

# Annual Report

2021

Financial Statements and Trustee's report  
1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021

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# Chairman's Introduction



I am delighted to have taken over the role of chair of trustees in June of last year and to provide the introduction to this year's annual report.

Commungrow achieved a number of notable landmarks in 2021 despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19.

Income generation has continued its upward trajectory by increasing by more than 10% last year. Our income from charitable activities on the field has increased 2.5 times, which provides a springboard for further growth in what we offer by way of horticulture and educational activities.

We were able to appoint a full-time operations manager and a part-time fundraiser. These are important appointments as they provide us with dedicated resources to increase and diversify our revenues and to manage our operations more effectively. The appointments provide a platform to expand the services we offer and to increase our reach to additional beneficiaries and the local community whilst ensuring that the services we offer continue to have more impact and a greater benefit to our beneficiaries and the local community.

Commungrow is a horticultural charity providing educational opportunities, work experience and outdoor activities for the whole community, including special needs, vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and adults. For these young people and adults we are able to promote their personal development and sense of achievement as well as providing horticultural learning opportunities. Through working outside and growing crops, everyone who comes to the field has the opportunity to reconnect with nature and learn about growing their own food in a sustainable way. A key benefit of what we do is being able to promote health and wellbeing.

As a board of trustees, we are greatly encouraged by the stories we hear on the impact that Commungrow is having on our beneficiaries and some of these stories are told in this Annual Report.

I conclude with a thank you to the Trust and Foundations and all of our other donors who support us. We are immensely grateful for all the financial support we continue to receive and which allows us to do what we do. I would like to thank our staff and all our volunteers. Both staff and volunteers are vital to the success of Commungrow and their efforts and enthusiasm on the field running the classes and workshops and helping with the planting and growing, as well providing a valuable support network with our social media and marketing, are very much appreciated. Finally, I would also like to thank Simon Webley who has so ably chaired the board of trustees for 5 years and whose support Commungrow continues to enjoy as he remains a trustee.

**Caroline Pearce**

Chair of the board of trustees



# About Communigrow

## Public benefit

The objects of Communigrow are to promote and advance education in responsible food farming activities for the public benefit by empowering local communities to directly link with farming and to reconnect with where their food comes from and how to enjoy local, healthy, sustainable, affordable food.

## Our mission

To use horticulture to educate, support and inspire everyone in our community by enriching their lives, and for disadvantaged groups by achieving greater independence.

## Our vision

Our vision is to provide horticultural experiences where all people in our community, regardless of background or abilities, work collaboratively to respect and understand how food is grown and the many benefits it offers to their health and wellbeing; inspiring them to lead fuller lives in a sustainable community.

## Our values

Our core values are focused on:

- People – who are at the centre of everything we do
- Education – to impart an understanding of nature, where food comes from and how it is grown
- Respect – towards all people in our community and nature
- Inclusion and Diversity – so that all groups in the community can benefit and work together, for the benefit of individuals and our community
- Sustainability – to create a sustainable world and society
- Wellbeing – to create a positive change in individuals and our local community
- Partnership – with local community groups to develop and tailor our offering, as well as partnering with other organisations to advance our objectives and respond to local needs.



# Highlights

Despite disruptions caused by the Covid-19 restrictions, the past year has nevertheless been a year of highlights and achievements that include:

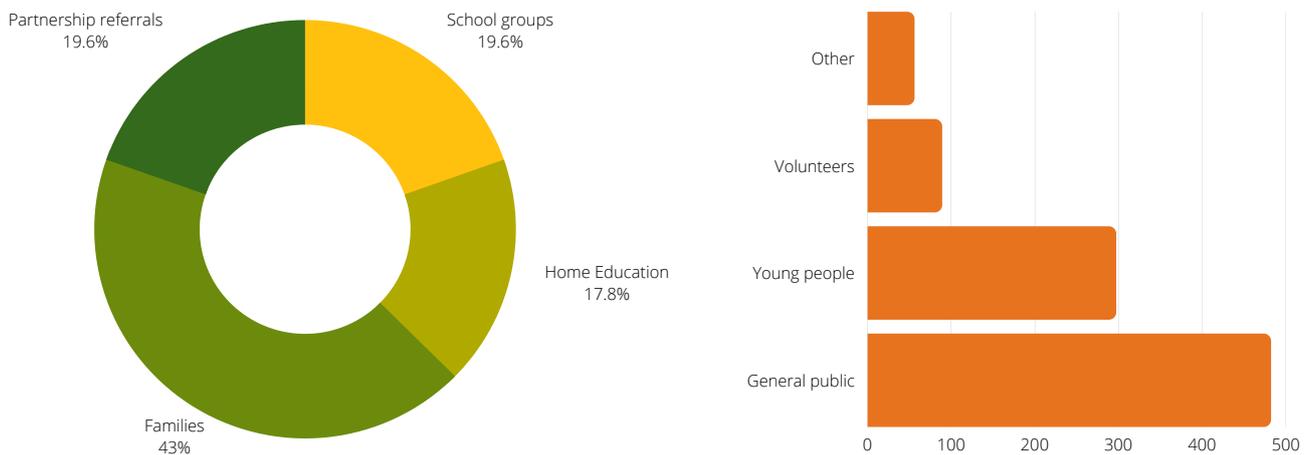
- Welcoming 443 individuals including the young people and adults who attended our classes and workshops, many of whom come on a regular basis (125 in 2020).
- Increasing the number of our volunteers to 89 (62 in 2020) who support Communigrow on site and off site and who gave us 5,268 hours of their time (3,614 hours in 2020).
- Working with 19 local community organisations including those who refer young people and adults to us so that they can benefit from the activities we run.
- Increasing our income to £127,480 (£114,216 in 2020) which has allowed us to expand our work and increase the number of young people and adults we can accommodate on the field.
- Achieving one of the Kent Volunteering Awards organised by the Kent Messenger Charity Team. The award was in recognition of our volunteers as a voluntary group making an outstanding contribution to its charity and community.
- Growing chemical-free produce and selling 319 large and small affordable veg boxes for the local community.

We are proud of these achievements which are described in more detail overleaf.



# Education and Wellbeing

The chart below gives a breakdown of the different groups who benefited from our educational provision and the graph which follows, shows the numbers of people organised by the target group. This includes people who attended regular sessions, one-off sessions; and community and online events.



## Schools

Five Acre Wood School is one of the schools which comes to Communigrow. Two groups of sixth form students from this special school come once a week during term time and benefit both physically and mentally from being outdoors and participating in the growing activities.

Grow 19 is a college for young adults aged 19–25 with significant needs which offers vocational skills and knowledge. Students visit every week and we support Grow19's aims by providing practical horticultural experience for their City & Guilds land based qualification.

Grange Park School is a specialist school for children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Condition. A group of students attend one morning a week to gain valuable work experience. They assist with all aspects of growing and harvesting. In the warmer months they help prepare veg boxes and sell our produce to local residents door to door.

As part of their enrichment programme, students from Bethany school, a private school in Kent, visit weekly to learn about local food production and its benefits for the environment.

The impact of what Communigrow does is illustrated by the support we have received from members of staff at these schools.



**"All of the students that attend the placement speak highly of the support and experience that they get. We have seen a positive change in our students that attend the placement and this transgresses into other parts of their programme of study. We are thankful for Communigrow in supporting the school and students and hope the partnership can continue."**

**PAULA MARTIN, SENIOR LEARNING MENTOR, GRANGE PARK SCHOOL**

**"Communigrow has given our students a great escape from everything going on during lockdown. Being outside and near nature has helped with their mental wellbeing and given the students a regular focus. Thank you Communigrow for all that you have done and your ongoing support during Covid."**

**STAFF MEMBER, FIVE ACRE WOOD SCHOOL**

**"We have worked with Communigrow for three years. Their staff and volunteers fully understand the needs of our groups and their future pathways. They are proactive and flexible in how they work with us and we are pleased to call them a community partner."**

**KIRSTIE HEMINGWAY, HEAD OF GROW 19**

# Education and Wellbeing

Working with local partners Crossroads and Involve Kent we have delivered 7 workshops. Groups of young carers and teenagers with autism and communication difficulties have learnt about wildlife and growing in these fun hands-on sessions. As part of the post Covid Reconnect programme, attendees harvested and cooked fresh veg, forging new connections and friendships after the isolation of lockdown. We also worked with IMAGO in delivering two online workshops. We have begun offering similar workshops to the general public and which have also proved very popular.

In 2021, in order to reach the more disadvantaged members of our local community, we forged links with the East Malling Centre. We offered 5 activity sessions for local families including tasting veg, learning about wildlife and crafting.

**"I now know more about plants and animals"**

AUTUMN FAMILY WORKSHOP  
PARTICIPANT

**"It helps me eat better and fresher food."**

PARTICIPANT OF SESSION DELIVERED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH INVOLVE KENT

**"I enjoyed making the bug houses and digging up the sweet potatoes."**

PARTICIPANTS OF THE COMMUNIGROW  
FAMILY WORKSHOPS

**"I learned how to make a salad out of fruit and vegetables that I've never tried."**

PARTICIPANTS OF SESSIONS DELIVERED IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH IMAGO



**"The children... enjoyed the tour of the allotments, seeing the various vegetables that had been planted, planting the various seeds and potatoes and also being able to take some pots home with them."**

YOUNG CARERS TUTOR,  
CROSSROAD CHARITY

# Education and Wellbeing

## Home Education

The home education programme ran from March to December in 2021. Learners aged 4-14 studied a range of topics, from pond life, to food miles. Following feedback from parents, the course included more practical sessions where learners help with tasks on the field to acquire new skills including cooking veg from the field.

The following case studies illustrate the impact of the work that Communigrow does.

### Case study 1

#### Overcoming shyness with nature

Zac (11 y/o), one of our home education students, came to Communigrow as a very self-conscious young person. At the back of the group trying to be as small as possible. A pond dipping session changed everything. A discovery of Red spider mites by Zac soon had the whole group gathering around, encouraged by the Communigrow education team his confidence grew.

Mr red spider mite man started joining in all conversations as his opinion was now as valid as everyone else's. We are so proud of how he has continued to respond and can't wait to work with him next term.

CAROLL, COMMUNIGROW EDUCATION COORDINATOR

### Case study 2

#### Improving communication skills

Gina (16 y/o), who attends sessions with her local learning disability school, has complex needs. In the beginning she wasn't keen to engage with manual work and insisted on being supported when walking. Lots of encouragement and attention saw Gina really start to enjoy her tasks. Recently Gina got off the bus with enthusiasm, and now doesn't need physical support to walk around the site. With her communication skills starting to improve, she even joined in using the loud speaker during an activity.

#Her support worker said: "Communigrow has certainly been a catalyst in Gina's recent improvement at the site and in general at school. It's fantastic to see her enjoying herself and working as part of the class".

CAROLL, COMMUNIGROW EDUCATION COORDINATOR

# Education and Wellbeing

## Wellbeing Programmes

Covid-19 in particular provided us with an opportunity to reach out to other sections of our local community. In partnership with Involve Kent, we delivered sessions and workshops as part of the KCC Universal Wellbeing Programme. These are designed for the over 55s to tackle loneliness, social isolation and those with health challenges.

### Case study 3

#### Wednesday Wellness sessions - Improving Wellbeing

“Attending weekly sessions has provided me with something fun and different from my usual day to day activity. I have enjoyed meeting new people, learning new things. Making new friends gets harder as you get older and this group whilst all being quite different from each other are friendly and welcoming. This experience has encouraged me to volunteer and contribute to a local charity.”

ANNE, PARTICIPANT OF THE WEDNESDAY WELLNESS SESSIONS



# Working in Partnership

Working in partnership is vital to CommuniGrow, helping us to raise our profile locally and supporting and being supported by other local organisations. We are actively seeking and building relationships with community, voluntary and statutory partners who share our vision and support our principles.

We have strong connections with:

Clarion Futures

Crossroads Kent Young Carers

East Malling Centre

IMAGO Community

Involve Kent – Social Prescribing Platform, Wellbeing, Young People

Kent Virtual Schools

KRAN - Kent Refugee Action Network

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council – One YOU

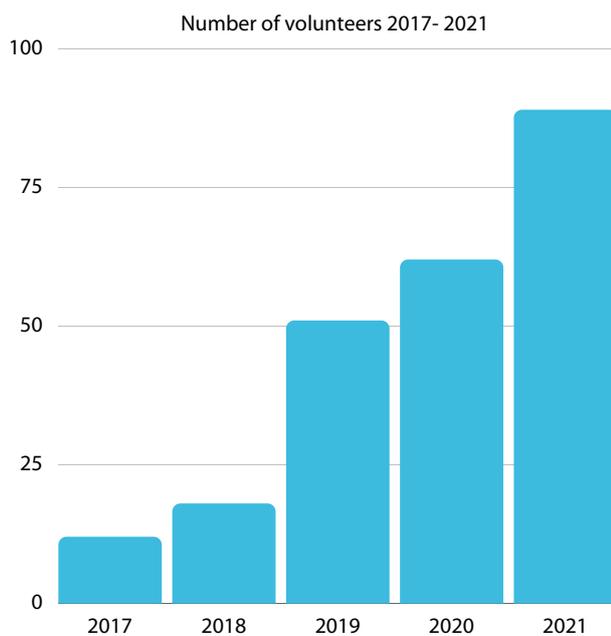
United Living



# Volunteers

The number of volunteers has continued to increase year on year as shown in the graph.

The charity provided volunteering opportunities in horticulture, education, marketing, event assistance, fundraising, research, recruitment and general administrative tasks. In 2021 we had 64 volunteers who supported us on the field with the cultivation, harvesting (making up weekly veg boxes) and maintenance activities, such as repairing the brassica cage and building the bird boxes and the bird hide to encourage birdlife. They assisted with the delivery of 87 educational sessions and workshops, five fundraising events, 25 wellbeing sessions and workshops and seven external events. 17 volunteers worked remotely producing content for our social media channels, designing and distributing 12 newsletters, organising nine online educational talks and updating the website. They helped us to increase and keep audiences engaged which made our online presence stronger. Eight volunteers supported us both on the field and remotely. We also delivered three Volunteering Days for the corporate sector and local businesses.



**"It was really rewarding to provide support to Communigrow, a wonderful local charity that does such good work for the community. Our team of volunteers built a raised bed area, worked in a no dig plot and helped with general tasks and thoroughly enjoyed our time there."**

JACQUELINE NOON, SOCIAL VALUE MANAGER AT UNITED LIVING PROPERTY SERVICES

Our volunteers tell us they benefit by learning how to grow their own food, how they feel they are giving something back to the community and how they are helping to protect the environment. They gain knowledge and skills and better mental and physical health whilst connecting with nature, food and people. They also tell us this helps build confidence and self-esteem, giving them a sense of purpose and helps them to make new friends.

“David has actively encouraged volunteers to learn how to use pieces of equipment, such as the rotavator, which is really rewarding. The different levels of knowledge amongst the team is always helpful and insightful. The field itself is a wonderful place to be and definitely helps mindfulness and wellbeing.”

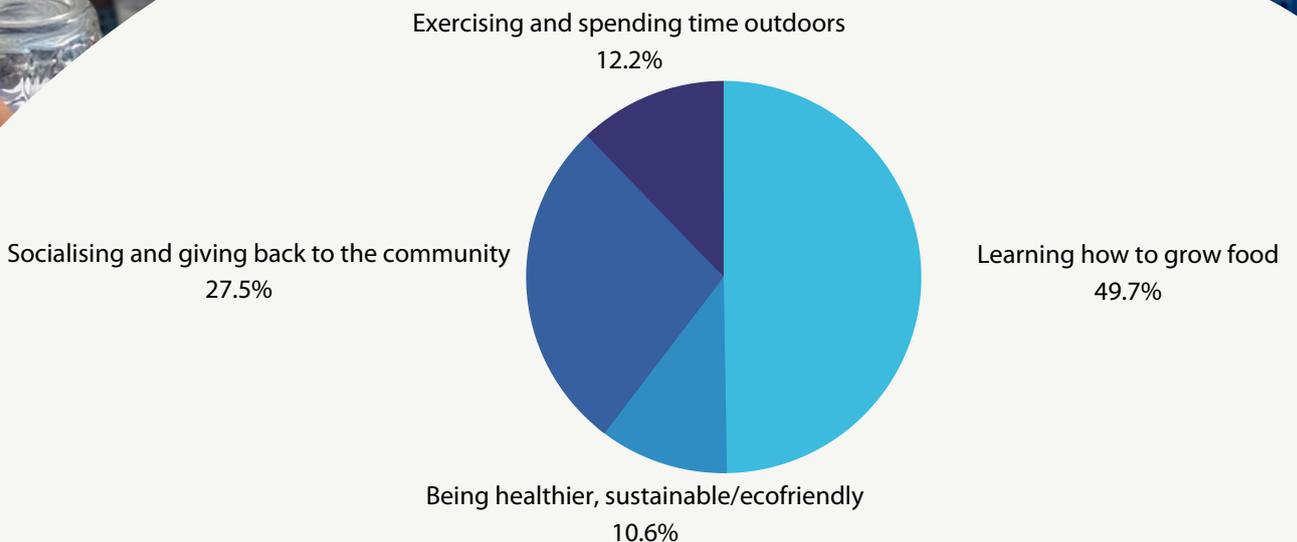
VOLUNTEER (GROWER)

“Volunteering with Communigrow has absolutely reinforced my interest in gardening and growing. I enjoy the experience of meeting and working with new people, learning about new things, and contributing your time towards something meaningful.”

VOLUNTEER (SOCIAL MEDIA)



### VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATIONS TO BE PART OF COMMUNIGROW 2021



# Volunteers

Being a delivery partner of the KCC Universal Wellbeing Programme (in partnership with Involve Kent), brought new opportunities for our volunteers. These encouraged them to join the weekly activities that support communities' wellbeing while making the group stronger and helping us to reinforce our commitment to promote health, wellbeing within the local community.

The achievements of our volunteers was recognised by the award of one of The Kent Messenger Charity Team awards, one of the most prestigious volunteering awards in Kent and one of only 13 regional winners across the county. This is given in recognition of voluntary groups in Kent which make outstanding contributions to charities and communities.

We thank all our volunteers very much for their time, skills and energy to support the charity's work in 2021.

**5268**

**VOLUNTEERED HOURS**

Between 1st January and  
31st December 2021

**£58,828**

**ESTIMATED ECONOMIC  
VALUE OF TIME DONATED  
BY VOLUNTEERS**



# Fundraising

2021 has been a very successful year for increasing our income from a variety of Trusts and Foundations both local and national. This has strengthened the perception and image of Communigrow as a credible and capable educational charity worthy of endorsement, sponsorship and investment. Our income for 2021 amounted to £127,480 (£114,216 in 2020).

We are most appreciative of the support we have received from:

Atwood Benefits Ltd (formerly F & L Finance)

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust

Albert Hunt Foundation

Barbara Ward Children's Foundation

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust

ExPat Foundation

Gatwick Charitable Trust

Hollick Family Foundation

Ian Askew Trust

Involve Kent

KCC Members Grant

Kent Community Foundation

Leigh Charitable Foundation

Matthew Wrightson Foundation

National Lottery Reaching Communities

Robert Gavron

Social Farms and Gardens

Tesco



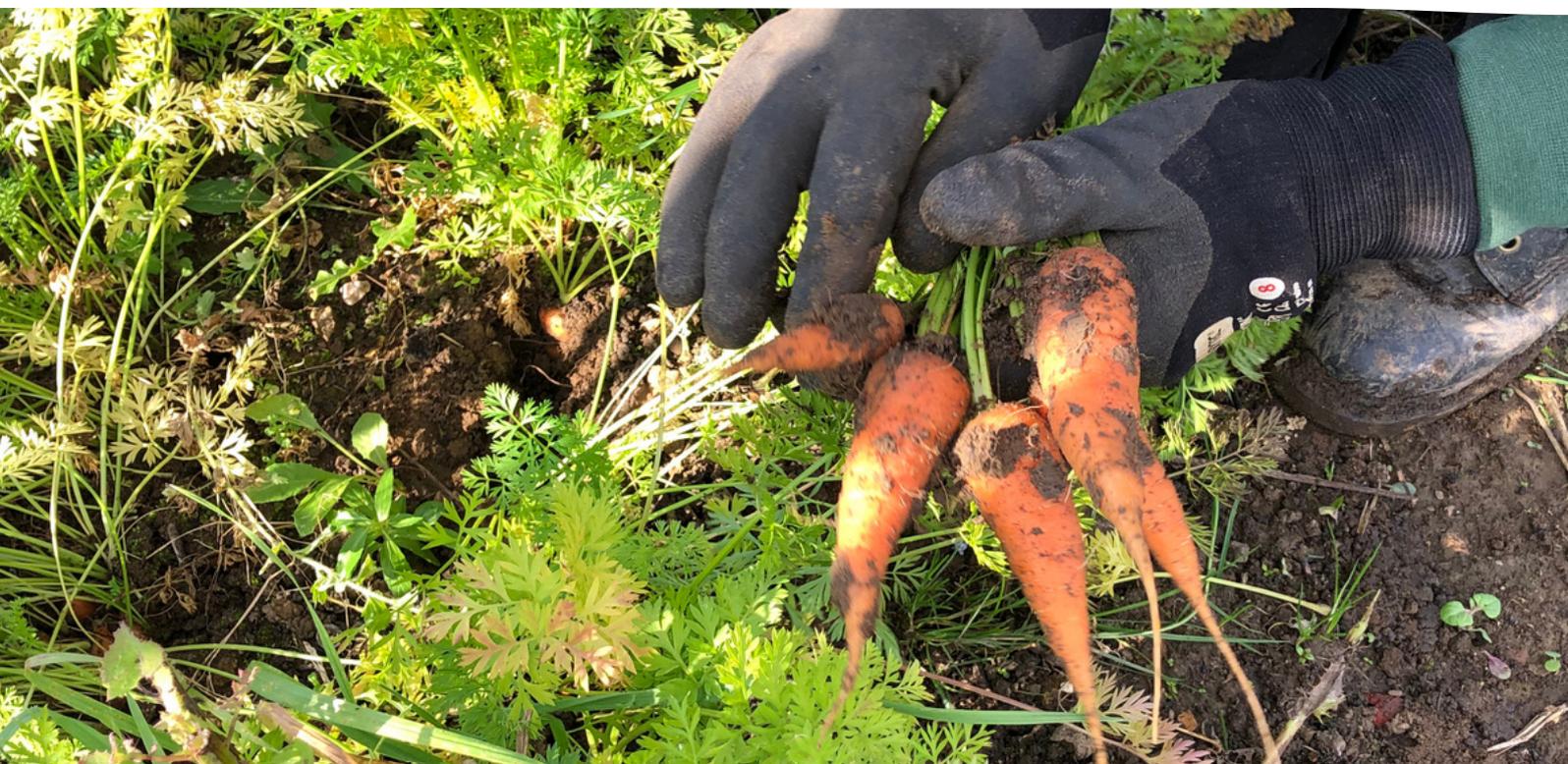
Grant funding has enabled us to achieve the following substantial progress in the development of our charitable aims. It has:

- Helped us to design an enhanced growing programme that offers a breadth of educational and skills development opportunities for all of our service users.
- Enhanced the coordination and deployment of our small team of growers and our volunteers in maintaining an effective and engaging growing programme across our 2.4 acre site.
- Ensured the consistent provision of education and skills development despite the restrictions imposed by Covid-19.
- Enabled us to create new roles of operations manager and fundraiser. It has also allowed us to develop and expand the existing roles.
- Enabled us to deliver 13 workshops during the school holidays and half terms with 165 young people attending.
- Allowed us to improve and broaden our data gathering, so as to better monitor and evaluate our service delivery and meet the requirements of our beneficiaries.

# Future plans

During the current and future years we aim to:

- Continue with our core activities in offering learning and skills development through our horticultural activities to an increased number and range of community groups and schools and in doing so, maximise the usage of the field to demonstrate new and innovative planting and soil management using sustainable growing methods.
- Develop the 'Communigrow Achievement Award' to help us evidence and celebrate the skills and learning outcomes achieved by our beneficiaries, These awards will be available first to young people including students attending SEN schools. They will encourage young people with their development and assist them when entering the employment market. Subsequently, volunteers and other beneficiaries will also be able to take part in these awards.
- Continue to develop opportunities for practical experience on the field for the City & Guild qualifications.
- Capitalise on the success in 2021 of the KCC Universal Wellbeing programme (in partnership with Involve Kent) by extending the programme to members of the general public. Launch Ready, Steady, Grow, bite-size workshops for new and enthusiastic gardeners in partnership with our landlord, the East Malling Trust.
- Launch a number of new initiatives including garden craft workshops, a 'communi-shed' project, where beneficiaries can improve their garden related woodcraft skills and create an outdoor kitchen to help us build our field to fork opportunities and expand our education and training offering. Overall, our objective with these initiatives is to increase the numbers and diversity of disadvantaged young people and adults and to build relationships with our local communities and their residents.
- Implement our 4-year income diversification strategy. This includes piloting social enterprise activities, developing a range of donation opportunities, organising fundraising events and researching corporate relationships leading to sponsorship. We have already launched our 'adopt a plot', that we are marketing to local businesses to help them meet their corporate social responsibility aims.



# Governance and Management Structure

Charity name	Communigrow
Registered Charity No.	1159534
Contact address	1 Wesley Close, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 9HT
Trustees	Caroline Pearce - Chair Helen Turner – Secretary Alan Piper Simon Webley David Field Anthony Blackman Eleanor Nicolas – Treasurer
Independent Examiner	Priscilla Asirifi
Bank	The Co-operative Bank PO Box 200, Skelmersdale, WN8 6 WT
Website	<a href="http://www.communigrow.org.uk">www.communigrow.org.uk</a>



# Organisation and decision making

CommuniGrow held its AGM in June 2021 when new trustees David Field and Anthony Blackman were appointed. The trustees met seven times in 2021 to consider all aspects of the charity's activities and to monitor progress.

## Leadership and Management

We are very fortunate in now having a very skilled and active Board of Trustees who are passionately committed to our principles of using horticulture creatively to assist those facing challenge and disadvantage amongst communities across West Kent. In addition the Board engages a business development and fundraising consultant to assist with business planning, growth and income generation.

## New Trustees

Prospective trustees are invited to a trustee meeting to discuss their application to be a trustee. References and due checks are carried out and following appointment as a trustee an induction session is held including explanations of the roles and responsibilities of trustees.

The trustees confirm that they have had due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when making their decisions.

The management team met regularly through 2021 to plan and monitor activities. Other day to day decisions were made informally as and when required.

## Major Risks Statement

The trustees regularly review the following major risks and respond accordingly.

1. Governance - a skills audit was carried out in 2020 to identify strengths and weaknesses.
2. Financial - regular reports are received on the charity's financial position, sustainability, safeguarding funds and reserves.
3. Operational - safeguarding and health & safety reviews are undertaken and volunteer roles and beneficiary welfare are assessed.
4. External - key for the charity was responding to the impact of Covid-19, safeguarding its reputation, responding to demographic changes and changes in funders' criteria.
5. Compliance with law and regulation - in particular employment law and charity law.



# Finance Report

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	8,261	-	-	8,261	3,241
COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING	1,039	-	-	1,039	413
CORPORATE DONATIONS	3,000	-	-	3,000	135
DONATIONS	1,557	-	-	1,557	419
SPONSORSHIP	-	-	-	-	3,500
TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS	-	103,228	-	103,228	102,872
VEG SALES	4,069	-	-	4,069	3,636
OTHER INCOME	6,336	-	-	6,336	-
<b>Sub total(Gross income for A1)</b>	<b>24,262</b>	<b>103,228</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>127,490</b>	<b>114,216</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
ADMIN/UTILITIES	-	3,063	-	3,063	3,504
CONSUMABLES	413	1,486	-	1,899	6,431
EQUIPMENT	84	4,559	-	4,643	14,031
FUNDRAISING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	-	9,000	-	9,000	7,413
INSURANCE & RENT	-	2,005	-	2,005	1,893
MARKETING	712	226	-	938	115
SERVICES (INCLUDING SALARIES)	80	83,597	-	83,677	62,054
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>103,937</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>105,225</b>	<b>95,440</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>103,937</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>105,225</b>	<b>95,440</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>22,974</b>	<b>- 709</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>22,265</b>	<b>18,776</b>
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	11,951	62,285	-	74,236	30,775
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>34,925</b>	<b>61,576</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>96,501</b>	<b>49,551</b>

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>		20,045	72,967	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>20,045</b>	<b>72,967</b>	<b>-</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	Agreement Error	Agreement Error	OK

## Reserves Policy

The charity needs reserves to enable it to progress to completing both its long term projects, and its current activities and fluctuations in receipts and payments. The policy is to hold £8,000 for working activities. The level has been set to take account of the following:

1. Contingency: unexpected expenditure in the event of an emergency;
2. Cash-flow: situations where a bill has to be paid before the money to cover it has been received;
3. Commitment: a commitment to expenditure which cannot be covered by the annual income
4. Closure: the charity becomes financially unsustainable and has to be wound up.

## Explanatory Notes

1. General funds are unrestricted and are spent on the charity's general purposes.
2. Restricted funds comprise donations and grants for specific activities intended by the donor
3. £66,365 of the £72,258 restricted funds at the end of 2021 is carried forward to 2022 for staff salaries and business development costs during 2022.

# Independent Examiner's Report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Charity") for the year ended 31/12/2021.

## Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

## Independent examiner's statement

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

<b>Signed:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	02/02/2022
<b>Name:</b>	Priscilla Asirifi ACMA		
<b>Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):</b>	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)		
<b>Address:</b>	8 Sandown Street		
	Manchester		
	M18 8SA		

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.



Name: Helen Turner (Signed on behalf of trustees)

Position: Secretary & Trustee

Date: 26th May 2022



[www.communigrow.org.uk](http://www.communigrow.org.uk)

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