



Annual Report 2024



Our vision is:
"Growing Community in the Heart of Thanet".

and our mission is

"To deliver a variety of inclusive outdoor opportunities for people to come together to make a difference for themselves, others and for the environment."





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Welcome letter from our Chair

In 2024, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the gardens. It was a lovely day and an opportunity to understand how the gardens have developed, yet have remained true to the original concept. It was also a pleasure to welcome two of our original pioneers on that day and celebrate their contributions including Enid Hall whose portrait is included here created by Sophie Herxheimer.

It is a real privilege to see so many new faces joining us in the gardens and enjoying what the space has to offer. The diversity of the subjects covered in the Community Roots learning programme and focus on community composting have been highlights for me in what has been a very busy year.

The gardens never stand still and the energy and enthusiasm of everyone drives change and keeps the gardens vibrant and interesting. New ideas are welcomed and are essential to ensure that we remain relevant and supportive to as many people as possible.

We are grateful for the generosity of our funders, donors and sponsors, for the camaraderie of many local organisations, the energy and willingness of the amazing volunteers, and of course, the determination and skills that the team have in abundance. Most importantly, we are grateful to everyone who takes the time to visit us.

That is what makes it all worthwhile.

Gordon Hatt

*Chair of the Board of Trustees at
Windmill Community Gardens Margate*

About Us

At Windmill Community Gardens Margate we practice nature-friendly food growing to strengthen a fairer food system, protect the natural environment and collaborate with community members, organisations and businesses in a strong network to create a closer community.

Alongside gardening we share the delights of discovering damselflies, tasting golden raspberries, exploring a wildlife rich meadow, orchard, and forest garden. Meanwhile vibrant beetroots, rhubarb, carrots and salads that we grow together thrive in soil nurtured through our community composting scheme in no dig veg beds.

In both our market garden on St Peter's Footpath and community garden on Dane Valley Road we learn and share skills in nature friendly food growing as we nurture, share and cook together to increase access to local seasonal chemical free food and wildlife for all.

2004





Our Impact



In response to demand, we diversified activities, workshops, and outreach to make everyone welcome.

In 2024 there were **6,121** visits, including **2,341** from children and over **1,000** people attended our events

Food growing and cooking

We provide hands-on learning in horticulture, sustainable gardening and building confidence in successful food growing.

601 People took part in food growing and cooking including **211** new participants

We welcomed **508** people to our Saturday and Thursday Garden Clubs including

12 young people for work experience.

18 volunteers.



"I love tomatoes now...hmmmm"



"I have never planted anything in the earth before. Waiting for the garlic to grow is a very good feeling and good to share with family & friends. I send photos to my family in Pakistan each week."



"I come back down here and I learnt more than I ever have in my life while doing exams from coming here. And somebody said, I'm, so proud of you for what you've achieved, because it's my goal, it's something I've been looking to do."

Our Impact

Children's Activities

Our friendly staff and volunteers support children and families with inclusive diversified activities to explore wildlife and natural materials through art, crafts, stories, songs, as well as growing and tasting fresh fruit, veg and herbs at

"A wonderful outdoor space for teaching my son about nature and enjoying it together."

"It's really good to be outside with the baby."



Cabbage Patch

for under 5s

Tuesdays

10.30–12.30pm

&

Green Beans

for under 8s

Saturday

10.30–12.30pm

"We are new here and my sons love it. They have loved learning about leaves we keep for us to eat and what is worm food."

Wellbeing

In a calming friendly space we create preserves, cordials and cook together between seasonal gardening and visiting inspiring projects at Abbey Physic Gardens, Faversham and Stream Walk Gardens, Whitstable

- Throughout our services **479** People felt improved well-being
- Our Wellbeing Group hosted **273** visits



"I needed a moment of respite from my role as an unpaid carer, and it felt exactly like that."

"I love the atmosphere, so chilled and relaxed."

"The setting of the gardens was really restful."

"I return full of charge at home"

Our Impact

Supporting people who are low waged or unwaged to overcome barriers and reach their potential

- 50** learned new skills.
- 41** felt more confident
- 8** gained employment
- 19** started volunteering
- 14** took up learning opportunities

235

People spent more time outdoors



"I thought it would be a good opportunity to experience outdoor working."

"I know what to do with all of the local, seasonal veg now! I have never made anything like this before and feel confident I could go into the garden, harvest the bits and make a dish from scratch."



538

People enjoyed more time socialising.

We support involvement in community action reaching beyond the gardens in strong networks for mutual aid; **30** people were inspired to take part in community action across Thanet including tree planting, litter picking, Westbrook Sunken Gardens Ecofair, and Ark community events

"I notice more people looking out for each other, sharing activities to support and include everyone."

"I feel excited about my future now. I am looking forward to my 60's, 70's."

Highlights from the Year

Community Roots

The Community Roots Learning Programme launched in August 2024, funded by the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund generously awarded by Thanet District Council. Through this programme we have harnessed the many skills and strengths of our community members. This continues into 2025 where we expect more participants to enjoy learning together.

Community Roots employed **22** tutors, engaged learning support from **12** welcoming volunteers and supported **3** people into work as tutors from both volunteer and participant roles.

281

individuals participated in 63 workshops, where learners, volunteers and tutors received support to overcome barriers to learning.



Increased community involvement with free and supported tickets at all sessions.

Ticket sales generate revenue that helps sustain the gardens.

Improved access with new ramped weather-proof spaces for workshops and gatherings.



"It was really helpful to have the chance to volunteer Now I feel ready to host my own workshops..."



"After last week's Permaculture course I remembered things that I forgot during COVID. I have reclaimed part of myself that I hadn't realised had gone."



Over 5,000 litres of compostable material diverted from landfill



Highlights from the Year



We have increased the quality and quantity of homemade compost made on site.

Jas Dhillon, an artist practitioner invited by local gardener and curator Fiona Parry, created organic, compostable art that fostered new connections and increased engagement.

"Great variety of activities for different learning styles. Very engaging for the kids and adults alike."

Compost Fest

Our Community Composting Pilot Scheme launched in April was generously funded by Kent Community Foundation which enabled us to host **367** participants.

12 educational composting workshops.

168 visitors including **71** children attended our Compost Fest event, where Hetty helped children make compost guardians.

"I have learnt how you can use plants to fertilise the soil, comfrey. How you can mulch the soil to protect it during the summer."



Supper Club

We hosted our first Supper Club, showcasing the produce we grow with a beautiful menu prepared and served by our very own member of staff, Adriana. Accessible tickets made the event more inclusive, allowing a wider range of people to experience the garden in a new way, celebrate the garden's harvest whilst providing an opportunity to generate income to sustain our other free activities.



"Adriana hosted a wonderful meal, informative too about both the dishes and the incredible seasonal ingredients. The perfect combination of light and comforting. A really relaxing and laid back environment with friendly bunch."

Welcoming More People



We are delighted to welcome more people and learn how we can be more inclusive.

"Yesterday was truly something special! We did things a little differently for this week's Ginger Tea, venturing over to the beautiful windmill community gardens Margate. Our community gathered to sip ginger tea, share laughter, and experience the abundance of the gardens in such a magical way. Fresh fruit, sunshine, and good company made the day unforgettable... We're extremely excited to share more of their practice and how it's manifesting within our community, creating opportunities like this for us to come together in nature. This is just the beginning of many beautiful moments at Windmill Community Gardens Margate!"
People Dem Collective

Saturday Opening

We now also open on Saturday afternoons, welcoming more visitors and volunteers to enjoy the gardens, offering veg plots, bespoke sessions, making new connections between people and nature, a tangible way to help tackle climate change impacts and mitigate social and environmental injustice through access to fresh local food, to land and companionship.





With funding from Save the Children and support from Margate Early Learning Community we are collaborating with families and local organisations including See Me Play to tackle barriers to participation experienced by people who are neurodivergent and with disabilities. Funding has also been used to construct a more accessible toilet and to provide SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) training for staff and volunteers to help us include more people, diversify our activities and make our spaces more accessible.

Volunteering

Our **21** volunteers are the backbone of our charity and make a multitude of positive impacts by bringing barrow loads of skills, kindness and energy.



Our dedicated volunteers play a vital role in supporting our community by protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats, organizing events and activities, and helping with outreach and promotion. Thanks to their hard work, a much-needed log cabin was built at the market garden—generously funded by the Kent Community Foundation Environment Strand. Additional support from Social Enterprise Kent helped improve onsite facilities, and we're especially grateful to Perfect Place to Grow for donating a brand-new outdoor sink unit.

These enhancements provide much-appreciated all-weather shelter for our volunteers, staff, work experience participants—and, of course, our festive Christmas Elves from St. Peter's Churchyard, who made packing veg bags a holiday highlight.

A huge thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

Our socials and celebrations with volunteers include Burns Night Celebration with poems in the polytunnel; monthly lunches from garden produce; National Volunteer Week Picnic, Christmas lunch, campfires and the baking of many a fine cake.

Our dedicated volunteers' many talents include beekeeping, floristry, trusteeship, gardening and wildlife habitat management, assisting at children's groups; and supported volunteering. We welcome new volunteers to join our friendly team with support and training available to explore opportunities including helping at our plant nursery,, community composting, seasonal cooking and communications.



With **2,395** volunteer hours in 2024 ever more creative, determined action has included nature friendly crop management, helping improving yields, and making more people welcome through supporting our Community Roots learning programme.

Corporate sponsorship and volunteering

On going support and collaboration with People Care Planet Care has continued to blossom for which we are extremely thankful including employer supported volunteering; The generous donation of a Ridan composter to run our community composting scheme, and leading on funding a new polytunnel planned for 2025 as well as a sponsorship collaboration in growing for wellbeing in our market garden.



Social Outcomes

Volunteers regularly join us at our Market Garden on St Peters footpath on Wednesdays and every first Thursday in the month our Garden Club enjoys an energetic morning of volunteering amongst the birdsong. Important achievements include: sowing broad beans, planting tomatoes, mulching, composting, planting and harvesting squash.



School Groups

We hosted year 10 students for work experience throughout the year and are so inspired that these young people choose to learn about nature-friendly food growing with us. Our fruitful collaboration with Laleham Gap School also supported 2 young people on work experience during 2024

Our staff observed that:
"Students increased in confidence, skills and enjoyed their time with us, becoming more relaxed to enjoy more conversation and progressed to attend independently after initial support."



East Kent College

In a terrific new collaboration with East Kent College from September 2024 we welcomed 15 students each Thursday, impressing us with their enthusiasm, energy and confidence to rise to the many challenges of working outdoors in all weathers.

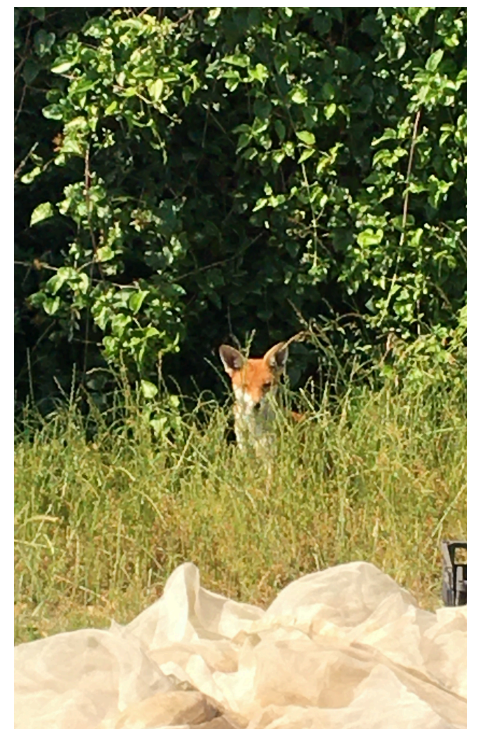
Thanks to the success of our new venture with this friendly group of young people, we look forward to welcoming a new group of East Kent College staff and volunteers in 2025

Nature Friendly Food Growing

Biodiversity

We nurture healthy soil, to enhance biodiversity and connect with organisations to promote nature conservation including the Nature Friendly Farming Network, Dane Valley Woods and local Swift Project.

Our local RSPB adviser described our Community Market Garden as a “turtle dove banquet”; impressed that our crop margins preserve rare wild plants that turtle doves feed on and together with neighbouring landscapes form a mosaic of habitats suitable for feeding, nesting and roosting. We also established more bug hotels, lizard refuges and plan to construct another pond in 2025. Some encouraging signs include a noticeable increase in hedgehogs on site.





Weekly Veg Bag Scheme

2024 was about building self-sufficiency for our weekly chemical-free veg bags and moving over to the new OoooBy online system to offer our customers greater flexibility in ordering.

Increasing from 87 to 96 customers over the year; our average of 82 weekly customers increased from 70 in 2023, a total of 4254 veg bags were delivered, up from 3655 in 2023. Standout yields include 209 kilos of broad beans , 1218 leeks , and 108 kilos of salad potatoes.

A great testament to improved sustainability of nature friendly food growing, harvesting and packing by the team at our community market garden on St Peters footpath.

"I get my fruit and veg from here and it is soooo delicious! I will never go back to supermarket. You can taste the freshness & also see how much supermarkets must alter the growing of veg as my cucumber was the biggest I've ever seen! Highly recommend. Great value for money knowing you're getting all the goodness you should from fruit and veg."

Nature Friendly Food Growing

We use a variety of techniques to care for our soil and grow food including no dig systems – simply applying compost to the surface of the beds, allowing the soil structure and soil life to remain intact.

At our Community Market Garden On St Peter's Footpath we had an excellent return in produce from no dig beds and polytunnel, with 461kg of tomatoes harvested, up from 294 Kg in 2023 and an abundance of chard and leeks from outdoor beds. This generates much needed income through sales to some local restaurants as well as weekly veg bags.

We also noticed more fungi in our no dig beds, we believe arising from the carbon rich compost we created, and as the soil was less disturbed, allowing fungal hyphae to travel throughout the soil without being broken.

"I feel really lucky to be able to eat locally produced, seasonal veg, every week, from a chemical free grower. The fact that the project delivers a host of other social benefits is a big bonus too."



Our nature friendly food growing includes:

- Using more green manures and undersowing cover crops:
- a mixture of clover beneath kale, along with field beans, and phacelia – a magnet for pollinating insects early in the year, before we plant our squash.
- Green manures build soil health, reduce erosion and surface capping whilst out-competing weeds. Field beans naturally fix nitrogen into soil, and when cut, rot down adding yet more nutrients.
- We formed green waste into mounds as fertile ground for growing squashes and flowers.
- Our homemade compost tea feeds plants using natural resources available on site
- Whilst increasing natural predators and companion planting improves natural pest control.
- Crop rotations preserve soil fertility, avoid build up of pests and prevent nutrient depletion, promoting healthy productive food growing over the long term.
- Creating hot beds using heat from composting organic matter to provide early crops of carrots



Nature Friendly Food Growing

- Resting garden beds over winter and sowing with green manure enhances soil structure, increases nutrient levels and promotes improved yields in coming seasons.
- Drip irrigation in our polytunnel efficiently targets plant roots, minimising water loss.
- Mulching with donated waste fleece and wood chips retains moisture in the soil, improving our water conservation efforts.
- A solar powered irrigation pump provides water efficiently where it is most needed

Wildlife Habitats

We continue to create and maintain a mosaic of habitats for pollinators and wildlife, including the installation of bee hotels, planting butterfly-friendly plants and a hedgehog box. Our diverse planting, wildflower meadow and forest garden further encourage a wide range of species to thrive by providing shelter.

Our ponds allow frogs, newts and invertebrates to flourish, contributing to the overall biodiversity and ecological balance within and beyond the gardens, attracting many birds including goldfinches to bathe in this important source of open freshwater.



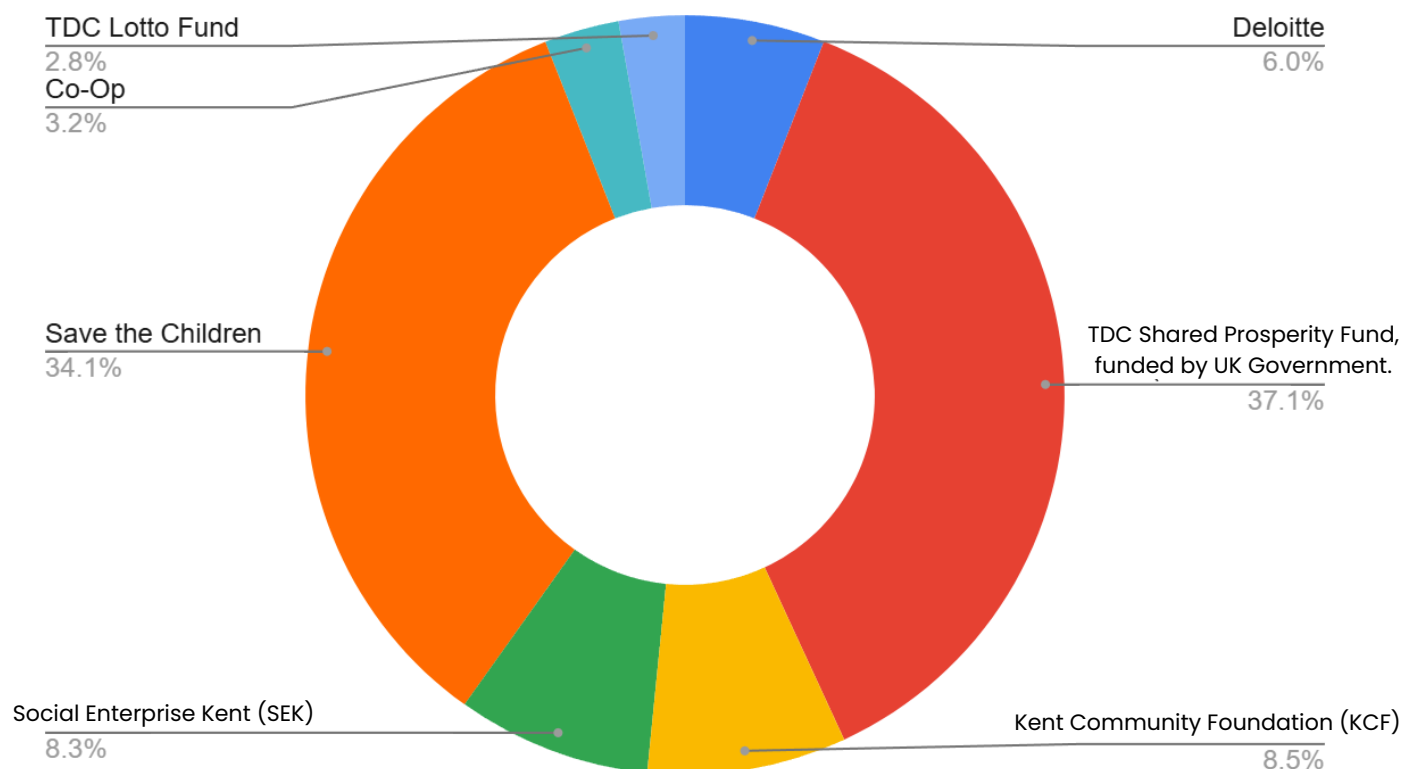


Finance Report

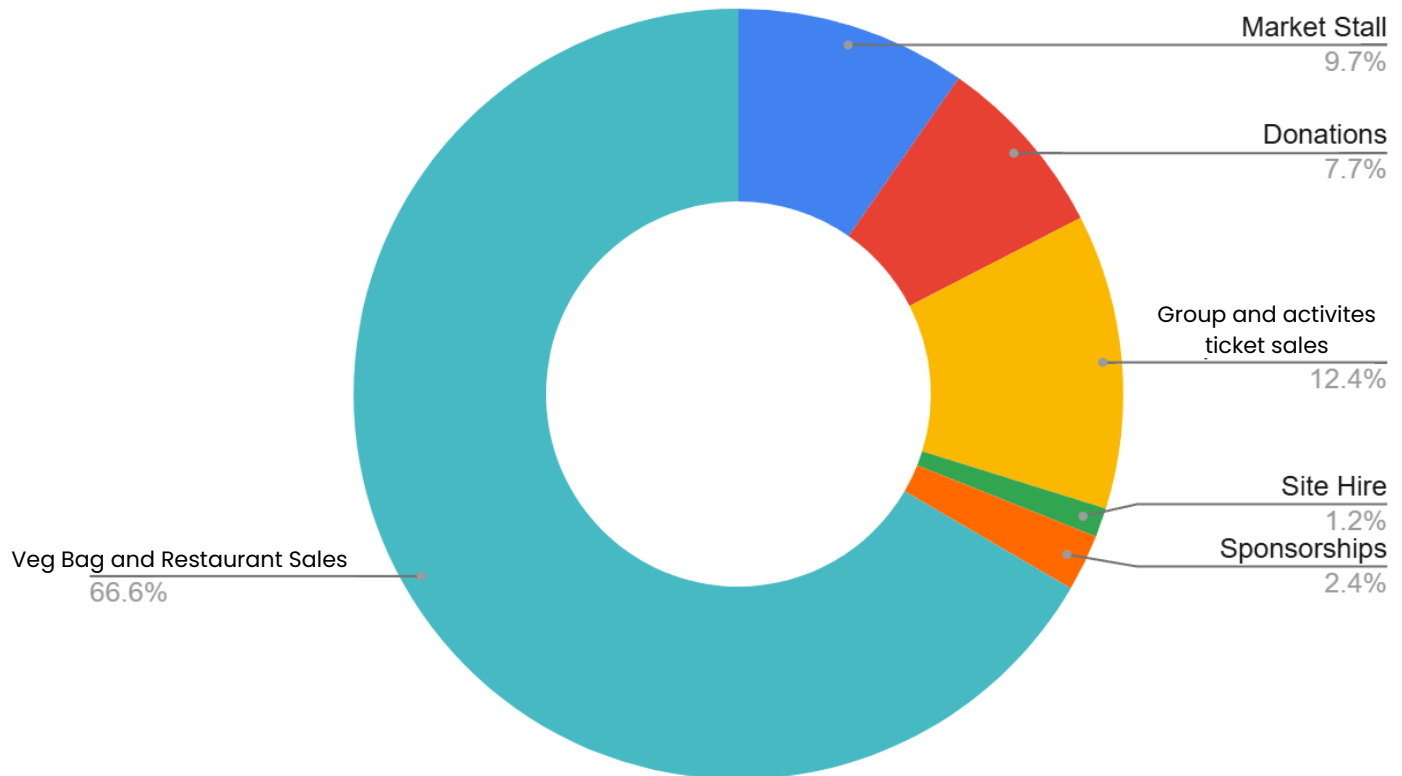
We've had another great year here at Windmill Community Gardens Margate and we've been hard at work to make sure that we can bring you the activities, veg and community that you love.

None of what we do would be possible without the incredible support from the National Lottery Community Fund who provided us with just over 50% of our core funding, along with amazing support from generous grant making trusts, donors and sponsorship that we've received over the year to continue the work we do.

In addition to National Lottery Community Fund, we are grateful to have received funding and support from the following organisations.



The below chart indicates income generation



Along with sales of our fresh seasonal chemical free produce, and tickets sold to people attending our groups and activities, we generated nearly £85,000 of income this year, including sponsorship from People Care Planet Care. Altogether this allowed us to continue to offer surplus fresh fruit and veg as donations to local food charities and causes, and keep a “pay what you can” system for tickets to our groups and events.



Sustainability and Future Proofing

Valued customers

Each customer's purchase helps sustain work experience, wellbeing and learning opportunities that we offer in the gardens. The collective buying power of our valued loyal customers supports nature friendly food growing here in Margate.

We offer increased access to locally grown, chemical free food, plants and bunches of beautiful cut flowers through our veg bag, mini-markets and our main Thursday market stall, with plenty more to come in 2025!



Sharing surplus produce



Whilst preserving and sharing surpluses with local food charities including 101 Social and participants, our supply model demonstrates how to reduce food waste and enhance community connections via a local food system that provides community benefit by making freshly harvested seasonal produce more widely available.



Strengthening our local food network

When poor weather and a cold, dull spring, impacted yields of courgettes, beans, and kale, our self-sufficiency was hit and we are privileged to be able to boost our supplies with fresh produce from local growers and help strengthen this network. By incorporating supplies from East Kent Growers which sustains nature friendly food production on their land in Wingham we can improve local resilience to shocks in the wider food supply system.



Reducing carbon footprint



To reduce the climate impact of our local food supply network we continue to invest in and strengthen our role in a more localised sustainable food system by growing more of our own produce in a new polytunnel planned for 2025 and by working with local food producers including Margate Mushrooms.

"Working with WCGM has been absolutely brilliant for Margate Mushrooms – not only are they a client who buys our produce for inclusion in their weekly veg stall and soon their veg bags, but they also use our spent substrate in their community compost project – this is a waste product for us and we are chuffed to bits that our waste is no longer going to waste!"

Waste reduction, recycling, sustainable energy and supply chains

Through community composting, local food waste from partner organisations is collected on an otherwise empty van journey, optimising fuel use, time spent and the distance waste travels to be recycled, as all our inputs are from the immediate area.

This waste is then hot composted in our Ridan composter producing our own rich, high quality compost in as little as 4 months; feeding soil life, improving soil structure, water and nutrient holding capacity and resilience of our soils.



Our primary partners are People Care Planet Care providing natural inputs such as seaweed; with peels and juicing pulp from Grain Grocer; coffee grounds from Oast; peelings from 101 Social, and spent wood shavings and mycelium from Margate Mushrooms.

We love using composting as an educational tool, for ourselves, and our participants to learn more about the process and best use of the resulting compost.

- In 2024 we diverted on average 400L of organic waste from landfill each week, that's 20,800L over the year. Once composted we gain almost 7000 litres of compost to use.
- Supporting MULL, we have been able to save and donate 5kg of plastic lids which are repurposed into homewares.
- We also set up a new waste separation system to promote recycling of paper, mixed recycling, tetra paks and organic waste.



- We refurbished our compost toilet using wood donated with thanks to Circular Margate and reduced sawdust use to minimise inputs. Our compost toilets reduce water use as flushing toilets would use around 7 litres of water per flush
- The Community Pharmacy initiative has brought a network of herbalists to the garden, promoting holistic wellbeing and learning about the medicinal properties of plants and their value
- In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, we had our solar panels serviced and rewired, now further investment is planned to upgrade and meet our needs for the future.
- We implement No Mow May and beyond!, reducing machinery use and supporting pollinator habitats.



With Thanks

Building Strong Partnerships with local businesses, schools, and organisations, sharing resources and amplifying our collective impact. This has been crucial in ensuring that our charity remains a vibrant and resilient community hub.

We extend a warm welcome to our community through outreach supported by our volunteers to include local schools, Dane Valley Residents Association, Dane Valley Woods, Millmead Children's Centre; Spaces 2 Connect; Green Social Prescribing Network; Thanet Employment & Training Forum; Pilgrims Hospice; Canterbury Christ Church; University of Kent; Newington Field to Fork; Dreamland's Sustainable Organisations event; Thanet Games; Broadstairs Food Festival; Westbrook Sunken Gardens Ecofair; Social Enterprise Kent Christmas Fayre and JobCentre Plus providers event.

We collaborate on biodiversity, local food and circular economies with People Care Planet Care; POW; Perfect Place To Grow; Turner Contemporary Creative Lab; Bon Volks through Circular Margate,

We learn to celebrate diversity with feedback and inclusive innovations from When They Ask; See Me Play; Mencap GOLD; People Dem Collective Ginger Tea; Oasis Domestic Abuse Support Group; Beyond the Page United Mothers; One You Health; Thanet Woodcraft Folk; Kent Refugee Action Network; Project 43; Terrance House; and Arts Education Exchange.

We are very grateful for funding and support from The National Lottery Community Fund; UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund generously allocated by Thanet District Council; Kent Community Foundation; Co-op Community Grant; Social Enterprise Kent; Save the Children and Margate Early Learning Community, People Care Planet Care, Travel Chapter Holiday Cottages UK, Deloitte Digital Connect Programme; and Thanet District Council's Lotto Fund

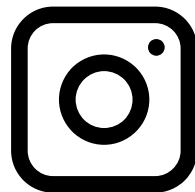


We hope this report inspires you to find out more and support us. Please get in touch, or pop in for a cuppa.

Find out more:

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Please Keep in touch

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