Enhance provision (quantity and quality) of activities for people with specific needs
- ◆ Ensure supported volunteering opportunities are available in all areas of our activity
- ◆ Engage with the local community to better understand their needs and aspirations
- ◆ Build more relationships with other organisations that can deliver services from the farm

New areas to explore

- ◆ Branding as a 'health and wellbeing centre'
- ◆ Developing more public health contracts
- ◆ Development of the offer we make to older people

Community Facility

Ambition and aspiration

To be a key part of what makes our neighbourhood a great place to be, adding to its character with a farm, gardens and enjoyable environment.

Enhance our capacity as a 'community anchor' offering a wide range of services that complement local authority and commercial provision.

Create a great visitor experience with local people actively engaged in the services and facilities on offer and a wide spectrum of people participating.

Development of existing work

- ◆ Farm, gardens, site and facilities
 - Retain free entry to the farm and gardens and good accessibility to all facilities
 - Make the gardens even more beautiful, productive, sustainable, inclusive and educational
 - Keep a good variety and number of animals with high levels of animal welfare
 - Produce food sustainably and profitably
 - Involve volunteers in food production
 - Manage allotment plots as an integrated part of the community garden area.
 - Improve the material fabric of the existing site (maintenance, decoration)
- ◆ Café
 - Complete and open an expanded café making the most of the new space.
 - Provide greater opportunity for volunteering and training
 - Provide refreshment in a manner that demonstrates sound environmental principals
 - Make a positive financial contribution to the organisation

New areas to explore

- ◆ Accreditation of animal welfare standards through a recognised quality mark
- ◆ Redevelop the farm yard area to make it more useful and attractive
- ◆ Decide the future of the sports pitch and take steps to realise the decision
- ◆ Explore the feasibility of a new community space – eg conference centre, incubator or venue

Community Development

Ambition and aspiration

To help to enhance the identity and cohesion of our local community and to be a leader in it.

To be an active participant in the life of the city

Development of existing work

- ◆ Enable volunteers to participate in an exciting programme of activities
 - Exemplary volunteering procedures and practice
 - Improve provision for 14-24-year olds including work experience opportunities
- ◆ Events
 - Provide a programme of events that attract, reflect and involve local people.
 - Make a positive financial contribution to the organisation
 - Partner with community events and local businesses to engage with the locality
 - Act as a venue for others to host their events
- ◆ Local people actively engaged in activities
 - Increase the diversity of people involved in our activities
 - Take positive steps to engage minority communities on site
 - Increase the number and level of engagement of members

New areas to explore

- ◆ Potential to act outside the site boundaries (eg as a social landlord or provider of outreach services)
- ◆ Developing a vision for local area – participating more in planning and shaping the neighbourhood (eg leading on development of a neighbourhood plan)
- ◆ More active engagement with people in the Redcliffe area

Stronger, more sustainable, organisation

Ambition and aspiration

To be an exemplary city farm: high environmental standards, good visitor experience and a broad range of community-focused services.

To be financially robust and to become a 'living wage' employer.

To develop a measure of our overall impact, possibly based in a 'social return on investment' model.

To be a 'learning' organisation where projects are well measured and lessons learned are fed back into future work.

Development of existing work

- ◆ Finance and funding
 - Explore new business areas eg social prescribing, public health contracts
 - Give more autonomy to senior managers on budget responsibilities
- ◆ Communications
 - Develop brand to encompass all activity on site rather than just that we directly run eg centre for outdoor learning, centre of health & wellbeing, community anchor, centre for early years
 - Improve the engagement of members with innovative approaches
 - Instigate a 'listening' project run annually to focus feedback channels (visitor survey, AGM, parents' meeting, user groups...)
- ◆ Sustainability
 - Improve the environmental credibility of the organisation (improve recycling and energy efficiency)
 - Renew the technology infrastructure to enable more efficient working
 - Ensure that sustainability is built in across all activities - economic, social and environmental
- ◆ Staff and board
 - Instigate a system to track and promote professional development of staff
 - Further develop the staff wellbeing programme
 - Support board development to build capacity and activity of trustees

New areas to explore

Community fundraising

Social return on investment – improving measures of our own impact

Organisation

Business model

We face increasing pressure to move towards earning our income through paid services rather than grants.

The current business model for the organisation is well balanced. While the nursery accounts for over 50% of the turnover (and may expand again in 2017) its income is spread across almost 200 families giving a secure income source. The level of funding received from any single source in 2016 is below 10% of turnover. The biggest of these is Bristol City Council (c£88,000 pa through 2 unrelated contracts due to end in 2017). Commercial activity (primarily the café and room bookings) account for around 12% of the total turnover and is set to increase as the café expands in 2017.

The focus of the strategy is to increase income and efficiency to achieve sustainability rather than to attempt to reduce costs and activity. Fundraising activity will continue to focus on major grants for projects. In parallel we will aim to build a community fundraising that has both friend-raising and fund-raising elements and to increase the awareness of visitors to our charitable status with an aim of increasing on-site donations.

Governance and structure

Windmill Hill City Farm is a company limited by guarantee and registered charity. Nothing in this strategy requires a change to that status. WHCF owns a trading company through which some activity is currently directed. The board of trustees is the legally responsible body for the organisation. It should be maintained with between 6 and 12 members in order to offer sufficient expertise and challenge to the executive team. The staff of the organisation are headed by a Chief Executive Officer who is directly responsible to the board.

Volunteers will continue to play a central role in the activities of the organisation. They are both the subject of its charitable mission and the means of achieving it. Members have an important role in developing the organisation as they are both the source of board members and hold the board to account. We aim to improve engagement levels of members. Membership will continue to be a requirement for access to some of the services of the organisation.

Measures of success

The measures by which we and others judge our success are a key driver in determining the direction of the organisation. The organisation must strike a balance between input, output and impact measures, which all have different benefits, and the measures chosen must not cost more to measure than the benefit derived from measuring them.

Key Indicators and targets

Detailed indicators and targets will form part of the operational plans for each year. The following indicates the areas and types of measure we will be monitoring.

- ◆ Overall
 - Measures of social impact (return on social investment model to be explored).
 - Brand, reputation – be considered a flagship city farm.
 - Quality and quantity of projects undertaken and their delivery.
- ◆ Engaging with and educating people
 - Number of visitors and the quality of their experience (based on feedback)
 - Quantity and quality of school visits
 - Number and variety of courses run and their quality
 - Quality of care in the nursery
- ◆ Health and social care
 - Quality of services offered – progress of individuals engaged
 - Number and diversity of people supported
- ◆ Provide community facilities

- Accessibility of the facilities and services
- Animal welfare measures
- Quality and quantity of food produced
- Quality and profitability of events
- Café – profitability, customer satisfaction, courses, volunteering opportunities
- Impact as a place-maker
- ◆ Community development
 - Number and type of volunteers (eg individual, corporate groups, supported), quality of experience they have
 - Events – variety, viability, community involvement
 - Membership – level of engagement
- ◆ Become a stronger organisation
 - Financial viability
 - Staff retention, remuneration and professional development levels
 - Measures of environmental impact
 - Fabric of the estate improved

Charity objects

The objects for which the organisation is established were updated in 2016.

Extract from the Articles of Association.

1) To advance for the public benefit the education of all people in the neighbourhoods in and around Windmill Hill Bristol, particularly, but not exclusively, in subjects related to food, farming and the environment through provision of information, courses, activities and facilities for learning; to provide education and nursery care for young children; and training for people in any trade, occupation or service, thereby advancing them in life and enabling them to earn their own livelihood.

2) To assist in the treatment and care of persons suffering from mental or physical illness of any description or in need of rehabilitation as a result of such illness, by the provision of services and facilities for work, therapy, education and recreation.

3) To provide for the benefit of the public in the neighbourhoods in and around Windmill Hill Bristol facilities including, but not limited to a farm and gardens, and services in the interests of social welfare for recreation, volunteering or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the object of improving their conditions of life and wellbeing.

4) To develop the capacity and skills of people disadvantaged in any manner in the neighbourhoods in and around Windmill Hill Bristol in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society.

Steve Sayers, Chief Executive, March 2017