



Annual Report 2021

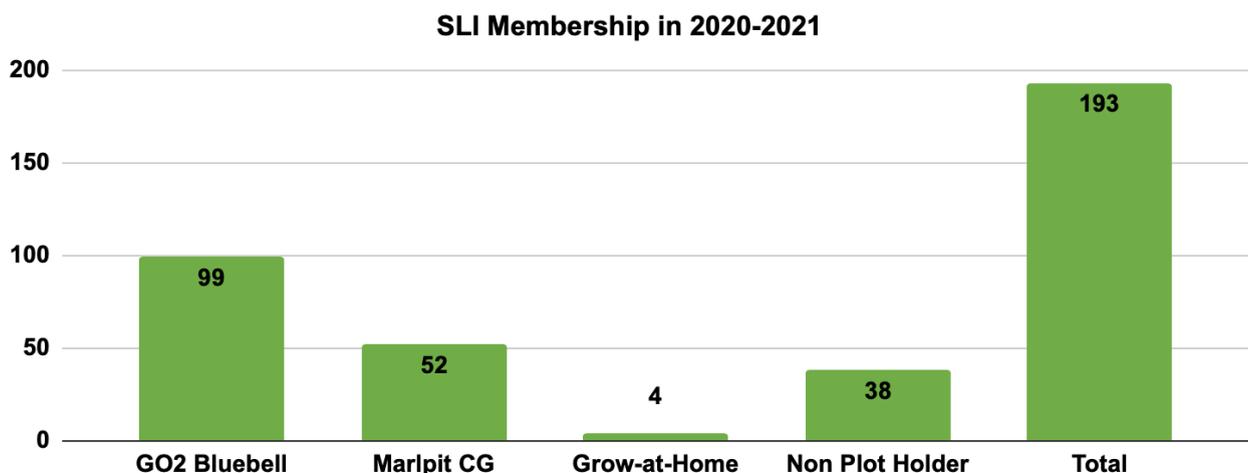
Introduction

The Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) is a registered charity run by trustees with its office at Marlpit Community Centre, Hellesdon Road, Norwich NR6 5EG. Founded by Mahesh Pant in 2004 as a pilot project, it now runs two community gardens in Norwich; Grow-Our-Own (GO₂) Bluebell which is at the Norwich City Council’s Bluebell South allotments, and Marlpit Community Garden, which is at Hellesdon Road, Norwich.

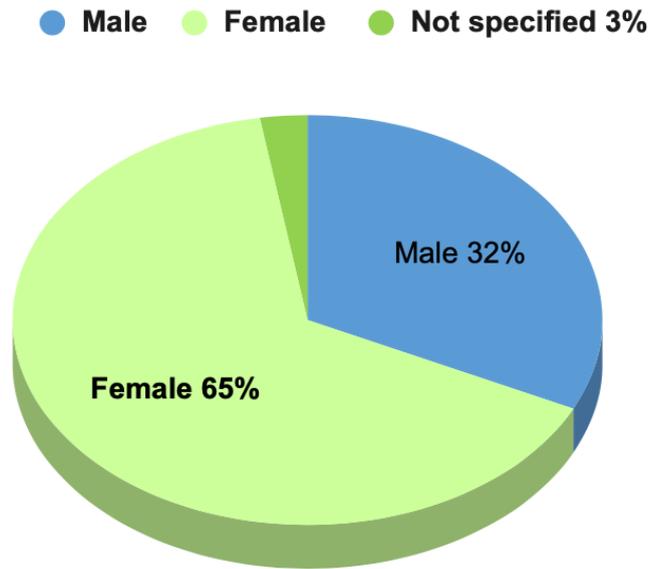
SLI is a membership-based organisation and is open to those who support its objectives and wish to be involved in its activities. SLI works to improve the quality of life for individuals and communities through gardening and environmental projects. Members come together to grow fruit and veg organically, share resources, food and recipes, learn about and support the natural environment and to enjoy each other’s company. SLI membership shows a commitment to promoting environmental awareness and improving our quality of life. It is a forum for sharing ideas and skills and initiating collaborative practical projects in growing and using food sustainably.

At a glance

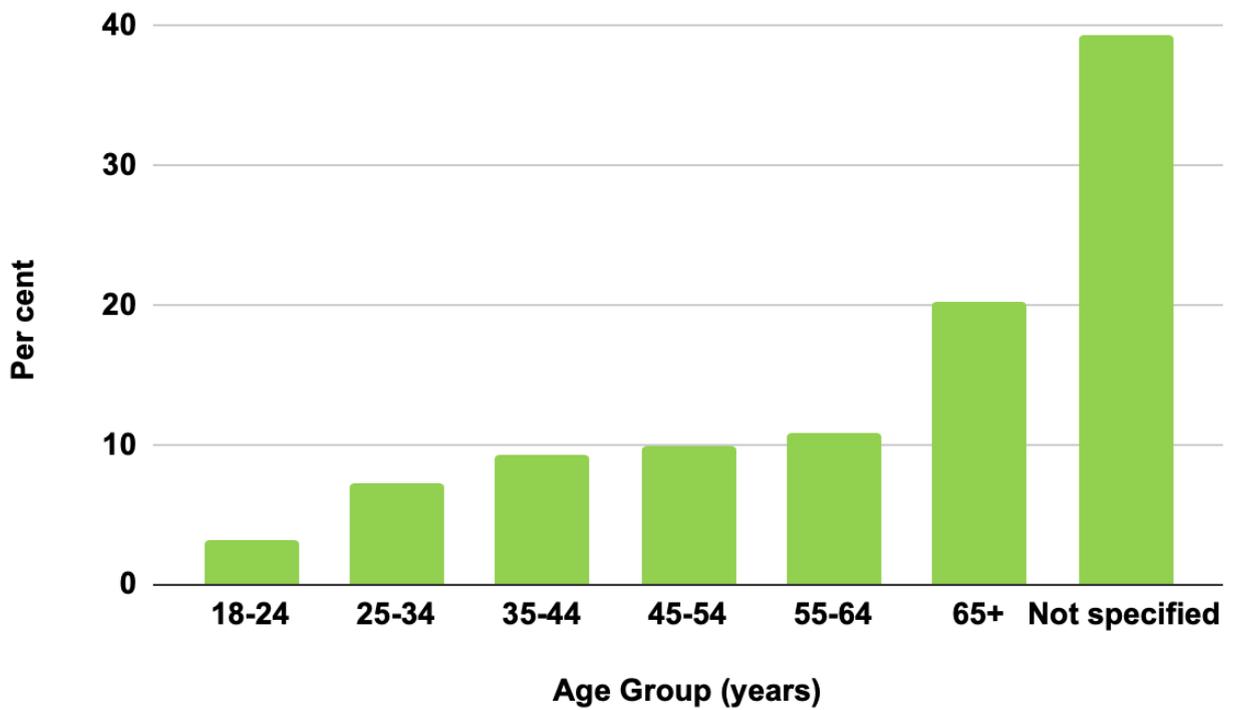
SLI Membership in 2020 - 2021



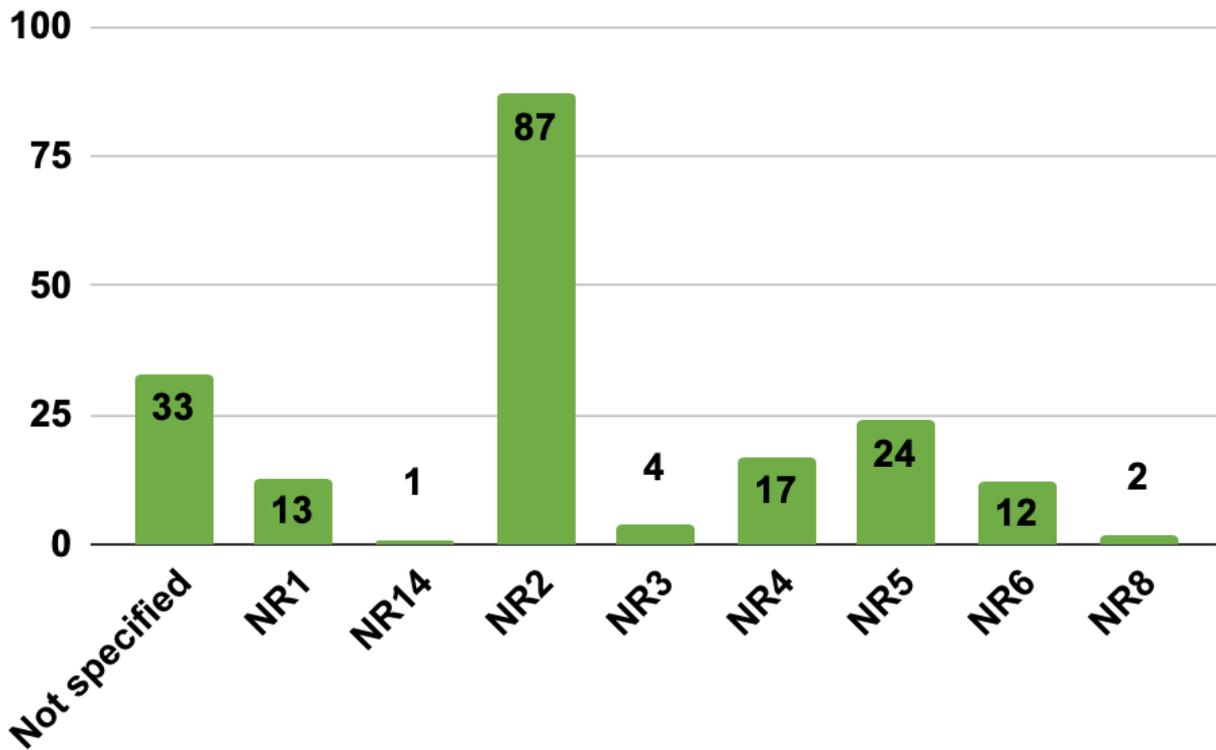
SLI Membership by gender in 2020-2021



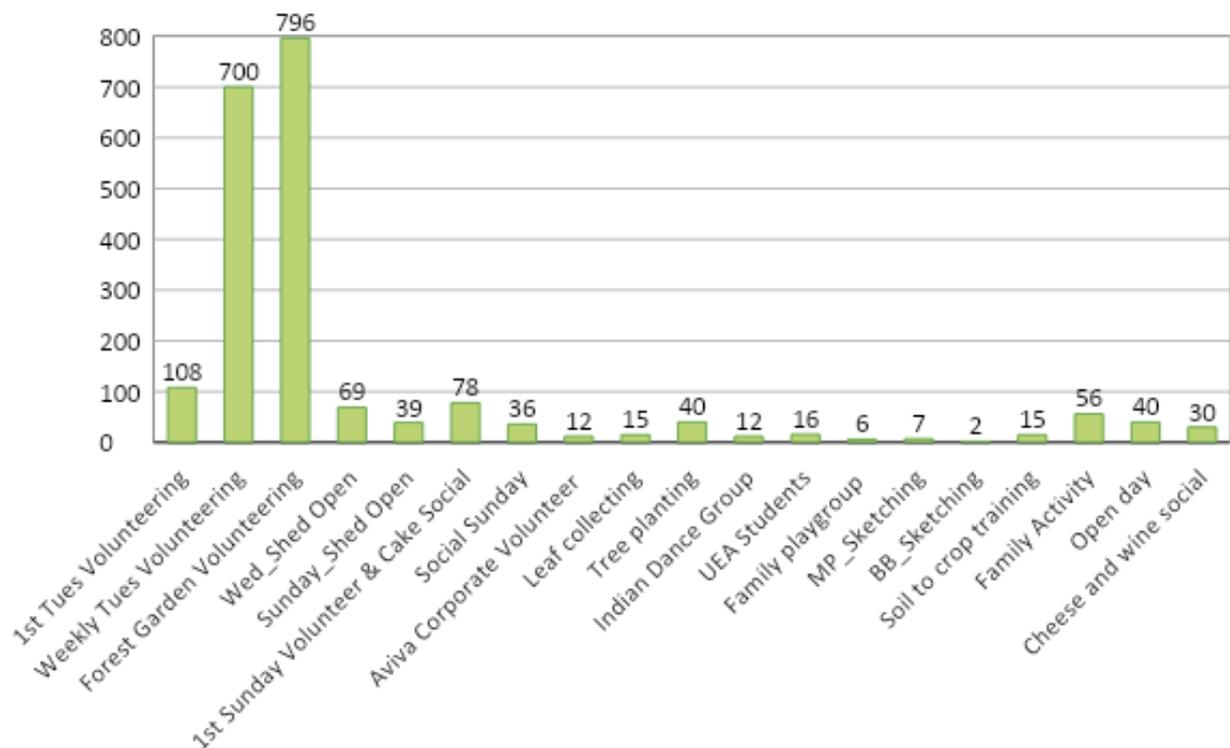
SLI Membership by Age in 2020-2021



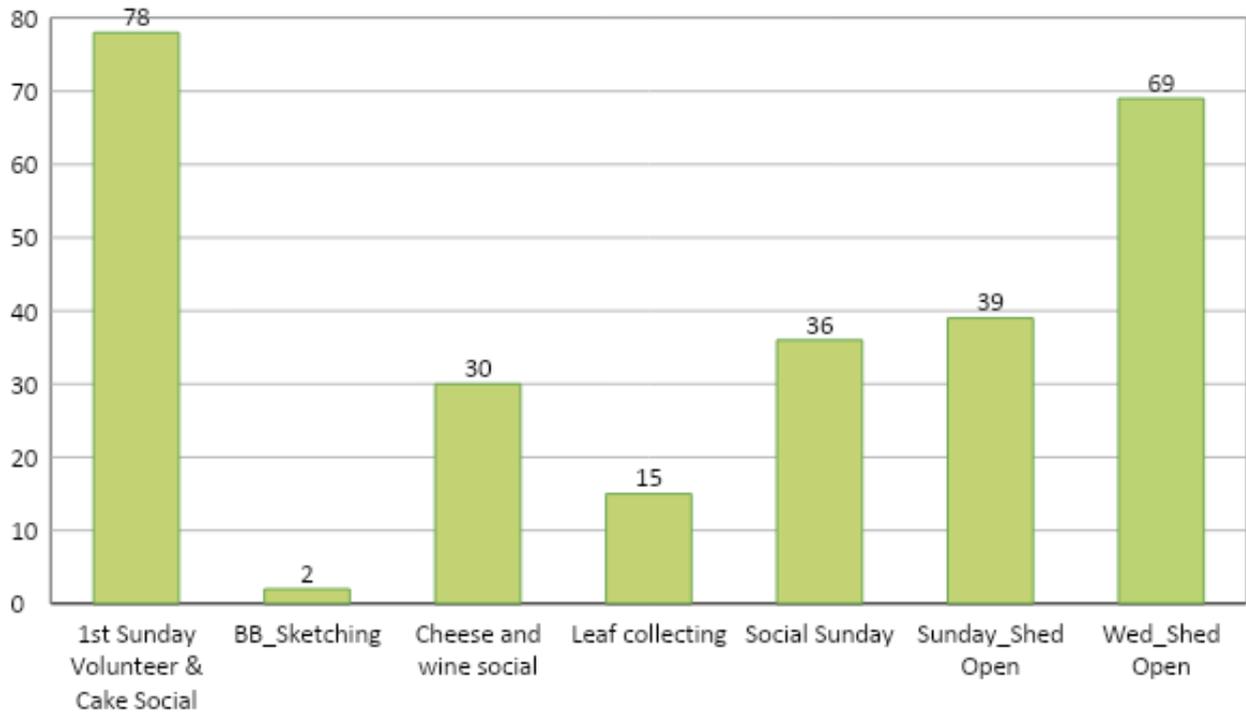
Number of members per postcode in 2020-2021



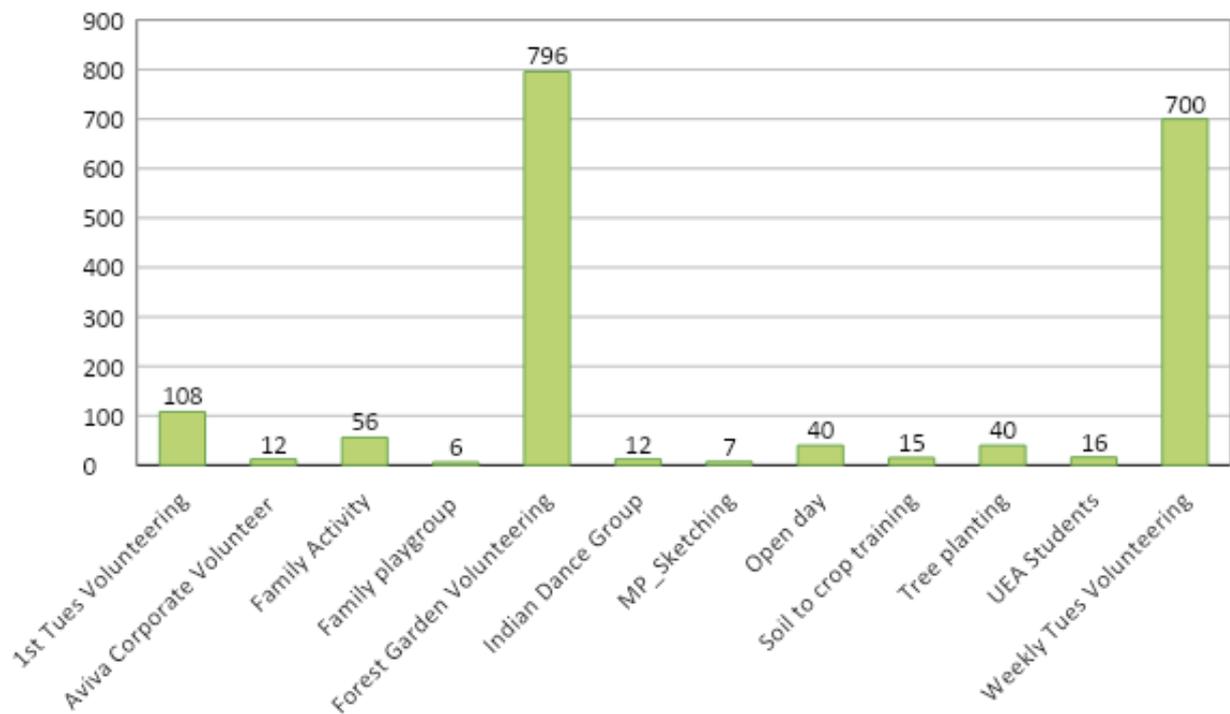
Number of people visiting SLI in 2020-2021



Number of people visiting Bluebell in 2020-2021



Number of people visiting Marlpit in 2020-2021



Activities

Members having access to our sites during Covid restrictions has been extremely important this year. For some members it was the only outdoor space they had access to. Many members said how much this supported their mental wellbeing. Members were able to continue gardening which promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. Volunteering events were arranged to ensure social distancing was observed. As restrictions eased the regular twice weekly volunteering at both sites resumed. There has been a big demand for growing plots from the public and we had waiting lists at both sites. New plots were established at Marlpit.

The wellbeing garden has been designed and planting has begun. Areas to grow flowers have been established and flowers for cutting, dying and eating have been grown.

The series of training videos was completed and this is available on our website. The face to face programme has restarted and was well attended by many newer members.

Shared meals stopped because of Covid restrictions but have now resumed on a monthly basis at both sites. A small team takes turns to cook a hot meal for volunteers once a month at Marlpit. Cookery club sessions stopped when restricted numbers in the hired kitchen meant it was impractical. Members are keen to set up alternative outdoor facilities for simple cooking.

We ran activities for school children during summer holiday introducing them to the delights of nature and the magic of growing plants. And we continued our very popular candle making workshop using our own beeswax. Members have been invited to run informal pop-up sessions to share a skill or enthusiasm with others. We held an open day for friends and family to share the delights of our Marlpit site and were entertained by a variety of musicians from among the SLI family.



Social events have restarted with the cheese and wine evening and potatoes round the bonfire event being well attended though some members are still cautious about attending events due to Covid.

Our group plots continue to be well used by community groups involved in education and mental health. A homeschooling group visited Marlpit to take advantage of outdoor learning.

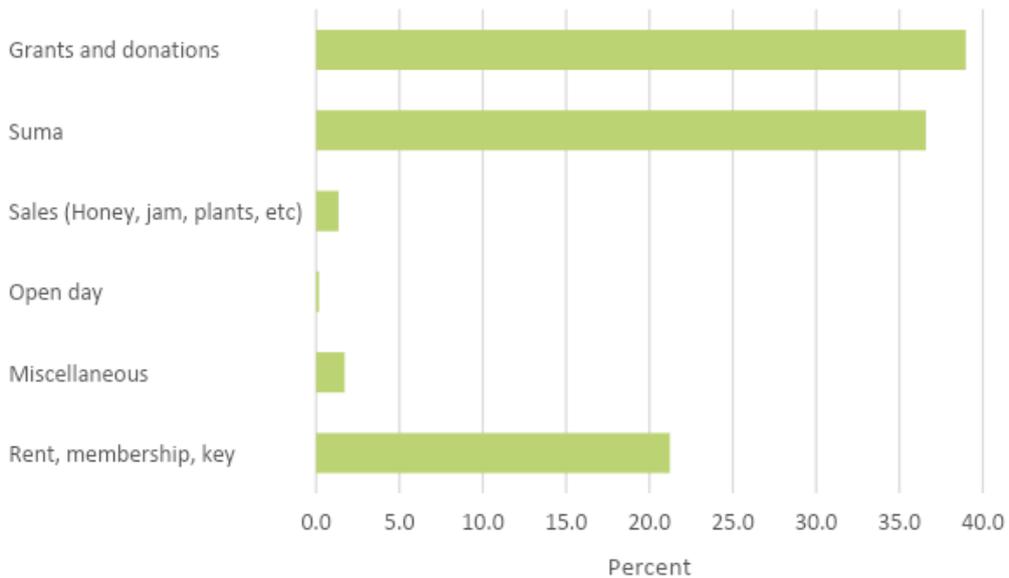
Our day-to-day work carries on with members looking after their own mini plots and joining in work on communal areas.

SLI attended Edible East and Science Week events at the Forum in Norwich. Our stands attracted lots of attention and visitors had some hands-on experiences with making and growing. Regular visits from the volunteers at AVIVA have resumed.

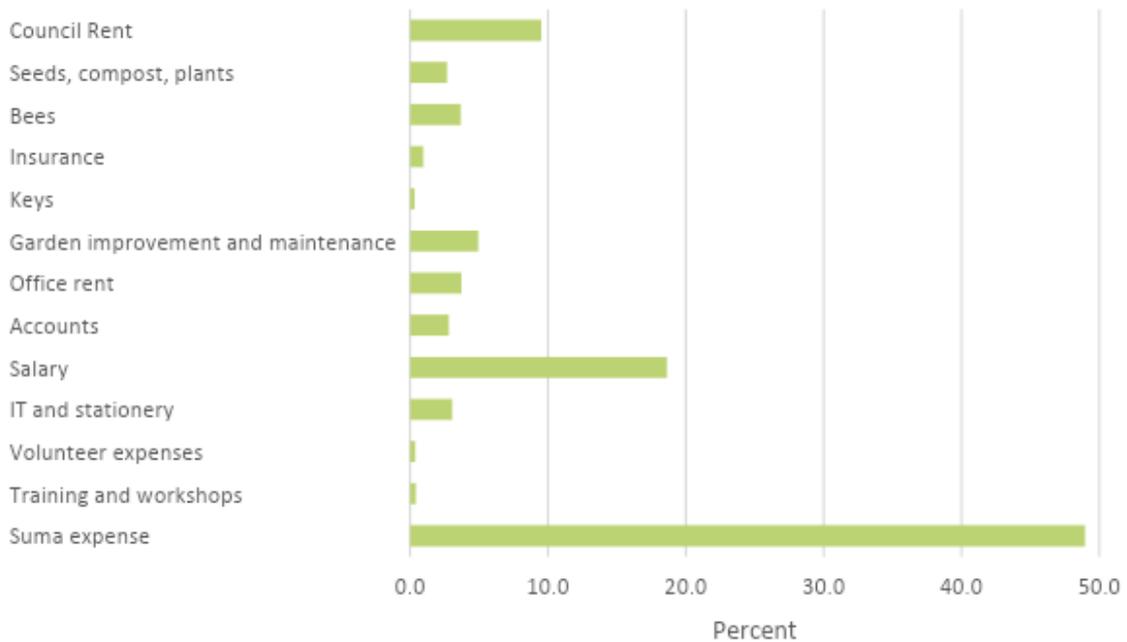
Finance

Total income for our financial / reporting year October 2020 - September 2021 was £31,727.45 of which nearly 40% was from grants and donations. We spent £22,041.80 most of which was spent on Suma, followed by salaries, overheads and garden maintenance (please see indicative charts below).

SLI Income 2020-2021



SLI Expenditure 2020-2021



Structure, governance and management

Following the retirement of the programme manager, Mahesh Pant, in November 2020 the trustees implemented their planned management strategy taking oversight and responsibility for different aspects of SLI and building teams of members to support the practical work. These teams and individuals have already taken on some responsibility for running day to day aspects of the schemes very successfully.

The part-time office manager is the only paid member of staff and she currently works mostly from home but is in the office once a month.

The trustees, Rochelle Wilson, Anne Marie Steward, Peter Medhurst and Paul Nicholson, were joined during the year by co-opted trustees Viji Moorthie, Rose Baulcombe and Julian Pitt. Paul Nicholson resigned in October 2020 and Rochelle Wilson resigned in September 2021. We thank them both for all their work on behalf of SLI.

SLI is regularly approached by a variety of external bodies offering and asking for support. Trustees held an ethos review meeting in the previous accounting year, and use this to guide decision making.

Future Plans

The trustees will review the existing management structure in the next six months to assess its effectiveness and how sustainable it is.

An outdoor cooking area and wellbeing garden are being developed at Marlpit.

Both sites will have a land management review to highlight areas that can be developed to support the diversity of flora and fauna.

The trustees are looking into the paperwork regarding covenant etc on the land to establish a better clarity on it.

Farewell

Our founder and long term project manager Mahesh Pant retired from SLI in November 2020. He spends part of the year in Nepal but is a welcome summer visitor and retains a life membership. We celebrated our long and fruitful association with him with a tree planting farewell session at Marlpit. He likened the saplings we were planting to his time with SLI. Something that had been started and nurtured and was now being handed over to others to mature and flourish. Thank you Mahesh for your enduring vision and encouragement.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Tudor Trust, Norwich City Council and National Gardens Trust for supporting our work by providing grants and donations during the year. Our thanks also go to volunteers from AVIVA who have helped us maintain our community gardens. Last but not least - a big thank you to all our trustees, members and volunteers whose unwavering support helps keep the organisation running.



Sustainable Living Initiative

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Registered Charity No. 1154190