



**Comfrey Project**  
a space to grow



# Annual Report

1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013



## THE COMFREY PROJECT TEAM

### TRUSTEES

Ruth Cunningham  
Mick Dixon  
Pippa Kendall  
Richard Adams OBE  
Susan Donnelly  
Gail Young

### STAFF

Yvonne Hartnett - Manager  
Craig Puranen Wilson - Communications Manager  
Joe Hughes - Finance Officer  
Sanja Ratkusic - Horticulturalist  
Amir Ahmadi - Project Worker  
Dr Janet Lloyd - Project Worker  
Pia Griffiths-Phillips - Garden Club Trainer  
Fereshteh Etemadi - Sessional Worker  
Yassir Hamid - Sessional Worker  
Evelyn Mudo - Sessional Worker  
Muanza Nyumba - Sessional Worker  
Sam Storey - Cook

### VOLUNTEERS

Mitra Nabavipour  
Mehrdad Faderani  
Madiha Alyousuf  
Belmira Monteiro  
Tamlyn Cummings  
John Mills  
Jo Butler  
Yvonne Grant-Mills  
Craig Puranen Wilson  
Helena Seget  
Sue Woolhouse  
Sandra Rolston  
Ian Hendry  
Fereshteh Etemadi  
Yassir Hamid  
Evelyn Mudo  
Muanza Nyumba

We would also like to thank all Comfrey Project participants who have an equal role in the organisation, but in the interests of confidentiality we have not named.

Photographs courtesy:

Gilbert Johnston Photography  
[www.gilbertjohnston.co.uk](http://www.gilbertjohnston.co.uk)

Krista Puranen Wilson  
[www.kotastyling.com](http://www.kotastyling.com)

Lindsay Duncanson  
[www.productofboy.net](http://www.productofboy.net)

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## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, AND MANAGEMENT

The Comfrey Project is an unincorporated association with a constitution and was registered as a charity in 2002. The Comfrey Project is managed by a Board of Trustees who are elected each year at the AGM and normally hold office until the following AGM. Trustees may also be co-opted onto the board until the next AGM. Day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated to the Manager. The Chair supervises the Manager and the Manager supervises the other staff members.

All Trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits.

The Trustees would like to thank the staff and volunteers for all their continued hard work and dedication to the Project.



## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of The Comfrey Project are to provide facilities for the recreation or other leisure-time occupation of refugees and asylum seekers with the object of improving their conditions of life and general well-being, primarily, though not exclusively, through the provision of horticultural activities.

This is achieved by various shared creative activities including allotment gardening, cooking and creative activities. The Comfrey Project facilitate weekly group sessions on three allotment sites in Newcastle and Gateshead. Participants attend weekly sessions and take part in gardening activities, with time to socialise, make friends, and learn about other cultures over a shared lunch.

We aim to provide a safe, welcoming environment, which promotes personal well being through a sense of place and belonging. The allotments are a place of peace and tranquillity in which participants can relax and forget about some of their worries.

Gardening promotes well-being because it takes place outdoors; interacting with the natural world, helping and seeing things grow, with the empowerment and fulfilment that brings. Growing and sharing food is a fundamental human activity that unites us all.

The participants' voice is at the heart of everything we do - from planning to delivery - and our role as facilitators and enablers makes this possible.

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

While the Summer never seemed to arrive, we were all kept cheerful by the work that needed to be done on the allotments. Healthy produce and good company always produced smiles and laughter.

While the Winter programme was highly successful, we were all looking forward to getting back to the allotments. The seedlings planted at the John Marley Centre were ready to go into the ground, but with lots of pests and diseases it was slow growing. Luckily, we're a resilient bunch, so we sowed more seeds, put up a gazebo and took note.

Life for asylum seekers and refugees is one of constant uncertainty and that also had an impact. Housing, levels of support, reporting arrangements. It's sometimes hard enough to stand still, let alone keep appointments.

We continued to run three weekly allotment sessions, but our participants often found it difficult to attend sessions, let alone garden. Often there was a requirement for them to attend an appointment and this led to absence and lateness. Thank goodness for the daily shared lunch! An opportunity to catch up with friends, have a chat and stop for a while.

Working outdoors, the weather has an obvious impact on what we do, so we decided to plan a shared space with better access, which would encourage families with young children and babies to attend.

Allotments are not just a place to grow things, they're a place where we get to know our neighbours and each other. Allotments are a social space and by changing the design and layout we could develop the allotments into "a place to be".

“The Comfrey Project is simple not complicated. Life is hard for asylum seekers, but here it is very simple”



Thanks to additional funding from Local Food, we started immediately on Walkergate Allotment. Working with garden designer Charlotte Ridley, who kindly volunteered her time, we gathered everyone's ideas to produce a design that would make the allotment more accessible, safer, that incorporated areas for being together and quiet contemplation, and that provided for a range of different gardening activities regardless of the weather, and we worked together towards this common goal.

At Felling and Moorside we noted the different ways people use the garden and recorded ideas, visiting a garden centre to gain inspiration and look at the range of plants available. We created mood boards and produced garden designs for next year. It was very exciting to see different ideas of what the allotments might become; ideas that used all of the senses.

We also continued to develop the Cooking Club. Having access to a community kitchen meant we were able to start our peer cook training programme. Working with an experienced chef, they tried out different cooking skills and techniques, shared their own recipes, and built their confidence in teaching others how to cook food from different cultures. Twelve cooks graduated from our first course.



Celebrating achievement is important to all of our participants and we had a chance to enjoy the fruits of our labour at our annual ceilidh in October 2012.

The celebration marks the end of Summer gardening activity and the start of the Winter programme; it's a good time to reflect on what we've done, eat some of the produce and look at the photos. It's an opportunity to remember everyone involved in The Comfrey Project year.

The year saw several staff changes. Two members of staff were absent with long term illness, and Financial Administrator Joe Hughes retired after six years with the Project. We recruited new staff to deliver the Local Food Project - "Growing and Cooking with World Foods" - and they brought fresh ideas and skills to The Comfrey Project.

Organisational and strategic work continued with revision of the Mission Statement and Principles, and a realisation that these are not just words, but require active steps to implement at all stages of planning and delivery.

The Policies Review was completed, and we made time to write procedures that supported and underpinned them. Having an organisational structure helped us manage and cope with the changes, but without losing focus on our main aims and objectives; supporting people.

Communications Manager Craig Puranen Wilson took a Summer break to work on the Olympics, and on his return we merged his role with that of the Finance Administrator.

“When I come here,  
I forget everything”



Our daily Twitter and Facebook feeds have helped us to tell positive stories about the contribution made by asylum seekers and refugees - not just to The Comfrey Project, but in the wider community. There is huge support for asylum seekers and refugees and when we are constantly exposed to negative images and stories it is good to know that there are friends who support us and challenge inequality.

With snow storms on the horizon, November saw the bankruptcy of our landlord which meant a short-term move to temporary accommodation at a peppercorn rent (courtesy of Newcastle City Council).

Our participants developed a varied Winter programme with the continuation of the Gardening Club who met at Ouseburn Farm. Using knowledge and skills from plants that were familiar - such as coffee, date and tamarind - they learnt more about seed sowing and plant propagation. It was also a great chance to see how other organisations work, and to share skills.

Other activities were held at Summerhill Bowling Club, a light airy space in which to meet and be creative. In addition to card making and knitting, we made cheese and jam, learnt about herbs, and planned what we could grow in the year ahead - lots more herbs and flowers!



# “Here I am happy”



## A HELPING HAND

As a small charity, minor issues can have a major impact, but when this occurred in 2012-13 our participants took on greater responsibility in organising and delivering activities. Fershete, Evelyne, Yassir, Mitra, Muanza and Merhdad all did extra work in setting up group activities, while others picked up the slack: washing-up, cooking lunch, paying busfares, tidying up and securing the site.

Volunteers have continued to give their time at the allotments and in the kitchen. Trustees increased the frequency of their meetings, and we had lots of help to pack up and move offices, and get the equipment back to the allotments.

It is reassuring to know that we are part of a community that supports and welcomes asylum seekers and refugees.

## FUTURE PLANS

- To continue to build stability, secure funding, provide long-term appointment of staff, and develop the Peer Cook and Peer Gardener programmes to support new participants;
- To build on partnerships that support our aims, enable asylum seekers and refugees to be more involved with their local community, and have their voice at the heart of policy and decision-making;
- To develop the allotments as safe emotional spaces - places for asylum seekers and refugees, places they are respected; and
- To explore the link between cooking and growing, and to cultivate a more diverse range of plants at the allotments.



## FINANCIAL REVIEW

At the end of the financial year we had £15,656 in unrestricted funds, which would provide about one month's running costs in the case of financial difficulty.

The majority of our funding comes from charitable trusts and foundations, with some funding from local authorities and individual donors. We are very grateful for the generous support we have received from our funders and from individuals.

We would not be able to provide the service that we do without your help. Thank you!

## DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' Report set out above.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pippa Kendall". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light pink rectangular background.

Pippa Kendall  
Chair  
December 10 2013

To The Comfrey Project

From: The Independent Examiner

I report on the accounts for The Comfrey Project for the year ending 31st March 2012/2013

Respective responsibilities:

The Association is responsible for maintaining the accounting records from which the attached accounts have been prepared. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts and statements, without performing an audit and to report to the Management Committee.

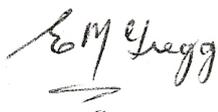
The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. This also includes making enquiries as are necessary for the purposes of this report.

Examiner's Statement

Based on my examination, I found the accounts to be satisfactory and confirm the financial statements gives a true account of The Comfrey Project affairs as at 31st March 2012/213.

Accounting Policy

The Accounts have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with applicable accounting standards and follow the recommendations in the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting by Charities (SORP).



Edith M. Gregg

10th December 2013

## THE COMFREY PROJECT

Charity Regn. No: 1093365

## RECEIPTS &amp; PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2013

Restricted	Unrestricted	Total		Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
£	£	£		Funds	Funds	2012/2013
		2011/12		£	£	£
20,000		20,000	<b>Income Receipts:</b>			
12,250		12,250	Northern Rock Foundation Grant	0		0
25,000		25,000	Lloyds TSB	12250		12250
1,000		1,000	Tudor Trust	25000		25000
15,000		15,000	Hadrian Trust	0		0
			Community Foundation;			
			Henry Smith	25000		25000
			Lily Matthews	2500		2500
4,000		4,000	Gateshead MBC	3280		3280
			Newcastle Fund	5000		5000
			Big Lottery Fund/Local Food	40102		40102
20,000		20,000	Esmee Fairburn Trust	20000		20000
1,000		1,000	Cruach Trust	0		0
	1	1	Interest on Investment	0		0
	1683	1,683	Other		1343	1343
<b>98,250</b>	<b>1685</b>	<b>99,935</b>	<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>133132</b>	<b>1343</b>	<b>134475</b>
			<b>Direct Expenditure:</b>			
5,555		5,555	Session Costs	5714.71		5714.71
			Winter Venue	2097.77		2097.77
1,796		1,796	Station/Postage/p.copy	2802.21		2802.21
48		48	Publicity	920.21		920.21
	-15	-15	Sundry creditor	0		0
1,214		1,214	Insurance/Audit fees	742.21		742.21
7,025		7,025	Freelance workers	5380.25		5380.25
222		222	PU & Staff Protect. Cloth.	0		0
133		133	Allotment Rent	466		466
60		60	Staff Training	356.27		356.27
2,597		2,597	Garden Equipment & seeds	2465.06		2465.06
4,578		4,578	Refreshment (included in session costs)	0		0
758		758	Telephone/Mobiles	1040.73		1040.73
8,830		8,830	Travel - Beneficiary/Voluntary	9170.28		9170.28
1,188		1,188	Travel - staff	596.48		596.48
4,817		4,817	Rent	9035.64		9035.64
148		148	IT & Office Equipment	372.65		372.65
47,988		47,988	Salaries	55547.35		55547.35
			Miscellaneous	155.38		155.38
25		25	Recruitment	0	0	0
<b>86,981</b>	<b>-15</b>	<b>86,866</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>96863</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>96863</b>
11,269	1700	12969	<b>Excess Income over Expenditure</b>	36269	1,343	37611
24,444	12613	37,057	<b>Fund Balance b/fwd 2011/12</b>	35713	14,313	50026
<b>35,713</b>	<b>14,313</b>	<b>50,026</b>	<b>Fund Balance to c/fwd 2012/13</b>	<b>71982</b>	<b>15656</b>	<b>87637</b>

## BALANCE SHEET for year ended 31 MARCH 2013

Restricted	Unrestricted	Total		£	£	2012/13
£	£	£				£
37905	13763	51667	Bank Balance as at 31 March 2013	74286	15106	89392
-2192		-2192	Less Creditors	-2304		-2304
	550	550	Debtors			0
			Float PW's		550	550
<b>35713</b>	<b>14313</b>	<b>50026</b>	<b>Bank Balance to c/fwd 2012/2013</b>	<b>71,982</b>	<b>15656</b>	<b>87,637</b>

The Financial Statement gives a true account of the state of the affairs of  
The Comfrey Project as at 31 March 2013

*Christina Kendall*

Chairperson  
for and on behalf of the Management Committee

Date:

**THE COMFREY PROJECT**  
Charity Regn. No: 1093365  
**SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2013**

		£		
<b>2012/13</b>	Creditors	Cheque Nos:	301465	792 C. Wilson
			301464	446 Northern Design
			301462	442.81 Opus Energy
			301461	90 Fush Electrics
			301466	250 Matthew Fleming
			301453	210 Ousburn Farm
			301455	36.4 Sanja Ratkusic
			301431	24 Sanja Ratkusic
			301400	13.5 Community Foundation
			<b>2,305</b>	<b>Unpresented cheques</b>
			<b>2,305</b>	
	Debtors	Petty Cash	50	
		Project Workers Float	500	<b>Unrestricted</b>
			<b>550</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>
			<b>550</b>	

<b>Summary of Specific Grants:</b>	<b>2011/12</b>			<b>2012/13</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>B/fwd</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Balance</b>
		£	£	£
Lloyds TSB	7104	12,250	-11,776	7578
Tudor Trust	18963	25,000	-21,351	22612
Community Foundation ;				
H. Smith	0	25,000	-12,480	12520
L. Matthews	0	2,500	0	2500
Gateshead MBC	0	3,280	-3,280	0
Newcastle City Council	0	5,000	-5,003	-3
Big Lottery Fund/Local Food	0	40,102	-31,032	9070
Esmee Fairburn Trust	9645	20,000	-14,031	15614
Adjustment (Salaries)			2,091	2091
	<b>35712</b>	<b>133,132</b>	<b>-96,863</b>	<b>71982</b>
		<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Balance</b>
		£	£	£
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>				
B/fwd	14313			14313
Other		1,343		1343
	<b>14313</b>	<b>1,343</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15656</b>
<b>Total balances</b>	<b>50025</b>	<b>134475</b>	<b>-96863</b>	<b>87637</b>





The Comfrey Project  
Arch 6  
Stepney Bank  
Newcastle Upon Tyne

info@thecomfreyproject.org.uk  
www.thecomfreyproject.org.uk

Registered charity 1093365

In 2012/13 we were supported by

