

SUSTAINABLE LIVING INITIATIVE



Annual Report October 2015 - September 2016
Promoting sustainable living through collective practical action



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Introduction

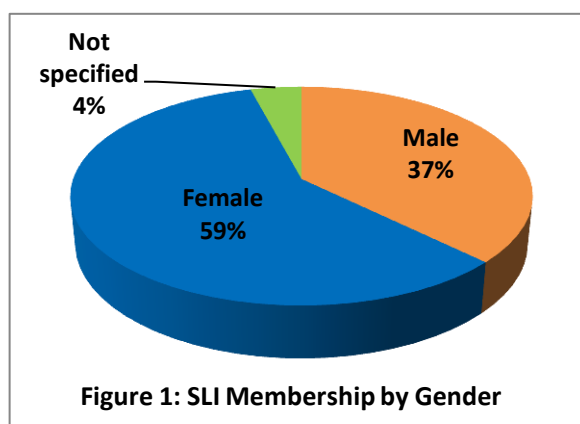
The Sustainable Living Initiative (SLI) is a registered charity run by Trustees and [its office is at Marlpit Community Centre](#) on Hellesdon Road. Started in 2004 as a pilot project, it now runs two community gardens in Norwich.

SLI is a membership-based organisation and is also open to all who support its objectives and wish to be involved in its activities. Young people under 18 are welcome to join but parental consent is required. SLI membership shows your commitment to promoting environmental awareness and sharing resources in improving our quality of life. It's a forum for discussion on issues related to the connectedness between people and the wider environment, sharing ideas and skills and initiating collaborative practical projects in growing and using food sustainably.

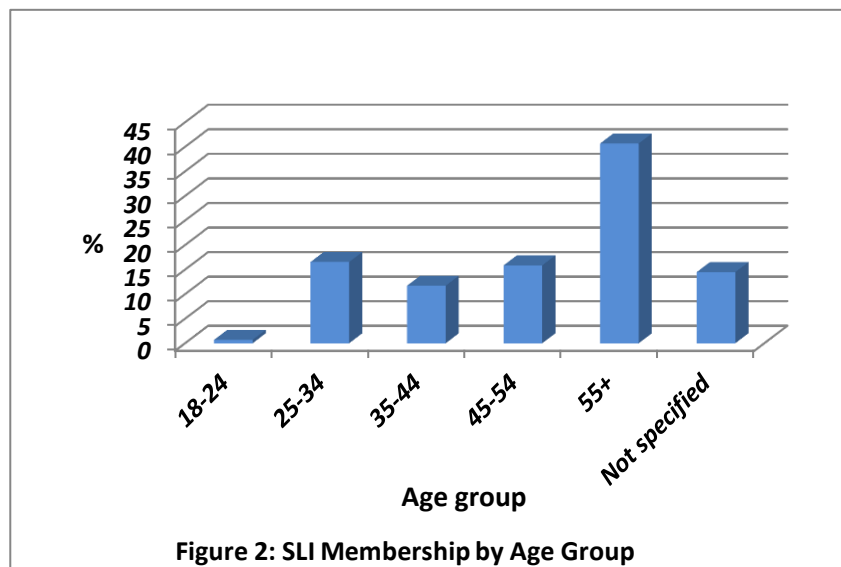
SLI in 2015-16 at a glance

Following the decision of the AGM held in July 2015, the SLI membership includes not only the growers but regular volunteers and ordinary members.

There were a total of 145 members, the majority (59%) female (figure 1). The majority of our members (40%) were over 55 years old (figure 2). About one in ten members reported to have some sort of disability. Sixty-four per cent of SLI members were reported to be White British which also reflects the ethnic composition of the County, Norfolk. The rest of the members were European, Asian, Irish and mixed race.



Following the decision of the SLI to start a new project at Marlpit in 2011, a team structure was introduced to manage the GO² Bluebell Scheme. This team approach is still evolving and we need to streamline the team and its working practices in the



changed context: fewer growers at GO² Bluebell, SLI's increasing focus on Marlpit and the opening up of SLI membership to non-growers.

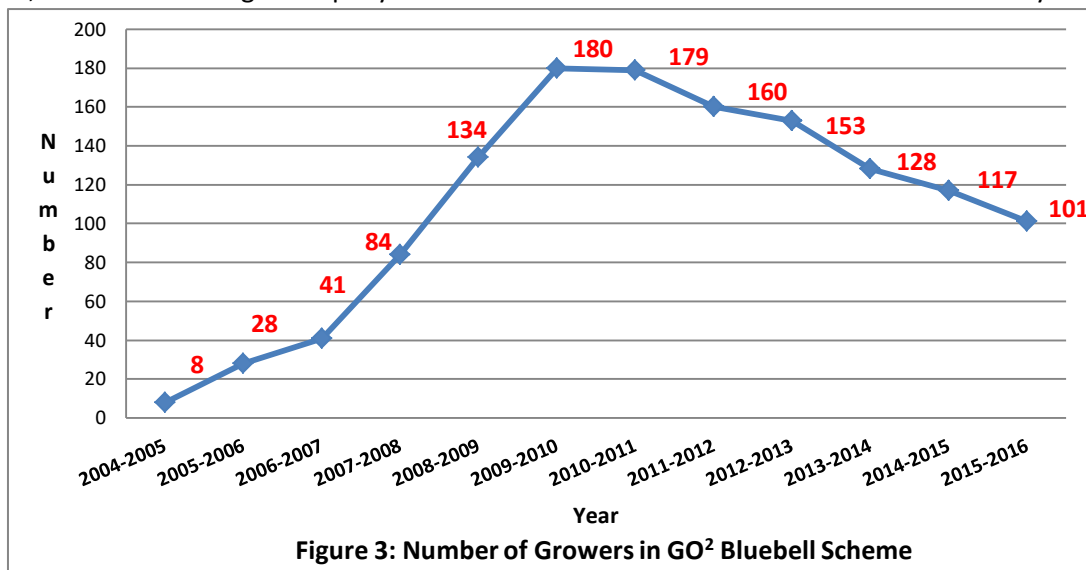
The newer scheme at Marlpit has just completed its third year. It is a much larger site, at 7 acres, and is owned by SLI so we have been able to create more than a food producing space. In addition to conventional individual plots, it is home to a wildlife area, a herb garden, bee hives, an orchard and a soft fruit area. It is run differently from

Bluebell, with co-ordinator, Mahesh Pant, taking the lead, but with Tish Kerkham taking responsibility for bee-keeping and the planning and management of the Forest Garden. The site-specific report is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Grow-Our-Own (GO²) at Bluebell South Allotments

Grow-Our-Own (GO²) at Bluebell South Allotment was the site of the first ever pilot scheme of SLI. As the figure 3 suggests, the GO² scheme grew rapidly between 2007 and 2010 and after that it is on a steady decline.

This reflects the lack of demand for allotments plots in recent years, a view shared by the Norwich City Council's Allotment Officer.



Reports from Team Leaders

Admin team

Christine Wilson

The third year of the 7-person management team has been very good, despite ill health for some of us. Jim Froud does the all-important website but had to resign from running the newsletter due to pressure of work. It should be said that not everyone was reading it! Special thanks to Rita who continued to arrange the shed rota for Wednesday and Sunday mornings. There is always a team leader present and one other, usually a member of the Admin team so thanks to Roger, Vicky, Jordan, Janet J, Joanne, Harriet, Roberta, and Ian. Apart from receiving visitors and potential members, there are always weeding and watering jobs, but it is also a companionable morning with coffee/tea and sometimes cake.

Enquiries about plots come in steadily but not as frequently as last year and numbers are down; this despite word of mouth, advertising on the Council's community noticeboard and in the online forum, Streetlife. We speculate as to why this is and have decided that allotments are not 'flavour of the month' at the moment. As a result we have only had about 18 new growers. People who had not renewed by 1 October, despite reminders, were deemed to have left.

We have 'returned' two outlying plots (i.e. not in the central part of our scheme) to the Council, 33A and 128A, as we have several vacant strips centrally and it is not economic to pay for half-empty plots. People on the two we gave up either said they were leaving or were glad to move nearer the centre. Our chasing-up system for members with overgrown plots has worked very well. I alert Laura who writes and generally, sometimes after a second email, gets a response.

Mahesh and I have continued to try to improve written communications while keeping them short. Amalgamating paperwork with Marlpit Community Garden didn't always work to the best for GO² and we have now produced a separate GO² leaflet. We are also producing a monthly email to GO² members which will focus on GO² matters.



The Open Day took place on a warm, sunny Sunday, 4 October, 2015, the deadline for renewal of membership. Many people came and enjoyed good food, sampled pressed apple juice and generally had a

good time. The weather was superb and the food excellent. We took over £100 in donations towards food and about £50 in money from selling jam and chutney.

Many thanks to those who helped out with renewals in the shed, those who provided food, and those who helped generally. In eight years of open days, I would say it was the best. In addition some people helped with pressing apples and pears and those who sampled the juice must surely agree that it was delicious.

Allotmenting on a small scale such as in GO² ticks all the boxes for health and wellbeing: exercise, fresh air, organically grown vegetables, and companionship, and joining such a scheme would help alleviate the isolation, poor eating habits and physical inactivity that we hear is such a scourge in our society.

Once more my thanks for a most enjoyable year to a great group of team leaders and the many stalwart helpers and supporters who make GO² such a fantastic project, and, of course, Mahesh who started it all!!

Seeds and plants

Tessa Phillips

Firstly I would like to thank everyone who held the fort while I was incapacitated during the early part of the year.

The raised beds and green boxes in the polytunnel were refreshed with compost and manure and a trial of growing more in large pots was started. Cold wet weather in the early part of the year meant we got off to a slow start, but as the weather warmed up Bridget, Rochelle, Shena and the two Janets worked hard in the greenhouse sowing hundreds of seeds to produce a good supply of summer vegetables including courgettes, various squashes and sweet corn. Despite the slugs and snails the polytunnel again produced a variety of produce including a good-sized aubergine, lots of tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers and a couple of very tasty melons called Outdoor Wonder as suggested by Monty Don. The large pot trial gave good results and even larger pots from Marlpit will be used next year; aubergines, peppers and chillies seemed to do particularly well in them. We also trialled three varieties of sweet potato: Murasaki, Beauregard, and Bonita and we will be digging these up soon to see the results. For the last two years an early crop of broad beans has successfully been grown in the polytunnel. This will be attempted again this year, but if we have a harsh winter, the deteriorating state of the cover of the polytunnel may make this less successful.

We fortunately didn't get tomato blight in the polytunnel. Whether this was due to the mainly blight resistant tomato varieties we grew or the extra ventilation from the holes in the outer skin we will never know!

I would like to thank the watering team, Laura, Shena and Janet Ede for their help in keeping all the plants in the greenhouse and polytunnel well hydrated during the hot weather. Without them we would not have had such a good crop; and Mandy has again done a great job in making available the supply of seeds ready for sowing at the appropriate times during the year, and for putting out the relevant information about planting.

The monthly/bi-monthly newsletter made it difficult to let everyone know as soon as plants were ready to plant out and I know some people missed out this year, but hopefully the new e-mail communication will prove better next year, as it is planned to send it out when required so the information should be up to date.

Food team

Moira Froud

This year has been a busy year for the food group with regular lunches on the first Sunday of each month, with members bringing their cooked produce to Bluebell. We also supported special events – such as the 2015 Christmas Party and cooking-skills sessions at Marlpit Community Centre and the Open Days at Marlpit Community Garden and Bluebell Grow Our Own.

Christmas Party 2015: The three-course Christmas lunch was cooked on the premises at Marlpit and served to more than 30 members. It was a very successful event but a major undertaking. We will provide a lunch again next year.



Foodshare Sundays: These have been held regularly on the first Sunday of the month at 1pm at Bluebell Allotments, and are usually well supported.

Growers have used a variety of recipes with ingredients grown on the allotments when possible.

Cooking sessions: Held at Marlpit Community Centre and hosted by members willing to share their expertise and when the opportunity arises. We have been able to learn how to cook Lebanese, Mediterranean and Indian dishes. Thanks to those willing cooks who broadened our knowledge with surprising and delicious dishes.

Jams, chutneys and honey: Our harvest has been made into a variety of jams and chutneys with help from Mahesh, Jane G and Bridget. Honey collected by Tish and her helpers, from the hives at Marlpit was put into labelled jars and sold at events, adding to our funds.

Bluebell communal beds: Thanks to Peter Anderson, who tended five strips for GO2 until recently when, due to ill-health, he has been unable to continue. We are considering how best to manage these plots.

Compost team

Phil Young

We're heading towards winter so the need for compost and horse manure should be fairly limited. Nonetheless we currently have a fairly healthy amount of horse manure located as you walk down towards the red shed and ready to use compost is available in the Bay next to the red shed. There's also plenty of leaf mould located around the apple tree next to the compost area near the main shed. This leaf mould is split into two sections. One section is uncovered and ready to use (it having rotted down).

From spring onwards the horse manure does seem to go alarmingly quickly. I would again encourage people to use the compost which has rotted down and is ready for use. We've had a few work days over the last year sorting out the compost areas. These workdays did produce a turnout sufficient to get the required work done. However these days do tend to produce the same faces and I would encourage anyone who has not yet attended to try and attend future work days which will be arranged from time to time.

Land and water team

Mark Newman

A number of objectives have been accomplished. Three Blue Badge parking spaces have been signed with a space soon to be allocated for dropping off and collecting materials. This short stay area is next to the paved path leading to members' strips.

It is good to report the connection of the rainwater feed to the system. Connecting required the

employment of an engineer to climb into the four holding tanks to install the connections and set the system to comply with statutory regulations. The system can now provide eight dip-tanks with grey water or in times of drought mains water.

From late autumn of 2015 to September 2016 a corrugated tin shed was built. Measuring approximately 2 x 3 metres its purpose is to store specialist tools and flammable liquids. The following allotmenters helped and gave encouragement to the build: Peter, Frank, Roberta, Andres, Joan, Tessa, Jane and Juyna.

In the 2015 report I wrote of the joy of seeing well managed plots. The ingenuity of growers to engineer with string, cane and netting, and an adapted pop up tent, structures to do battle with cabbage fly, pesky pigeons and slugs is marvellous to behold.

Throughout the year Philip and Juyna made a difference to the Land and Water duties of land husbandry. Thank you for your work and support.

Tools and maintenance team

Jane Graham

We had a very successful tool and shed day on the 6th March with a full count of tools, shed cleaning and tool sharpening. A few discrepancies were noted, due in all probability to breakages although the expensive digging tool was still not found. The front of the large admin /seed shed was painted. Throughout the growing season it was noted that the general maintenance of the blue shed was not being done by the users and consequently the team leader with another member took on this task. Tools were left uncleaned and often found lying on the floor. The small tools remained in good supply although hand trowels still disappear.

Sunday 6th November end-of-year tool day saw six volunteers turn up and we were able to inventory, clean and sharpen all the tools along with the new equipment housed in the metal shed, which has been handed over to the tool team. The sheds were cleaned and checked for major damage (none apparent) some tools were broken and have been replaced with donated tools and hand tools were replaced or redistributed.

Overall there would appear to be sufficient equipment for everyone's needs in the coming year and in good order. The metal shed houses mechanical equipment which can only be used by a trained operative of which two members are already trained, more members to be trained up at a later date. The composting toilet remains in good order and continues to be cleaned and monitored by the team leader.

Training and mentoring

Sophie Chollet

Our "team" activity was low this year. No members volunteered to be in the training team, so it was just me with the occasional help of other team leaders. I organised four skill-sharing sessions, held on Sundays. They were advertised in the newsletter.

28 February, soft fruit pruning: few people participated. One member needed help to prune a black currant on her plot. Then Christine and Mark helped pruning the fruit bushes on the common area. After that I decided to wait for better weather to organise skill-sharing sessions.

24 April, how to improve your soil: five people participated. We had a good talk about compost and green manure, followed by a visit to each other's plot.

28 May, how to tackle couch grass: no turn up. Note that it was a bank holiday week-end.

26 June, make and use your own fertiliser: the objective was to show how to make and use comfrey and nettle tea. Nobody turned up for the session but I showed it to two members who were working on their plot on that day. Note that we have a container with comfrey tea ready for use between the green houses. One cup of fertilizer should be diluted in one watering can of water.

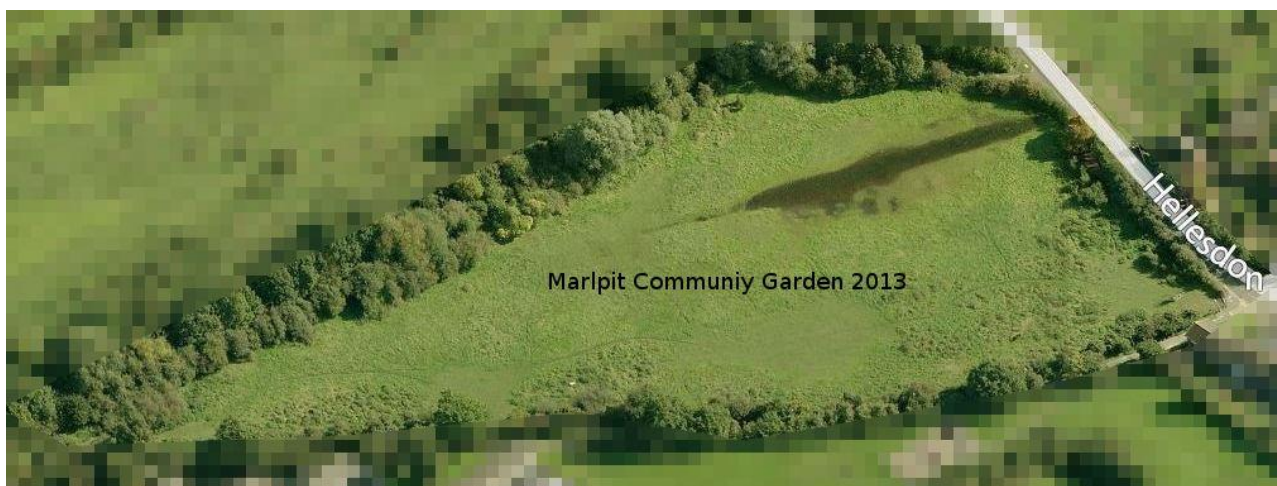
The overall turnout was low. However each time we met we had a good time and learnt something. So I wish to carry on next year. For better success I absolutely need some help. Members do not need to be specialists to help. They can help with the organisation such as advertising (sending email, printing posters, talking to other members on site) or facilitation of session. We offer free training to anyone willing to help facilitate skill-sharing sessions.

Given the difficulty of the food team to keep up with common growing areas (demonstration plots and soft-fruit area), I suggest I team up with them next year and organise practical sessions on the demonstration plots as well as weeding on the fruit bushes area.

I wish to build up a new team – I mean a real team – next year in order to offer more training opportunities and get help when I've had my second baby, but also to find someone to take over my role in a year's time... since this might well be my last year in Norwich!

Marlpit Community Garden

Marlpit Community Garden (MCG) has completed its third year. What we have managed to achieve in such a short period of time is remarkable (see before and after pictures of MCG below)! In June 2013, it was a completely empty piece of land; now it has a thriving vegetable growing area producing enough food to feed lunch to an average of 10 volunteers each week, a massive soft-fruit area which produced far more fruit than we could use last summer, an established orchard which will start producing fruit soon, a herb garden with well over 100 herb varieties to use for cooking as well as for medicine, a wild-flower meadow, a well-developed forest garden which will soon be supplying plenty of fruit, nuts, vegetables, spices and coppicing products and half a dozen bee-hives which produced 90 pounds of honey last summer.



Thirty-three growers including Grow-at-Home members along with two groups – Mancroft Advice Project(MAP) and Early Action Network (EAN) plus Julian Support used the facilities available at the Garden for their members.

Other activities undertaken during the year included activities for children during the half-term, summer holiday activities for parents and children from Earlham Early Years and hosting of Networking events. We also ran practical training sessions on growing and using fruit, vegetables and herbs for our members as well as for non-members including Norwich City Council allotment holders.

Activities

Marlpit Community Garden Honeybees Report October 2016

Tish Kerkham, Beekeeper

This season has been an exciting one. Our apiary grew to seven colonies and we harvested 90lbs of honey. We also caught our first swarm.

Two of our three colonies of bees survived winter 2015/2016. The third, which was suffering from a viral disease, chronic bee paralysis, didn't make it.

Because of the mild weather, the queens continued to lay eggs throughout the winter. The cold spring meant that I was unable to inspect the hives until May when I found queen cells - a sign that the bees were already preparing to swarm.

Swarm control methods divided the two colonies giving us four hives of bees. Then the Beaman family donated a new hive. Shortly after installing bees in this we were given a hive of bees by Gareth Lewis, who had to give up beekeeping, bringing our number of colonies up to six.

A few days later I was preparing to inspect the bees when I heard buzzing above my head – one of our colonies had decided to swarm. I followed the bees to where they settled in our tall perimeter hedge. An emergency call brought Jim armed with a cardboard box and a sheet and together we managed to capture the swarm which I rehoused later that day. This brought us up to seven colonies. Later I united two of them, so we are going into this winter with six.

Our new tangential honey extractor allowed us to extract the honey when it was ready instead of waiting for the loan of the Norfolk Beekeepers' Association's extractor.

This year we bought several protective suits in smaller sizes which made it possible for me to show bees at work in their hives to children as well as adults. I also developed games and activities which proved popular on our bee activity day and with other groups of young people.

In July, I took the British Beekeeping Association's Basic Assessment in beekeeping. This consisted of an hour's practical test examining a hive of bees while answering questions in four areas: 1. Manipulation and Equipment, 2. Natural History and Beekeeping, 3. Swarming, Swarm control and Effects, 4. Pests and Diseases. I passed the exam, and learnt a lot in the process, but not as much as I have learnt through observing and managing our expanding apiary on a day to day basis throughout the season.

Plan

I plan to maintain five or six colonies for the time being. I want to continue to learn how to manage healthy honeybees that will pollinate our trees, vegetables and wildflowers. I hope to work with members who have expressed interest in learning about honeybees on a regular basis. We will also continue to give adults and children the chance to see the fascinating life of the bees inside their hives and offer more opportunities to learn about bees.

Marlpit Forest Garden

Tish Kerkham

It seems a long time since the bulk of tree planting for the Marlpit Forest Garden was done in January 2015. In January 2016, we continued planting the canopy layer with mulberry, peach, persimmon, almond, cherry, sweet chestnut, yellowhorn, blue beans and a Siberian pea tree.



Shrubs also planted were chokeberry, goji, jostaberry, Worcesterberry, bog myrtle and manuka. Grape vines are now climbing up the fence of the bee sanctuary alongside a new variety of climbing rose, the Keith-Maughan rose that was donated in memory of Keith Maughan by his son.

Most of our trees and shrubs are doing well although we lost the blue beans and Siberian pea tree. Sweet chestnuts, persimmon and mulberries have also proved difficult to establish but one sweet chestnut and persimmon and two mulberry trees survived. The rest of the fruit trees are developing satisfactorily and the willows, hazels and Italian alders have put on a lot of growth.

The crocuses we planted in the autumn proved to be a popular source of pollen and nectar for bumble bees and honey bees in March.

Visitors in the summer might have struggled to see where the Forest Garden was among the rampant growth of couch grass and nettles. Work during late summer and early autumn clearing around the trees together with their natural growth has had an impact and now the forest garden is starting to take shape. In terms of products, it is still early days – we have eaten a few mulberries and cherries, the two quince trees produced three fruit each and the Szechuan pepper tree is producing spicy pepper-like fruit.

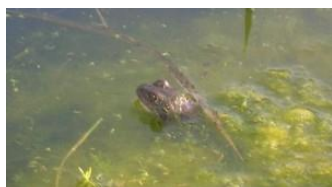


We are in the process of entering all the plants onto an aerial map of the forest garden. This is useful to give an overview of what is there. I used it to give a presentation about our garden at the very informative Agroforestry Research Trust seminar that I attended in September.

A new regular volunteer, Aaron Wheaton, joined us in August. Aaron has a degree in ecology, training and experience in horticulture and a particular interest in forest gardening. His contribution is invaluable.

Pond life at Marlpit Community Garden

The pond we dug in February 2015 near to the bee sanctuary in Marlpit Forest Garden has been attracting wild life all summer. Bees, wasps and butterflies have been seen drinking the water, dragonflies hovering above it and water boatmen swimming through the water weed. Frogs and toads, big and small, have been seen in and around the pond and baby newts were found there in October, showing that we have created an environment where they can breed successfully.



Herb Garden

Dan Wheals

The Herbal Path that takes visitors from the entrance to the centre of the garden has been flourishing. So much so that with the wild flowers on the other side of the path there has been a verdant jungle to get through.

2016 has seen the start of a plan to double the width of the herbal area, moving plants back away from the paving slabs to keep the paving clear and having a grass path as another route. Dan, the medical herbalist, has been re organising plants and dividing them to make the planting clearer by forming a larger block of plants. With several volunteers we are mulching the beds with woodchip to try and keep maintenance to a minimum. Labels are always hard to keep from fading so this is going to be the chief mission for 2017 which it is hoped will encourage folk to be confident in picking parsley, chives etc. With a regular monthly herb gardening session, volunteers know they can help and learn at the same time.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we need to put effort into controlling more of the weeds through mulching and use of green manure to provide growing areas for more perennial ground cover plants. We

can start to introduce perennial climbers. Clear labelling of plants is also a priority. We will continue to develop the paths and the “clearing” near the pond. We also need to think about ways to bring members and the public into the forest garden, make it a pleasant place to spend time and explain what we are trying to do.

Training

Following the success of the monthly training programme on Growing and Using Fruit, Vegetables and Herbs in 2014-15, we continued our training in 2015-16, with additional sessions on growing and using herbs. Each training session lasted for three hours followed by home-cooked lunch made from seasonal produce grown organically in Marlpit Community Garden. These training sessions were practical and we have received very positive feedback from all the participants. However, fewer people participated in our training programme this year compared to the last year. As a result, we will be reducing the number of sessions from 24 this year to 8 next year. We are also planning to run a special short course on landscaping.

Below is an excerpt from two case studies written by the participants.

MORE FLOWERS – Lavender, Chamomile, Calendula, Meadowsweet, Mullein, St Johns Wort, with Alex Hobbs

After a delicious and filling lunch at the Centre, a few of us were able to totter back to the garden to find out from Alex the tastes and health benefits of many types of flowers and herbs on our site. It was worth the trip as Alex has a fantastic knowledge of all the plants on our site – as well as many more. We found out that we could eat or make a tea out of plants and how that they could target various ailments that we all suffer from –



colds and coughs, aches and pains. My home now has lavender hanging in the kitchen



that I will use (a bit) in the next loaf of bread I make. Alex was kind enough for us to have a couple of Marlpit Garden take-aways: a St Johns Wort skin remedy and a herbal infusion in either oil or vinegar.

Paul Nicholson

Gardening training at Marlpit Community Garden: Growing and pruning soft fruit bushes and fruit trees, with Jon Darby

Growing and pruning fruit bushes and trees was the fascinating subject of training session at Marlpit and we were fortunate to be instructed by Jon Darby, an experienced and friendly horticultural lecturer. Mahesh provided detailed notes and Amy made us a lovely lunch so I found the morning to be very interesting and enjoyable.

First up, apple and pear trees: how to plant them and about pollinators. Non self-pollinating ones need another variety nearby and so, when buying these trees, we should look at the number on the label. This is between 1 and 7 so, for example, if we buy a tree with a 5 on the label then we should also get one with a 4, 5 or 6, to ensure they flower at the same time. Orchards put in crab apples which have lots of blossom. Tips included spraying flowers with water before a frost which reduces damage. Apple and pear trees are now ‘budded’ onto rootstock and later Jon showed us how to do this.

Next we heard about stone-fruit trees: peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums and damsons. We had a demonstration of how to plant a four-foot plum tree, the right level in the soil, correct staking (drive it in between the roots when you can see them!), tying a support, and heeling in. A good mulch around the tree, but not against the bark, will keep the soil at a more constant temperature.

We moved on to pruning which is essential to maintain good cropping fruit trees and bushes but can sometimes seem a bit daunting. Jon showed us various tools he uses: secateurs, loppers, pruning saws and shears, which to use when and how to keep them sharp. One myth busted is not to cut the stem at an angle, but across it, and to cut above an outward facing bud. Soft fruit bushes and apples and pears are pruned between December and February, while plum, greengage and nectarines should be pruned in spring and summer to avoid the dreaded silver-leaf disease. Summer-fruited raspberry is pruned after fruiting to allow the new growth and autumn-fruited



is pruned to 10 cm above the ground in December-January. Gooseberry bushes can be pruned in two ways, the easiest being by removing old branches and allowing new healthy growth. Fruit bushes should be cup-shaped with room for air to circulate.



These monthly training courses (which are also open to the public) offer much more than the title suggests.
Christine Wilson

Events

During the year 2015-16, we hosted a number of events for adults as well as children. Below is a summary of our activities and events that took place in Marlpit Community Garden.

Volunteers from Lily Pharmaceuticals, on 1st October, 2015

Lily Pharmaceuticals send members of their world-wide workforce to perform volunteer work. On October 1st, four volunteers and their team leader came to the Marlpit Community Garden. They worked very hard all day, putting in the twenty five 3 metre posts needed for the fruit bed netting. Holes were dug 1 metre deep, which is almost exactly the length of a Marlpit children's green spade. (Alternatively, deep enough for the smallest team member to get soil in her armpit!) The posts were inserted, carefully lined up, wire stretched across their tops and sides, and secured with staples. The netting went over in the Spring. The group worked with a good will throughout, and deserve a big "Thank You!" for a job well done.
Teresa

The soft fruit cage - Volunteers Day October 2015



Pumpkin Day at MCG on 31st October, 2015

Pumpkin day on 31st October at Marlpit Community Garden was celebrated by children's activities based around Halloween and a delicious meal made from our own seasonal produce.

Mahesh was at the garden early to harvest pumpkins, potatoes and squashes. Jana Hrusovska organised activities for children including messy pumpkin play, potato cut printing, making outside spiders, face painting and a nature trail.

A number of children with their parents dropped in during the morning and had a great time trying out the different games. Some visitors explored the garden and watched our bees busily bringing home nectar and pollen from the late flowering ivy.



It was a short walk to the Marlpit Community Centre to sample the pumpkin curry cooked from our own home grown produce.

SPRING BULB Planting, 3rd November 2015



Volunteers at Marlpit Community Garden planted 1,500 crocus bulbs on Tuesday 3rd November. The bulbs, 1000 *tommasinius* (Woodland Crocus) and 500 (*tommasinis*) cream beauty were chosen as being particularly appealing to bees and will provide our honey bees with



nectar and pollen on warm days in early spring. Most of the bulbs were planted near to the bee sanctuary and others will brighten up the entrance to the garden.

Christmas Minimarket at Marlpit Arms on Saturday 12th December 2015



The Marlpit Arms is still in the process of restoration but the Christmas Minimarket held on 12th December was a warm and cheerful occasion. Mulled wine was served in the marquee and we were among the local organisations entertained by a folk band. Among the other stallholders were the Friends of



Train Wood and Alec Steele, a young Norwich blacksmith, who was demonstrating his craft.

We donated a giant pumpkin and freshly picked vegetables from Marlpit Community Garden which were ingredients in the delicious soup and stews served in the pub itself.

Our sales of nicely presented jams and chutneys made by the GO² food group brought in £123 towards funds.

Half-Term - Bugs Day at MCG on 21st February 2016

"Accommodation available. Everything from luxury five star suites to hostel dormitory accommodation. Will appeal to a wide clientele - from woodlice to centipedes and spiders - not forgetting ladybirds, lacewings and solitary bees. Hedgehogs particularly welcome. No need to book - just turn up at the brand new Bugs Hotel at Marlpit Community Garden."



The first to view the property was a frog that hopped into the ground floor of the four-story hotel as soon as the pallets were put in place. He was carefully lifted out of the way as fifteen children, parents and



volunteers moved in to construct the hotel. Ursula Juta, who led the activity, had children into gardening gloves and busy foraging for natural materials and stuffing them into the gaps in the structure as soon as they arrived. Materials included canes, hogweed stalks, sunflower stalks, straw, wood with holes drilled in it, holey bricks, rolled up corrugated cardboard and fir cones. Roofing felt and tiles were placed on top and ivy planted to add a touch of greenery to the property.



A big thank you to the volunteers, parents, and above all to the children who worked together to make the day a success.

Volunteers Day at Marlpit Community Garden

On Friday 27th May, we were helped by over 90 volunteers from Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), Norwich. We provided refreshments, prepared tea and coffee and led the volunteers building compost-bins; weeding the herb-path; fencing the grazing area; weeding and repairing guards around orchard trees; fixing anti-bird netting over the soft-fruit area and re-covering the polytunnel with new polythene sheet.



This is the second time the volunteers from JLL have been to our Marlpit Community Garden. The weather turned out to be perfect and we managed to do so much in a day.



We would like to thank the volunteers from JLL, Sue from Employee Volunteering who along with her husband Tony worked so hard to make the day a success, Amy for making delicious refreshments, SLI members George, John, Alex, David, Jim and our regular volunteers for their tireless work.

Bees day: all about bees, half-term activities, 4th June 2016

It was a fun day for all ages to learn about the importance of bees for our food and the wider environment. Local parents and children came and joined in various activities including viewing bee hives. The account of one of the participants sums up how it went.

All about Bees by Lilly Beaman (7 years)



What a great day we had! The sun was shining, the flowers were blooming and the bees were buzzing. We played games, drew pictures, learnt interesting things about the bees and even danced like a bee to send messages.

Many children came and took part in the activities - even my little sister Daisy picked a flower and looked for pollen, and she is only 18 months!

Tish, the lady that organised it was very good - she

showed us tools we use to look after our bees - like the protective costume, smoker and a real bee honeycomb. She was also very kind to us, even when my little brother nearly ate the wax candle.



We had cakes and drinks and I was very happy that everyone liked our cupcakes- me and my mum decorated them with little bees and I cut all the leaves and daisies by myself!

A very great day! Thank you! [Lilly](#)

Marlpit Community Garden Open Day 2016



Our third Open Day on 25th June was a relaxed occasion attended by a steady stream of visitors.

The three sheep and their 'furry friends' were a big draw. Local children and their parents headed straight for the animals where they had the opportunity to touch a snake as well as stroking the sheep, rabbits and a guinea pig.

They participated in activities provided by 'Angelica's Rainbow' before heading up to the gazebo for refreshments.

Homemade rhubarb cakes were provided along with elderflower cordial made from Marlpit flowers. Honey from our own bees was offered for sale, but the limited supplies sold out fast.

As well as chatting and having their questions answered in the gazebo, visitors were shown round the garden by Mahesh.

We were lucky with the weather for most of the event, but finished early due to heavy rain.



Networking Events

One the evening of 7th July, MCG volunteers played host



to Grapes Hill Community Garden volunteers. On a warm sunny evening we showed them around and shared a delicious home-made supper using produce grown in Marlpit Community Garden.



We also hosted an Outdoor Project Network Event organised by Norwich City Council on 12 July,



2016. More than 40 people from various environment related organisations attended the event. The Citizen, Norwich City Council's quarterly magazine, had this to say about the event: "Held at Marlpit Community Garden – a really special site which has allotments, bees, wildflowers, fruit trees, sheep and more – it provided a chance for people to meet over refreshments".

What the members and Volunteers say about the Marlpit Community Garden

A place of exchange and sharing, Guillaume Gobin

I went to Norwich for one month to improve my English. I asked my host family if I could work as a volunteer in a community in order to be with English people every day and to offer my services in a field that is close to my heart.

I was lucky because my host Lucy Galvin invited me to meet Mahesh Pant of the Marlpit Community Garden. Mahesh manages the organisation of that community. He invited me to come every Tuesday, the day when the people of the community meet to work in the garden. Having English lessons every morning, I could only arrive at noon. My day in the garden began with a meal with the other volunteers – they were very friendly and the food was delicious, thank you to the cook Mahesh!

The garden is in a very pleasant and protected environment, edged by trees. It is relatively large, three hectares, and is composed of several parcels, which may be collective or individual. There are parcels for the vegetable garden, others for the fruit trees and one protected area for hives. It is a place of exchange and sharing, tools and materials are pooled at the community's disposal. It's also a place of discovery for the children. They can learn to garden and discover beekeeping while having fun.

At home in France, I had already participated in the realization of a shared vegetable garden created by a group of families. The principle of operation is a little different to this community. Families meet every Saturday morning to work in the garden. The morning starts with a small debrief in order to organize the tasks to be done, then the teams get to work.

At the end of the morning at a small meal break, the produce is shared out between the people present, also a good time to plan future work: purchase of equipment, cultivation proposals, priority of tasks, organization of events to make the space and the association more widely known, and testing of new

processes like permaculture and cultivation under cartons. As the organization is collective, each participant can take the lead in the field to, for example, try a new technique or new varieties of plants.

During my stay in Norwich, which took place in October, I worked primarily to weed the vegetable garden and to cut the tall grass around the young plants. Work at this time of year is conducive to clearing the ground and preparation for the next crops.

These moments spent in the garden, and the exchanges with the volunteers were very pleasant for me. One feels immediately at ease, and very well received. My only regret is that I could not come more. I would like to invest more time and improve my knowledge in this area.

Guillaume Gobin, 45, lives in south west France, and is a software engineer. He enjoys nature, wide open spaces, mountain biking, surfing, running and yoga. An environmentalist, he volunteers on the coast (Surfrider Foundation), in an association garden project (Green Beans and Black Radishes) and the construction of ecological habitat, including auto construction (straw house, rocket stove, solar heating).

A Space to Grow: Youth Work on the Allotment, Hanna Garrard, Mancroft Advice Project (MAP) for young people finding their way.

MAP's idea was to ignite interest in growing fruit and veg, and give young people an opportunity to feel connected and invested in their school. Taking young peoples' motivation into the wider community was the next step: could MAP help young people sustain and maintain an allotment, and actually grow some veg? MAP's youth work takes place in many different environments, from gazebos to dinner halls, but this was the first time we had taken it to an allotment.

Marlpit Community Garden (MCG) is seven acres of permaculture land located in west Norwich on the edge of a large and sprawling housing estate. It's a sliver of Eden amongst a suburban hinterland where the sheep roam free and the honey bees rule. A path lined with medicinal herbs and plants leads visitors towards a communal gazebo area overlooking the plots, fruit cages and field where the sheep live. Echinacea flowers display their blushing petals in a pirouette, and the air is fragrant with spice.

Mahesh agreed to facilitate a planting session at the school in exchange for a visit to MCG the following day. The group would be given some tasks around the garden, and would hopefully be energised to want to start their own plot there.



The sun broke through the clouds the next morning at MCG, bathing the gardens in the first snap of spring. "I didn't even know this place was here," one young person commented as we walked past a leggy thicket of ox-eye daisies, reaching eagerly towards the light. "They look like fried eggs!" another observed.

The group are all local young people, and I was curious to know whether they were familiar with MCG, and what they felt their local community could offer them. The four-lane main road at the top of the hill is a treacherous division between the housing estate and community gardens, and I know many parents are worried about road safety and do not want their children out alone. Having a regular youth worker presence here however, will hopefully give parents more confidence in letting their children visit.

We spent the afternoon planting snowdrop bulbs, more than 70 of them in fact. The volunteers at



Marlpit have a sound manner with young people, striking the right balance between sharing



knowledge and advice and giving young people enough autonomy and space to figure out their own surroundings. One young man just wanted

to dig up the earth with a shovel— snowdrops being too fiddly and frustrating for him—so a volunteer showed him a pile of earth he needed moving. He would have carried on digging to Australia if we'd left him there.

Since Easter, MAP has rented its own plot at MCG and every Tuesday I have been



down there after school and during the summer holidays with small groups of young people. Some come for a week or two; others turn up each week without fail.

Mahesh and his team are always around, ready to give advice and offer tips, but they never intrude on young people's space. Included in the rental fee is access to the communal tool shed—a shipping container lockup with hoes, forks, spades and rakes hanging from the wall. You just step in and use whatever you

need. Next to the shipping container is the greenhouse where seedlings are started off; Mahesh will leave anything ready for planting outside the door, for plot owners to use if they wish. We've had purple sprouting broccoli, dwarf beans, butternut squashes, potatoes and lettuces so far.

Other than a nice time spent outside, what is the value of this kind of work with young people? Over the weeks I have marvelled at how much knowledge young people retain, passing it on to new group members when they join: "You have to build up the earth around the potatoes so the sun doesn't damage the tubers." Our couple of hours down there goes by in a flash – we spend a good hour or so visiting other people's plots and noting the changes that have taken place since the previous week. Most of the young people we work with are carrying around some kind of emotional or family pain. We often talk about feeling very 'present' at MCG, immersed in wildlife and locked in to nature's own rhythm. For a few hours a week problems are left at the door, perhaps returned to with renewed perspective.

We've picked fruit and eaten it straight from the bush—"I've never eaten fruit like *this* before!" And we were taken down to the bee hives by Tish one week to witness their honey-making. The young people who came with us that day were nervous about visiting the bees, but with our suits on and with gentle encouragement from youth workers and volunteers, they pushed themselves that little bit further and came away knowing that fear doesn't always have to hold you back.

Young people tell me the value they see in coming to MCG: "It's nice and quiet – away from all my siblings. If I wasn't here I'd have nothing to do and I'm not allowed very far from the house." This young man is the oldest of four brothers and takes on significant caring duties.

One young person has a stepfather who is disabled. She told me she felt sad that she can't do this kind of thing with him. But the garden is designed to be wheelchair-user friendly, so a visit with her stepfather is not out of the question.

We finish our sessions under the wooden gazebo with an evaluation and reflection on the session. We make a plan for the following week and distribute any fruit and vegetables we've picked. Our plan for the winter is to maintain the plot ready for the following spring, and figure out how to cook the enormous pumpkins, which are growing at an alarming rate.

Having our own plot - Margaret Sealy-Lewis, Julian Centre

We first visited the plot at the Marlpit Community Garden in the early summer 2016. We were very excited at the prospect of having our own plot. The plot hadn't been dug over since last season so there was some heavy weeding and



digging to be done. The group that has attended has grown in their confidence during the weeks that have passed. Great satisfaction has been derived from planting seeds and seedlings, nurturing them and then harvesting. Everyone is keen to enjoy a new season and already some ground has been planted for over the winter.



My experience as an SLI member

I came to the Garden in March 2016 with no gardening experience at all and found my ignorance to be fully accepted, finding there was plenty I could do to contribute to the communal project at Marlpit. I quickly became a regular volunteer on a Tuesday and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience with the benefits of meeting new people and learning about gardening, which are both very valuable. I have also really enjoyed the group lunch which is a really nice social experience with the added bonus of being very informative for cooking healthy food on a budget. I have taken a small plot for myself so I work on both my plot and the communal garden, which combined have provided a very nice supply of fresh produce.

For me the nicest aspects about the garden are the relaxed way it is run with no feeling of pressure to do a certain amount of work each week, and the broad array of people who I feel I would not usually meet and get to know on such a personal level.

Lee

Community garden experience.

So far we have been part of the Marlpit Community Garden for few months, yet the experience has been much more enriching than we had expected.

The location of the garden, outside the centre of the city allows for a feeling of being in a bigger open space, everyone at the garden has made me and my husband feel welcomed at all times, their kindness and encouragement we value highly. Also, being able to produce something from the land, learning about different seeding techniques and about how to take care of plants we didn't even know, have given us a lot of happy moments. At a time where everything seems so disconnected from nature, having a place where that link can be re-established is such a wonderful necessity. Going out to a green space, and meeting with people who share similar values has given me significant psychological benefits, I feel motivated not only during the volunteering days but also in my general activities during the week. By engaging in a physical-enjoyable task, I also have the opportunity to let my mind fly and I have been even more productive in my studies.

We definitely would recommend joining the garden, and going to the volunteering day (the food, after working on the communal plots, is delicious!)

Sacnicté and Tristan

SLI Website and Newsletter Management

Sustainable Living Initiative has one website, but two growers' sites: so the website has separate "tab" sections for Bluebell and Marlpit. As all our growers are also members there is a Members' Area, password-protected for all members. We try to avoid confusion about such local features as "*the polytunnel*" or "*the gate*", or local availability of seeds and young plants.

This year there was one members' newsletter for all members, produced on the second and fourth Friday each month, so 25 a year. Previously, Bluebell newsletters were weekly and Marlpit monthly, so 64 each year. However, the same amount of content was squeezed-in and generally newsletters are three times longer!

The content of newsletters is submitted by email as text and pictures, and is always reformatted for publication. Tish Kerkham was Newsletter Editor collating, creating news items and proof-reading the finished publication just before it was sent to the membership.

The archive of all our newsletters lists 25 sent in 2015-16 and in previous years 20 sent to Marlpit and 174 to Bluebell.

News and notices are "blogged" on the website, and we have over 400 such "posts". More static information is shown as web pages, of which we have nearly 300. The website now contains more than 1700 images and documents. We have separate "What's on" pages for members and the public, they advertise future events and have links to pages of past events, with reports and photos.

There are pages for documents to sign-up, policies, minutes of meetings, pages to advertise us to prospective members, pages to tell our sponsors and supporters what we are doing, and not least an online Publicity Archive with press-releases going back to 2008.

The most recent addition is a Trustees page explaining who takes responsibility for the running of SLI.

Future Plans

It is proposed to redesign the website – the specification of the new site has not yet been drawn up – I hope there will be plenty of suggestions for improvement.

If you would like to help do all this or maybe just part of it, you'll be interested to know that our website content is managed by [WordPress](#) (since May 2011) and our newsletters by *MailChimp* (since 2012), both of which are made easier if you know some HTML.

Another related task is that of managing communications by email – monitoring the various mailboxes for the Bluebell Teams and others, and managing the mailing lists for newsletters.

I have been designing and maintaining our website since 2008 and sending newsletters since April 2012: I intend to continue, but have decided that I cannot spend so much time duplicating the website as a newsletter, and so in future will only send plain email news when absolutely needed. We have reports showing how many recipients actually open and read the mailings and it appears that about 60% open the emails and 15% click on the contents to follow up what interests them.

Jim Froud

SLI Finance

Lee Harbour, Finance Officer

Income for the year was £26,624 (including £4,081, bought forward from 2015) with total expenditure of £18,570 leaving a year end surplus of £8,054 to carry into 2017, which falls slightly short of the desired 6 month reserves target. Of the income £15,343 was grant income and £7,200 was self-generated with just over half coming from plot rent. The Bluebell plot rental income was £3,128 with rental cost of £1,050 to the Norwich City Council.

Training income is another fairly good source of income at £1,256 however it falls slightly short of covering our members training costs of £1,700 because our regular volunteers and team leaders get free places. We should look at ways of increasing the training income to at least offset the members' training costs. Between both Bluebell and Marlpit there is a lot of knowledge and good site facilities so there is potential for a good service to be offered. Another area of income is honey, jam and produce sales - though these seem small it is a very good source of income as the production costs are very low with the produce and labour being mainly voluntary.

Looking at the projects in isolation, both the Bluebell and Marlpit allotments run at a slight operating loss after absorbing their current share of the overheads (excluding any cost for programme manager and accountant) - there is no issue with cost control but shows a need to focus our attention on ways of generating further income at both allotments. The Marlpit project has been able to cover the cost of the programme manager and accountant and offset the losses in both allotments through its grant income. This emphasises the need we have to generate at least £15,000 per annum to keep all of the projects running in their current format.

The ideal position in future years would be to have both the Bluebell and Marlpit allotments contributing further to the projects overheads, reducing the reliance on grant funding for the general running and survival of the project.

Sustainable Living Initiative					
	Actual 1 Oct 2015 to 30th Sep 2016				
	Marlpit Project	Marlpit Allotments	Bluebell Allotments	Overheads	Total Actual
	£	£	£		£
B/fwd from 2014-15 to spend in 2015-16	4,081				4,081
Plot rent		820	3,128		3,948
Capital grant deferred	0				0
Grants & donations	15,192	0	0	151	15,343
Open days	119	115	180		414
Other income	453	803	0		1,256
Training income	609	614	0		1,223
Allotment & produce sales	113	139	108		360
Operating Income	20,567	2,490	3,416	151	26,624
Council plot rent			1,050		1,050
Seeds and plants		254	629		883
Manure and compost		30	93		123
Labour and Services		270			270
Small tools, repairs & garden sundries	219		94		313
Maintenance	2,332		130		2,461
Conservation	1,129		0		1,129
Training for members	1,709				1,709
Members Course costs	180				180
Volunteer Costs	555		0		555
Depreciation	0	0	0		0
Keys		146	105		251
Equipment and supplies	208	692	36	0	937
Direct Expenditure	6,331	1,392	2,137	0	9,860
Gross surplus/(deficit)	14,236	1,098	1,279	151	16,764
Insurance		207	207		413
Office Rent		720	720		1,440
Telephone & internet		311	311		621
Stationery and postage		48	48		96
Programme manager	5,000				5,000
Accounts	849				849
IT Costs		20	20		40
Travel		39	39		77

Training					0
Subscriptions		75	75		150
Depreciation					0
Sundries		11	11		22
Overhead Expenditure	5,849	1,430	1,430	0	8,710
Operating surplus/(deficit)	8,386	(332)	(151)	151	8,054
Interest receivable		0	0		0
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities before taxation	8,386	(332)	(151)	151	8,054
Tax on surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities			0		0
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	8,386	(332)	(151)	151	8,054

Plans for 2016-2017

As mentioned in our last annual report and Trustees' report 2014-15, we plan to increase the number of people who access and benefit from our Community Gardens. In addition to providing a manageable size plot along with the information and advice on growing and using fruit, vegetables and herbs and volunteering opportunities, we should be encouraging and welcoming individuals, schools and community groups to come and visit our Community Gardens and enjoy a short walk or learn about gardening, bees and wildlife.

We need to reach out to local communities through various organisations, schools and groups working in the area. To this end, we are going to improve the physical facilities on site and have clear maps, signs and noticeboards. We will be producing simple leaflets explaining the resources and facilities available in our Community Gardens.

We will be running two practical training sessions, one on growing fruit and vegetables and the other on Growing and Using herbs, each season – Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. In addition to this, we will be running a short course on landscaping.

From March 2017, we will be running cooking sessions once a month focusing on making simple meals using seasonal produce available in Marlpit Community Garden.

The income we generate from our activities is far from enough to meet our core costs let alone the cost of improving and maintaining the facilities in our Community Gardens, so we need to find ways of raising funds for the short-term as well as for the long-term. We would like to appeal to funding organisations and the business community to support our work.

Sustainable Living Initiative

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