

Grow Elgin – and Beyond!

A Climate Challenge Fund supported project
April 2017 – March 2018
delivered in and by the Elgin community with REAP
CCF – 5254

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Sowing and growing at Cooper Park at a Grow Elgin – and Beyond! session

Starting Point

Grow Elgin – and Beyond! sought to build and develop previous work in the community of Elgin (population 19,000 approx.) to get more people growing their own delicious healthy food to replace supermarket produce; and encourage more people and organisations to get the composting bug and divert more food waste out of landfill and into compost bins at home, through the REAP e-bike food waste collection service and at organisations and community gardens.

Through previous work in the town, REAP and local residents saw a chance to extend this work with vulnerable people in the community through developing therapeutic growing at a local health centre and elsewhere, plus developing new areas in the town. REAP, the local environmental charity, and the community in Elgin were delighted to be funded to continue work in Elgin, and also to reach out to some of the satellite settlements where this was possible (the ‘-Beyond!’ part). REAP saw a chance to increase staff and organizational knowledge of new areas of work, new skills through training on the carbon literacies project and sharing good practice through good reporting on our outcomes and running a conference at the end of the project. All these aims –and indeed our outcomes – have been exceeded, as this report shows, leading to some ground breaking work and exciting developments for the future.

Grow Elgin – and Beyond aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

Reduce food waste going to landfill by 2,560kgs through collecting canteen food waste by e-bike, and by setting up compost bins & caddy systems, saving a total of 1725.44kgs CO₂e

Create new community gardens for the members of Elgin community in at least 3 new venues with a total of 240m² new fruit and vegetable growing space, replacing 720kgs supermarket-bought food with locally grown food and thus reducing emissions by 2534.4kgs CO₂e

Increase the sustainability of existing community gardens set up through Grow Elgin to date through training & support; increase carbon literacy in the community by holding carbon conversations and other training sessions, 50 miles travelled by the e-bike, project publicity and 4 celebration events, including a large conference.

Increase the numbers of volunteers for REAP by 4 and other organisations by 3.
Increasing growing skills in our community with 250 participants on courses and enhancing therapeutic growing with vulnerable people

Headline Achievements

We did it! All our targets were met, sometimes not quite in the way we planned, but many new people in Elgin now grow and compost more because of this worthwhile project:

We Saved 5.02T of CO2e, beating our target of 4.25T

We diverted 3442.14kgs of food waste from landfill through our e-bike collections, setting up compost bins and getting more people composting at home

We worked with individuals and organisations to set up 256m2 of new growing spaces and support existing community gardens, beating our target of 240m2

We worked with 681 people new to the project at 24 workshops and 81 courses to promote growing and composting (target 250)

We engaged with 640 new people at 10 events, including a final conference attended by 135 people (target 100)

We worked well in partnership with many organisations and held 4 steering group meetings to direct the project

We promoted the project well, with 131 miles travelled by e-bike, 664 leaflets distributed and 4 press releases published, plus web/social media posts

We worked with 8 new volunteers, 5 for REAP and 3 from other organisations

Activities

Activities Grid	
How many training courses* did your project deliver? Gardening and composting courses	82
How many events did your project hold? Workshops and information sessions on seed sowing, growing your own, food miles, carbon conversations, composting, 7 events including a conference attended by 135 people	34
How many events held by other organisation did you participate in?	7
How many staff, volunteers or community members have achieved qualifications through the project Carbon Literacies Training (3), vulnerable adults training (5)	8
How many people were directly employed by your project. Tell us the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of employees (e.g. 3 days per week = 0.6 FTE).	5 3FTE
How many sessional staff members were employed throughout the project? This should not overlap with those directly employed.	2
How many people are actively involved in your project – attending events and participating in workshops etc.?	1321
How many people volunteer their time and energy to keeping the project going – don't forget the members of your management committee or board?	13
How many volunteer hours have been recorded to support your project?	347
How many schools are involved in your project?	9
How many square metres (m²) of community growing space (allotments, poly-tunnels, raised beds, community gardens) has your project brought into use?	256m ²
How many households have started growing food or composting at home with the support of your project?	15
How many kg's of food has been grown during your project?	768kgs

How many kg's of waste has been composted during your project?	446.15kgs
How many kg's of other waste have been diverted from landfill because of the activities of your project?	9kgs

Grow Elgin – and Beyond! carried out a variety of activities to achieve the aims of the project:

Community gardens

Grow Elgin and Beyond! sought to increase publically accessible growing spaces in Elgin and some of the surrounding settlements. Baseline information showed that while some people in the community are keen growers, others do not have the confidence to grow their own food due to a lack of skills and opportunity. This project helped local people set up growing spaces in their workplaces, in their town's public places and in neighbourhoods, backed up by growing courses and workshops. 256m2 of new growing space was created and gardens set up through previous work in Elgin were also maintained.

Elgin High Street already hosts some edible planters from an earlier opportunity with Elgin BIDS, but during this project, another chance to make an impact right in the heart of the city emerged. Moray Council obtained funding to set up the high street 'parklets', cycle parking space and planters. What better low carbon living message than to park your bike and gather herbs and fruit and vegetables for your lunch?! REAP were delighted to be approached to help and the parklets are now much admired by groups on best practice visits wanting inspiration for public planting. No vandalism has occurred at the site, nor at any of the other public spaces like Cooper Park. REAP would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of Moray Council Parks and Gardens managers and staff in this work.



Press coverage of the 'parklets' planted up by the Grow Elgin and Beyond project in Elgin High Street

In Cooper Park, bi-monthly care and weeding sessions saw many members of the community coming down to help out, learn and take home free produce. Some new growing space was added here, too, with fruit trees, herbs, strawberries and vegetables being planted on courses and workshops. Seeds and cuttings were collected here for other gardens and workshops, so that many of these sessions require no plant or seed purchases. We estimate that the project has saved 260 peat-based, bought plants - saving peat, pots, chemicals and transport (see front cover for picture)

E-bike food waste collections and herb tours

We have reached the challenging target for food waste diverted from landfill by E-bike collections – and that is despite attracting less organisations than we hoped – 5 new (target 10). Every organisation joining the scheme represents a real achievement, as it involves getting over the barriers some people find to dealing with food waste. Using gentle persuasion and conversations which stress success with other organisations, myth-busting, highlighting the environmental and other benefits and teasing out the problems, then solving them, we are delighted that more organisations have come on board. One of the new volunteers attracted to the project is going to undergo bike training and take part in collections.



REAP Project Worker Dorothy and the e-bike food waste collection trailer

The e-bike is a useful publicity tool, too. Trained REAP staff take it to as many events as possible – it is a good opener for informal low carbon living conversations. Other project publicity has seen some successful leaflets to promote all our events and activities and excellent, regular facebook coverage and reach from posts and blogs at every event/ session.

Our office staff have done a great job co-ordinating the project and dealing with enquiries and bookings. They help to create a great reputation for the project in the town and beyond which comes from prompt and informative replies to queries, nothing being too much trouble and efficient action.



Publicity leaflet, sign and composting at Maryhill therapeutic garden, Elgin GP Practice

With our new focus on therapeutic growing, REAP staff wanted to learn more about how we can deliver this work better. 5 staff were trained in working with vulnerable adults through Moray Council, and took part in other training. 3 staff attended a 2-day Carbon literacies training session organized in Keith for REAP and several other CCF funded organisations and others with CCF Project staff and obtained their certificates, thoroughly enjoying the sessions.

Schools sessions & work with young people

Young people are the citizens of the future and this project aimed to involve as many schools and youth groups as possible. Right from the project's first days with a session at West End Primary School learning about growing and how bees help our plants with 30 pupils, to the end of project conference involving 28 pupils from Seafield Primary showcasing the work they've achieved growing at their school to the whole conference and taking part in a carbon conversation, Grow Elgin and Beyond has sought to help children learn about growing, low carbon behavior, composting and having fun outdoors.

Courses and sessions were held at all the community gardens set up through the project, both new this year and ones set up through previous work, including youth organisations such as Aberlour Youth Point and Elgin Youth Café. Grow Elgin and its predecessors have now worked with every school in Elgin. Just three lovely examples:

A successful trip by West End Primary School pupils to the Elgin Allotment Group's garden share, where everyone worked hard weeding, sowing seeds and finding worms!



Elgin Academy have been really active this year, with classes working down at their extensive gardens near the school, the eco-group taking part in carbon discussions and pupils learning about composting and growing. They've recorded their harvest, too and material going into the compost bin. The interest generated has led to some filming work focusing on the garden taking place with REAP. They hosted their annual Farmer's Market and REAP attended, helped by one of their pupils who has become a regular volunteer



Elgin Academy Farmers' Market, with REAP young volunteer Harvey in festive attire!

At St. Sylvester's, the Depute Head and P3/4 class teacher commented: *"P3/4 is making posters about composting and the wormery and they are going to give a short talk to all the classes about this next week. I will put one caddy back into the staffroom and one will stay in our class. The children really enjoyed working with you and we will be using the compost when planting our planters"*. This shows an example of the work going on in all our schools sessions, working with interested teachers to deliver lasting environmental impacts to the school and the children.

Other sessions at youth projects such as Aberlour Youth Point and Elgin Youth Café, plus some of the 'Beyond' Elgin work with the Hopeman Beavers for example brings this approach to a wide variety of young people in a variety of ways, learning about composting and setting up a compost bin, cooking with the harvest and sowing seeds.

Raised Beds and local lunches

The REAP raised beds continue to provide a great way to get gardening, with the robust, sanded raised bed kits providing an accessible way to get growing. Within an hour, an area of grass can be turned into a growing space by participants who've never grown before. Many of the growing courses and sessions involved putting these up to gain m2 for replacing supermarket veg and fruit with local produce. During the late summer and early autumn, the harvests from the beds provided local lunch sessions to eat lovely produce and encourage people to try new vegetables and grow their own at home.



Making raised beds and eating local lunches!

Work with older people

At the other end of the age scale, participants at the Moray Resource Centre set up their beds for the Spring ahead in a session with REAP. Gurness Day Centre and ENABLE made use of some indoor time in the cold weather to make bird feeders and herb posies with herbs harvested from community gardens set up through the Grow Elgin Project.



L: ENABLE working on their bird feeders for the Grow Elgin project R: Gurness Day Care Centre sowing seeds and having fun

Events

Grow Elgin and Beyond wanted to hold a number of events to engage with new members of the Elgin community and promote low carbon lifestyle to more people, as well as promoting the project. 3 larger events were held and an end of project conference 'Grow your own Healthy Communities'. We also attended 7 events organized by others, with stalls and workshops, reaching a total of 640 new people. These included Pitgaveny Farm open day, 2 Farmers' Markets and a Health and Social Care Event. All were successful, with a total of 135 people attending the final event, some of whom have worked with the project all the way through and did presentations. 10 other organisations attended with workshops and stalls.

The successful REAP Apple Day in Cooper Park on 25th November 2017 saw 4 REAP staff and 4 volunteers helping 70 members of the public to enjoy a celebration of locally grown apples, with apple pressing on the REAP apple press, the longest apple peel competition, a local apple tree grower selling apples, sowing apple seeds in recycled eco-cups and juice tasting. Lots of leaflets, free seeds and growing information were distributed to members of the public, and a press release was published in the local paper.

The Big Lunch Event organized by REAP was also very successful in promoting low carbon living and added to the tally of 34 local lunches held throughout the project.



'Scratting' apples in the REAP apple press at Apple Day in Cooper Park on a cold November day

OUTCOMES

CO₂e Outcome 1

Aim - 2,560kgs of food waste diverted from landfill by joining the project food waste e-bike collections or by composting more at home, saving 1725.44kgs CO₂e

TARGET EXCEEDED - 3442.14kgs of food waste diverted from landfill saving CO₂e

- bike collections = 500kgs diverted food waste; 337kgs CO₂e - actual = 446.15kgs
- new compost bins diverting food waste from landfill 10@ (UK household average) = 1560kgs diverted food waste – actual = 16 bins = 2,496kgs
- 50 participants on courses, 25 of whom increase food composting by 20kgs each = 500kgs – actual = 22 composting courses and sessions with 191 new participants on composting courses and 575 new participants on other courses. At least 500kgs food waste diverted from landfill.

Carbon calculations

Assumptions:

- a) Bike food waste collections from organisations who are currently adding canteen waste to household collections will compost at registered SEPA sites.
- b) The average household produces 156kgs of food waste per year (WRAP 2012 & revisions). Grow Elgin – and Beyond! will convert 10 new households to compost at home diverting waste from landfill and help participants on courses to reduce landfilled food waste by a further 500kgs per year
- c) Figures for CO₂e generated from landfilled food waste from DEFRA/DECC 2016
- d) Actual waste saved = **3442.14kgs waste**
 1. Baseline emissions = $3442.14 \times 0.68 = 2340.6\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e}$
 2. Emissions after project impact = $3442.14 \times 0.006 = 20.6\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e}$
 3. Annual emissions savings = $2340.6 - 20.6 = 2320\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e} = \mathbf{2.32T CO_2e}$
 4. Lifetime saving = $10 \times 2.32 = 23.2T CO_2e$

Evidence

The e-bike collections and composting for use in community gardens work is all carried out under SEPA regulations and registration. REAP has 3 registered compost bins in community gardens around Elgin near to the city centre that are licensed to accept waste from our efficient electric bike and trailer. Each participating organisation hosts one or two kitchen caddies or larger receptacles to collect their canteen waste – tea bags, fruit peelings and coffee grounds etc. and it is collected weekly by REAP on the e-bike. Waste is weighed and recorded each time and then waste is taken to the registered bins. This waste was previously all landfilled with general waste, and the service would not exist without the Grow Elgin and Beyond project. As we only managed to add half the number of new organisations we'd hoped to, we are pleased with the total weight collected, which is only just under our target.

For compost bins we worked with 16 individuals, schools and organisations to put up a compost bin, 6 over our target. One school fed back to us that they are composting 50kgs of food waste per week which was previously going to landfill. This impressive amount is realistic, as the school has 100 staff and 1000 pupils and has begun to involve the school canteen as well as the staff rooms and classrooms. At Maryhill for example, the full caddy

in the staffroom is being emptied twice per week, giving an estimated 4kgs of food waste per week. Other individuals in households estimate they are meeting the 'average' UK household food waste target (3kgs per week). Despite a poor response rate to our surveys (only 4 respondents) we are confident to average out the amounts and 'claim' the 156kgs per year food waste diverted from each of the 16 bins installed. This would also allow for some people who may have diverted from the council brown bins instead of from landfill.



Participants on a composting course for Grow Elgin and Beyond

For participants on composting courses, we exceeded the target of 60 participants, reaching 134 new people. We also reached an amazing number of 681 new people through our other courses and sessions, as well as 640 new people at our events. Feedback from one participant showed that she now puts an extra 2.5kgs of food waste into her new home compost bin each week, and 2.5kgs into the council food recycling bins. Others said they were putting less food waste into their green bins as a result of the project. However, to avoid any double counting of the people attending courses who have hosted compost bins, and to cover any errors in reporting behaviour change, we are claiming the 500kgs per annum only, as we are confident from our surveys and anecdotal evidence that at least 30 people are saving 20kgs of food waste from going to landfill as a result of our project.

“A member of staff reported that people are now ‘looking daggers’ at anyone now putting fruit peel or teabags into the general waste bin!” – Project Worker, Maryhill GP Practice

“I am inspired to get going this Spring and ensure that I take practical actionplastics recycling and better use of compost materials”- Participant at the ‘Growing Your Own Healthy Communities’ final event conference

Case Study – tsiMoray offices, Elgin

15 staff work from the tsiMoray base in Elgin. They'd had a go at recycling their office food waste before, but the container ended up causing unpleasant smells and things reverted to people putting their food waste into the general waste collection. After a couple of visits by REAP staff after interest from some members of staff, a food waste caddy was re-instated in the kitchen, and with several new staff coming in and being interested in composting, they agreed to trial the REAP weekly compost collection. The staff are now composting all their food waste through the bike collections every week and have started another caddy in their upstairs kitchen. "It's been a lot easier than we thought" said a staff member. "Dorothy collects out food waste every week and there are no smells – it's just really simple. Staff are commenting that they are glad to be working somewhere that composts food waste, not sending it to landfill. We'd encourage other organisations to take part"

CO2e Outcome 2

Aim – 240m2 of new growing space to replace supermarket produce with locally grown, saving 2534.4kgs CO2e

TARGET EXCEEDED – 256m2 set up at 4 new locations and 7 other locations, saving CO2e

Carbon calculations

Work in Elgin shows that residents and organisations mostly buy vegetables and fruit from supermarkets

Surveys carried out in previous projects back up Carter's figures (2010) of 3kgs produce grown per m2 to replace supermarket produce. These spaces will last at least 10 years, as all are in the grounds of community organisations who have agreed to engage with us and confirmed their leases/ownership

Actual area converted to producing food = **256m2**

Figures for carbon conversion for embodied emissions for supermarket food and locally grown food DEFRA/DECC 2016.

1. Baseline emissions = $3\text{kg} \times 4.06 \times 256 = 3118.08\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e}$
2. Emissions after project impact = $3\text{kg} \times 0.54 \times 256 = 414.72\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e}$
3. Annual emissions savings = $3118.08 - 414.72 = 2703.4\text{kgs CO}_2\text{e} = \mathbf{2.70T CO}_2\mathbf{e}$
4. Lifetime saving = $10 \times 2.70\text{Co}_2\text{e} = \mathbf{27 T CO}_2\mathbf{e}$

Evidence

Grow Elgin and Beyond set up 256m2 of new community growing spaces for the members of Elgin community to grow fruit and vegetables to replace supermarket fruit and vegetables. These spaces included new gardens at Maryhill GP Practice, at SACRO homelessness project, for VIP childcare at Holy Trinity Church next door and at Stramash Outdoor Nursery. New ground was also added at existing community gardens in South Lesmurdie, Cooper Park, Aberlour Youth Point, in the community at Murrison Road and at schools.

Therapeutic Gardening

One of the areas Grow Elgin – and beyond! wanted to focus on was therapeutic growing. Members of the Elgin Community were asking for an opportunity to grow their own as part of their journey to improve mental and physical health. An opportunity arose to develop the grounds of the Elgin Health Practice at Maryhill near the centre of Elgin. This GP Practice has been on the TV recently, though the lovely new grounds and REAP staff and volunteers were sadly not featured! The garden there is now a treasure, with new growing beds of various shapes and sizes set up, a donated shed, leafmould container and compost bin and rain water butt. Sessions have been held twice a week, with a variety of staff and volunteers taking part.



Planting fruit bushes and setting up raised beds at Maryhill, Elgin GP Practice

A referral pathway has been set up, and 12 local organisations have joined this system, though clients from 8 have attended so far. REAP staff have been trained to take on this work safely, accessing free Vulnerable Adult training thanks to the Moray Council and other training to support this work. REAP staff have liaised with the firm providing NHS grounds work, and hope to make the job easier by collecting leaves that are the cause of many complaints each year and turning them into leafmould.

A kitchen caddy for staff canteen waste has been installed to 'feed' a compost bin in the garden, providing 4kgs a week of waste diverted from landfill. Despite initial worries, the staff have taken to this with a will and it's now become part of the canteen experience there with help from our staff.

The people attending the sessions have helped us by recording their views and changes. 6 people completed the baseline survey and 3 of those completed a follow up survey some time later.

First Survey results

have you grown any food before?	yes - 2	no - 2	no reply - 2	
How did you feel about coming to the garden?	very anxious - 2	anxious - 2	neither anxious nor confident - 1	confident - 1
What do you hope to get out of coming to the gardening sessions?				
physical activity	5			
social interaction with others	5			
better food/healthy diet	1			
new gardening skills	1			
relaxation	4			
relief from symptoms	4			
better physical health	2			
better mental health	2			
fun	6			
how do you rate your skills as a gardener?	some - 3	a little - 2	no reply - 1	

As seen from the above table, some participants felt very anxious and worried about how it would be for them to attend the sessions at Maryhill. It is a testament to their courage in making it down to the garden, and to the welcoming and care given by the REAP staff, that they came, kept coming and are benefitting.

It's also interesting that everyone was looking for a bit of fun – aren't we all?! REAP staff are good at making sessions fun by providing a welcoming atmosphere, having a good chat, making sure there are plenty of refreshments for tea break time and talking about why we are there so that people can feel useful and valued.

After a few weeks, participants were asked to complete a follow up survey. 3 of the original folk were unable to complete a form (one was in hospital) but 3 people gave us their feedback.

How do you feel about coming down to the garden now?	anxious - 3			1 person still felt the same anxiety, but the other two had lowered their anxiety level
How do you feel you have benefitted from coming to the gardening sessions?				
physical activity	3			
social interaction with others	2			
better food/healthy diet				
new gardening skills	2			
relaxation	1			
relief from symptoms	2			
better physical health	1			
better mental health	2			

fun	2			
how do you rate your skills as a gardener?	some - 1	a little - 1	quite high - 1	1 person felt the same, but 2 felt they had more skills

We're grateful to participants for completing this survey, and glad to see that they've enjoyed the sessions and got so much out of it. One participant had recently lost their partner and enjoyed coming out of the house. Comments made to staff working at Maryhill showed how much people enjoyed the sessions and benefitted. After a slow start as the 12 organisations and agencies we engaged with took a while to be able to refer people we feel this is a great start to our therapeutic growing work. The amazing space at Maryhill will provide a great harvest for this year too, with the large area of land sown up with tasty fruit and vegetables.

The community garden there has hosted visits from schools, too – 46 pupils helped plant out 100 edible hedge saplings and underplanted some of the ground with strawberry runners saved from plants in Cooper Park beds transplanted by other community volunteers on our bi-monthly sessions there.

Other growing areas have been created, for example at SACRO Elgin accommodation for homeless people or those in danger of homelessness. Workshops to plan the space, construct the raised beds, learn growing skills and sow seeds/ grow plants have helped 6 participants gain new skills and confidence and build and maintain a new community garden space and compost bin.



At Arrows, a project of Quarriers Care working with people who have addiction problems, a garden set up under a previous project has been burgeoning with produce this year. 3 participants there helped to record produce harvested and planned crops and seed sowing as well as enjoying the harvests, working with help from REAP staff and a volunteer for Arrows. They recorded a harvest of salad leaves and herbs – 3.8kgs, Rhubarb – 5kgs, beans – 3kgs, fruit berries and strawberries 600gms, Brussel sprouts 2.75kgs, spinach, beets, onions and chives – 2.5kgs, a total of 17.75kgs in their 4 beds at 2x1m2 over 5 months.

Arrows garden with produce at Kilmolymock close, Elgin High Street

At schools, some recording of produce took place, with Seafield Primary School having a soup day to celebrate the harvest: *“we have made enough soup for about 30 people and given some carrots and potatoes to the canteen. We picked a large bucket full of carrots*

and half a bucket of potatoes – there are still plenty left. We also picked thyme for the soup” – teacher, Seafield Primary



A good harvest at Seafield Primary School!

Outcome 3 – Environmental

Aim – Increasing sustainability of existing community gardens through training and support; 3 new community gardens; increasing carbon literacy through publicity, project activities and 2 carbon conversations

TARGET EXCEEDED

Creating 3 new community spaces on previously uncultivated land and increasing the sustainability of existing community gardens set up through Grow Elgin to date through training & support.

Increase carbon literacy by holding informal carbon conversations, other training sessions and 2 formal ‘Carbon Conversations’ held.

Publicity for project activity – 50 miles travelled by e-bike including 75 bike compost collections & 2 herb planter tours, 500 leaflets & 4 press releases

Evidence

The project carbon conversations and publicity are mentioned elsewhere in the report, so this section focuses on the learning journey and increased sustainability for those taking on their community growing spaces. As well as the case study of VIP Childcare below, an example of sustainability in a long- established community garden is at Winchester House, where a new group, Step-by-Step now have their base for work with young parents and children. The garden is still perfect for use with groups and has seen a new group of

people getting the most out of this safe, well-planned space. A staff member there commented:

“Thank you for a great session. It was lovely to see the families out in the garden and they thoroughly enjoyed doing some gardening with you. They seemed really engaged in your composting session and I thought they were asking some really good questions” – Step by Step young parents worker

Another established space is Aberlour Youth Point. Sessions with staff and young people there have begun to show them feeling confident to take charge of the garden and create new spaces:

‘We went shopping for compost, planned the tatties, bought more edible plants with peppers, courgettes, carrots etc and planted them so our garden is full. Harvested the fruit bushes - mainly blackcurrants. We netted the strawberries too. We are watering regularly although the rain has helped. One young lad took home and planted the same plants to keep experiment going’. Aberlour Youth Point worker

Case Study – VIP Childcare

After lots of community work and support, the journey to a sustainable compost system and eating lots more locally grown food has come full circle for the VIP childcare group. Work with REAP worker Dorothy and others over the years (which included the ‘Worm’ play, e-bike collections over the years, group visits to community growing spaces set up through the project and staff training courses in raised beds, seed sowing, composting and growing techniques) has led the staff to grow in confidence and see the benefits that a community growing space can add to their work. Dorothy helped VIP negotiate with the church next door to access a space for a community food garden and compost bin, meaning that the group has now moved from the e-bike service to compost its own food waste and develop their own growing space. A real success story!

“The support from REAP has been motivating, inspiring, interesting and invaluable. Our garden would be nowhere near as productive or well planned as it is now. Thank you for making a huge difference”- VIP Childcare



Setting up the new garden with VIP Childcare children

Outcome 4 – Social

Aim – increasing volunteers for REAP by 4 and other organisations by 3; increasing growing skills with 250 participants on courses and sessions; 4 project events, including a large event with 100 participants

TARGET EXCEEDED

Increased growing skills in our community – 681 new participants on courses

Nurturing skills are enhanced in vulnerable people & 12 organisations (target 10) worked with us to report back – feedback forms report less anxiety and increased skills.

1 large event to promote growing your own healthy community and showcase achievements of the project with 100 attendees and 3 other events

Evidence

Growing and composting courses and sessions reached an amazing 681 new participants, from nursery school children to over eighty's. Skills learnt included:

Sowing seeds, windowsill planters, making and setting up raised beds

Planting and pruning fruit trees and tree care

Compost 'greens' and 'browns', what to put in – what not to put in

Setting up kitchen waste caddies and how this saves on carbon emissions

Making a tasty lunch from produce you've just picked

Carbon conversations both formal and informal, where does your food come from?

Seed saving, transplanting, taking cuttings, herbs

Bird feeders, soil, bees, bug homes and how these all help your plants grow

And many more.....

Final Conference



Elgin Town Hall with conference delegates for the 'Grow Your Own Healthy Communities' Conference

On Friday March 23rd, Grow Elgin and Beyond was showcased at Elgin Town Hall. 10 organisations ran workshops and had stalls there including the RNCI (Royal National Countryside Initiative), Greenfingers (steering group members), Earthtime, Elgin Youth Café, Earth For Life, NHS and Moray Mental Health Champions. After presentations by our local MSP Richard Lochhead and REAP Manager Ann and Therapeutic Gardening Manager Alasdair, 6 workshops including 2 carbon conversations were held. There was also a vegetable cake competition, presentations from participating schools and a Gardeners' Question Time session.

135 people attended, with 50 new participants to Grow Elgin and Beyond, with the others all being people we'd worked with over the project. Comments from feedback forms included:

(I enjoyed most) The vast knowledge from the workshops and the feeling of genuine community involvement

(I enjoyed most) The opportunity to feedback at the carbon conversations workshop and this being used to be help with research



Scenes from the final conference – L: RNCI's locally milled flour stall was popular;

R: Children from Seafield School tell everyone about their edible garden and how much they enjoyed taking part

More comments from feedback:

I would like to do carbon conversations in school with my students. I was also enthused to see what others are doing

I didn't know REAP did so many workshops on composting and growing, and that they helped people so much with that learning journey.

It was moving to hear how much the children had enjoyed the outreach that Barney had provided.

It would be great to see more people who do not know the work you do and why it is being done. This would then be an ideal opportunity to educate them in the positive, welcome atmosphere you have at the conference.

I find the REAP staff to be very passionate about both their jobs and the community as a whole...

The 2 carbon conversations worked with 32 of the conference participants, who took part in carbon footprinting activity or 'Where in the World' (does your food come from), followed by the carbon conversations 'Diamond Nines' activity, imagining what Scotland will look like in 2030 and what their priorities might be then. After much discussion - and debate that all the 9 ideas were important - the group settled on educating young people as the most important.



Some of the younger Carbon Conversation participants with their carbon footprints

Learning and reflection

- Monitoring and evaluation has been a challenge throughout this project – unexpectedly, as previous projects have had better response rates to filling in feedback forms etc. Some participants seemed confused by the forms, so for the future, we are planning using a different model, where people we work with ‘sign up’ to a carbon journey at the beginning of engagement with the project. We’re hoping to develop a contract to agree with groups and schools, so that if key staff leave or people question the approach (for example growing edible plants only for safety reasons – some flowers are poisonous; or using only peat free compost to save peat bogs), we can discuss the agreement with them and promote the low carbon living aims with new people.
- Therapeutic growing has been a great success during this project, with new training for staff, growing understanding and skills for REAP and a totally new service being created in Moray for those wanting to use the service. However, we will be adjusting the feedback forms we use here, too, to be able to better capture comments and outcomes.

- The events took a great deal of planning, but were very successful. Apple Day took place in late November this year – another time we would return to ‘Apple Week’ in October, as we were clashing with Santa events and it was a bit chilly!
- We are encouraged by what has gone well in this project, meeting targets and delivering good outcomes, courses and community gardens. In new projects we will continue to promote this approach of fun, accessible sessions

Finance and Administration

Continuing some key staff from our previous CCF projects meant that we had a good start for the planning and administration side of our project. However, a large part of the first month of the project was needed to carry out a fair and open recruitment process to employ the other project staff, who joined the project in mid May 2017. We experienced great difficulty at first recruiting a sessional gardener to work with other staff, though this was resolved by the last few months of the project, and 2 sessional workers were employed to great effect. Various underspends were resolved by the end of the project, mostly spent on extra staff hours and the plants and materials to deliver the extra growing spaces and extra sessions highlighted in the rest of this report to exceed our targets. The project was delivered to budget. We were really pleased with the good communication with our CCF officer Claire, who has helped with advice and prompt replies to our queries.

REAP’s robust policies and procedures helped us to manage staff and the 4 new REAP volunteers throughout the year. Our experienced office team is invaluable in helping ‘front line’ staff do their jobs well and in a supported way. Having the office as a contact point for getting back to participants is also essential. We also enjoyed liaising with CCF officers to run the Carbon literacies training here in Moray, meet other CCF projects and learn from others’ ideas and experiences, as well as deepening our engagement with carbon saving choices, both as an organization and on a personal level. We were also approached by 2 other organisations wanting to access CCF funding. As an experienced recipient of CCF funding, we were pleased to help out, and 1 group went on to be successful in their bid to CCF.

And Finally....

We have been delighted to have been successful in our bid for funding to take this valuable work forward through CCF 6. We will be able to continue learning from all the participants we work with and share the low carbon journey with more people to March 2020. We are looking forward to that!