



# ROOT-AND-BRANCH OUT CIC IMPACT REPORT 2022/2023

NURTURING COMMUNITY THROUGH NATURE





*Another year has passed! It's now seven years since we took the plunge to set up as a CIC (Community Interest Company) and we've not reached the 7 year itch phase! Being a CIC can be challenging in terms of business sustainability but with our solid and growing team we have been fortunate to gain funding from a range of local and national awarding bodies, which has given us security in our work. We have also had a great time, running so many projects that connect people with each other, the environment, food and nature.*

*Many different groups of people have experienced knock-on detrimental effects in the aftermath of lockdowns and the trauma of the Pandemic. Our work has focused on supporting people across the County, enabling mental and physical wellbeing, helping with reintroduction to social and community activities, helping with rising costs of living, especially food, and reconnection with nature.*

*We feel privileged to be able to run many projects that connect people with each other, the environment, food and nature and to fulfil our ethos of nurturing community through nature.*

## **Our Vision**

*Nurture the needs of community through nature connection, food and healthy relationships within a culture of sustainability.*

## **Our Objectives**



*To support children and young people to flourish through connection with nature.*



*To equip families across Rutland to make sustainable healthy choices in order to meet the challenge of rising costs in a climate conscious way.*



*To create a Shared Garden oasis of peace, beauty and productivity for therapeutic benefits.*

## **Our Work**

*Responds to the needs of the community through,*

*Outdoor Nature Education*

*Growing Together*

*Sustainable Food*





## OUTDOOR NATURE EDUCATION

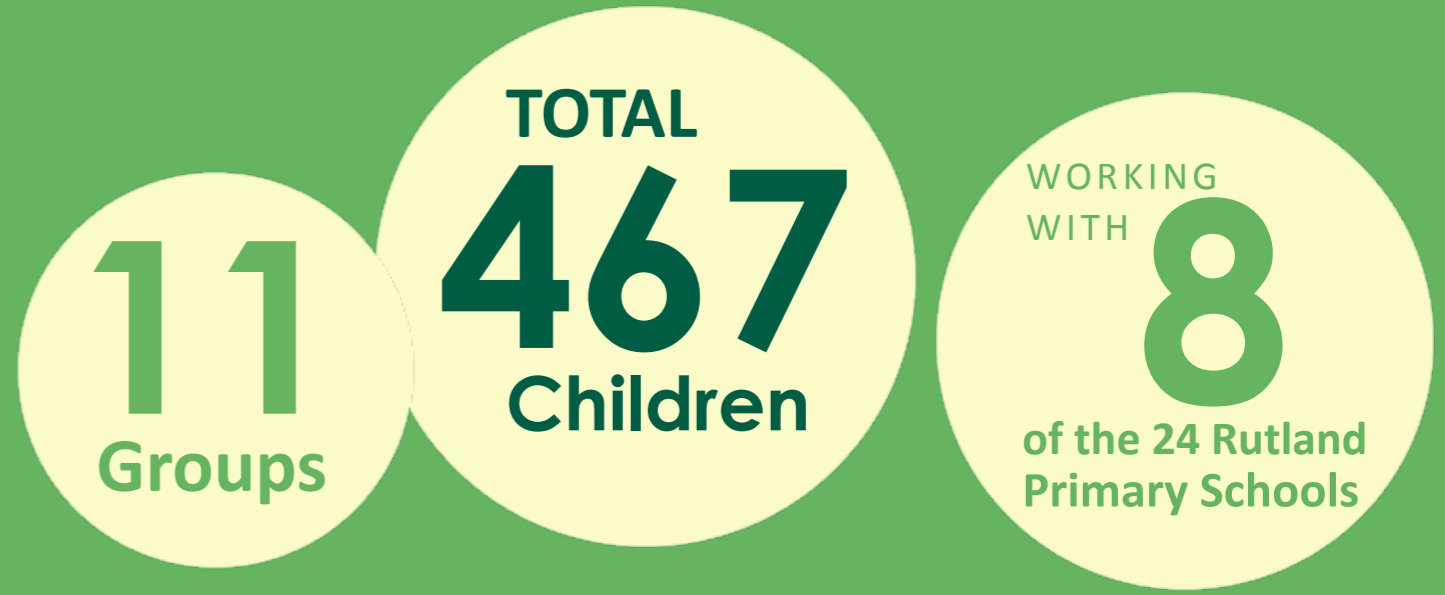
# Forest School

*Forest school has always been the heart of our work. This year we have developed our capacity as a team to offer more Forest School projects.*

*We have had freelancers and Trainees furthering their education and skill development with us, which has been mutually beneficial. Children have benefitted from long-term forest school projects in some of the schools we work with, which greatly impacts how children develop knowledge, understanding, awareness, physical and Ecoliteracy.*

*Long-term Forest School is the way it should be, and we have again fulfilled the criteria from the National Forest School Association to be awarded our Recognised Provider of Forest School status.*

*We support children and young people who have experienced anxiety and stress exacerbated by the unusual way of life that they have experienced over the past two years, which has been inevitable. Our Nature experiences have provided children with a place of peace, fun and wonder. We have often bridged the gap between families and professional services while many children wait to access appropriate support.*





## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT **Forest School**

“I found the sessions to be restorative, helping me to reconnect with wild nature as well as introducing my daughter to the joys of being outdoors in a natural setting.”

### *Was there any noticeable change attending Forest School?*

“She began to ask to go outside and play more often outside of Forest School.”

“He has changed, so much more confident in trying new things.”

“Definitely helped me to feel more relaxed and have improved my well-being. This is partly due to the woodland setting and partly due to how the sessions are run, in that parents and children are allowed to “just be” and to explore at their own pace.”

“Forest school was one of the first groups we attended after the covid lockdowns, so we’d never been to playgroups or toddler groups. I had a two year old hungry to explore the world and I often didn’t know how to safely support her to do this.”

### *Benefits of Forest School*

“Helped calm anxiety caused by autism. All children were able to access activities despite their physical restrictions.”

“As a child with autism E often finds extra curricular activities overwhelming, but she clearly loves forest school and seems to find that everything is done at a much better pace for her. It has encouraged her to spend much more time looking around her on walks and she talks about the facts she knows about nature now. She even asked for a waterscope to explore rock pools and a microscope to look closer at things from the forest - things she had never had much interest in before attending forest school.”

“Developed better relationships with their peers.”

“She has benefited from the impact on me, as having a more relaxed mum can’t be a bad thing!  
The sessions invite us to slow down.”





“I so enjoyed my visit to see you in action  
...to see how your programme has progressed  
over the years and to appreciate the benefits  
to children from the freedom to explore and  
expand in such a stimulating environment.

I am full of admiration for all that you [...] accomplish.”

Jane Peach, Windmill House Trust trustee

*Windmill House Trust have been supporting our  
Forest School work with Rutland Schools since we  
began.*







## GROWING TOGETHER

### Growers Row Shared Garden

*Our shared garden, Growers Row has been invaluable this year in bringing people together to work collaboratively: children, young people, adults of all abilities and older people.*

*We have a second polytunnel, inherited from Sustainable Land Trust when they closed, which served as our warm space to gather in winter (yes... we were even there in the snow!), a shelter from the rain, and a place of belonging for all of us. There have been countless cups of tea drunk and conversations had in this space. The growing space polytunnel has been such an asset to start seeds off, to nurture seedlings and to get early crops.*

*We were successful in gaining some funding from Severn Trent Water which enabled us to improve our rainwater harvesting to support sustainable watering at the garden. And funding received from the LLR Academy, has enabled us to improve the site for accessibility and to enable a wider demographic of people to come to the site. The composting toilet and raised beds have been a huge positive in terms of meeting the needs of our garden's members.*

*Growers Row has hosted workshops, outdoor family yoga classes and monthly Crafternoon sessions for home educated children.*





# Therapeutic Gardening

*In April this year, we launched a free 6 week Therapeutic Gardening Course for people who want to improve their wellbeing by gardening. The course ran twice this year, and there will be a third and fourth later in 2023. The course engages people in following the seasonal cycles and the maintenance work within the time they come. They learn about seed sowing and saving, soil preparation, weeds and plant identification, water harvesting and tending plants until they're ready to harvest.*

*We have had interest and participation from adults of all ages and abilities. They have formed connections with other people in the garden and shared conversations and cuppas too, and are continuing to use the garden after the course has ended.*

# Seated Gardening

*For the Elders in our local population, we have facilitated three Seated Gardening projects, to sheltered accommodation and a nursing home. These workshops have created a greater sense of community in places where people live and have got people's green fingers moving again in an accessible way.*

*We sowed copious amounts of seeds for flowers and salad vegetables. Two sites now have some significantly strong tomato plants growing, adding life and colour to dreary walls! We hope that we will have a glut of tomatoes, and then we can return to make green tomato chutney with the participants.*

*Friendships have formed, and people work together for a common goal. The Dementia friends group visited Growers Row to do their Seated Gardening and were very keen on watering the garden, planting small plants out, and working on the accessible beds. They too were glad to work in the company of others, and we enjoyed chatting and listening to each other's stories.*

*The feedback was very positive, and there was a desire to do it all again next year!*





## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT

### **Growers Row**

*Do you feel welcome at Growers Row?*

“Yes, definitely. Claire and Jo are such lovely and welcoming leaders and really provided an amazing learning experience for my son and I, in a gentle environment where we also had the opportunity to meet other families.”

“Yes. Lovely place and lovely people but you can work on your own if you want a peace and quiet!”

“I feel so welcome. It is a calm, warm and friendly space to be for both myself and my children. We all benefit from being at Growers Row!”

“There is always a warm welcome and a smiley face.”

“My little one enjoyed planting apple seeds, and still to this day collects the seeds from her apples and plants them in our garden.”



“Helpful information in how to grow vegetables and help recognising plants and weeds.”

“Lots of tips on vegetable growing and organic gardening.”

*How does Growers Row add value to your life?*

“My grandson is learning about gardening and growing.”

“The calm and welcoming environment has improved my mental health and well-being.”

“It’s relaxed and friendly but not pushy and we’re not forced into engaging (my grandson is very shy).”

“Really thoughtful (and varied) activities organised for the children It is so relaxing and we forget about all our worries.”







## SUSTAINABLE FOOD

# Community Fridge

*Our Community Fridges are going from strength to strength! We now have a 25-strong volunteer team who collect, sort and store the surplus food on the night before we open our doors and another team of volunteers who support the smooth running of the Community Fridge when we are open to the public on Fridays. Every week we make food collections from Waitrose, M&S, Coop, Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and Hambleton Bakery.*

*We have developed relationships with local food growers from allotments and private gardens, and people bring us their locally grown food surplus! Any surplus vegetables and fruit harvested at Growers Row also, are shared with the Community Fridges. There is a cycle of abundance and gifting, to ensure that as much food is shared among our community.*

*Since opening in October 2020, we have achieved over 21 tonnes of food saved from landfill. We are serving, on average, over 50 customers a week in 3 hours opening time! One tonne of surplus food equates to 2280 meals, so we have saved almost 50,000 meals worth of food so far!*

**9 tonnes  
SAVED**  
FROM LANDFILL  
IN 12 MONTHS

**21  
tonnes**  
SAVED FROM  
LANDFILL  
SINCE OCT 2020

TOTAL  
**2046**  
visits



## Fundraising Event

*In November 2022, we put on a Fundraiser for the Community Fridges. It was a hugely successful occasion! The Uppingham Jazz and Soul Band played, and we offered bread from Hambleton Bakery, cheese from Otters and chutney made and donated by Rosie Makes Jam on each table for people to graze. We raised over £1100 for the Rutland Community Fridges. We really appreciate the support offered by local businesses.*



## Souper Space

*In the Autumn of 2022, there were various discussions in our Uppingham community about the fact that there was unseen disadvantage and people in need of a collective lunch. We got together a number of interested people to discuss the needs and how those might be met. As we already hosted the Community Fridges, it seemed logical for us to host a warm lunch throughout the Winter, to bring people together and make use of excess vegetables. With some more funding, the Souper Space was born.*

*Over the 20 weeks that we were there hosting the soup lunches, we eliminated a queue waiting in the cold, served around 500 bowls of soup, and met people we hadn't seen before who joined us for a warm lunch, company and then the food from the Fridges.*

*We recruited Soup Makers, servers and wash-ups from our community, and students from the Uppingham Community College also offered stirring support and forged relationships between the school on the outskirts of town and our local customers. It was brilliant.*

*Our Souper Space is now 'Super Space' throughout the Summer, providing tea and biscuits and a place for people to continue meeting, and we are hosting the occasional Summer Smoothie Space too! Souper Space will return in the Autumn to provide warmth, food and connection for our local folk.*





## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT **Rutland Community Fridges**

*In your opinion, how valuable to the community are the Rutland Community Fridges?*

“Very. For the global community, this kind of initiative is critical, but locally it creates a safe space, aids people financially, and prevents or lessens the stigma of asking for help.”

“Especially for those unable to access a food bank.”

“VERY!!! I have been in the position that I was unable to feed my family and when asking for help got told no one could help due to the fact I was not reviving the correct benefits I then had to choose between food or heating. Through out the winter just gone our heating was very rarely on and if it was just for an hour at a time. Now due to working hours I am only able to come in the holidays but if it was run in the evening. I would possibly be able to help and attend more.”

*How do you benefit from the Rutland Community Fridges?*

“I discovered Proper eggs (that I could never afford normally) and bread ditto. I really enjoy meeting all the different people.”

“Saving money is fantastic in the current climate. It is also a friendly space, so working from home it is good to get out, meet a variety of people both queuing and volunteers, and feel safe at what could be deemed a vulnerable time.”

“We’re a great crowd in Oakham - everyone knows everyone - sometimes it’s the only chat I have all day.

When I was ill and couldn’t go one of the Q club phoned me to check. How kind.”

“This [...] encourages me in my food shop to be mindful of food waste and not throwing away food to landfill.”

“We get some stuff we wouldn’t normally be able to get and also stops the food going to waste.”





# Community Engagement Events

July 2022

**Growers Row open day at the Global Birdfair**

Oct 2022

**Lantern Making at Oakham Castle**

Nov 2022

**Magical Lantern Walk**

Feb 2023

**Seed Swap event at Oakham Castle**

Jun 2023

**Horticultural Marquee at the Rutland County Show**

Monthly

**Voluntary Sector Forum monthly meeting participation and presentations**

## Media

### Marketing Materials

*This year we have printed leaflets, posters, fliers and point of sale cards for; Growers Row, Therapeutic Gardening Course, Rutland Community Fridges and the Magical Lantern Walk. With both targeted and widespread distribution to reach new audiences.*

### Quarterly Newsletter

*The Friends of Root-and-Branch Out quarterly email newsletter was launched this Spring, with the view of reaching those not on and moving away from social media.*

**Stamford and Rutland Sound**

**Oakham Nub News**

# Our Growing Team

*We have been fortunate to employ an Outreach Worker parttime, to reach our community and the other organisations within it to further build links and enable people to join our projects.*

## Thanks

**Huge THANKS to our Funders and Supporters!**

Windmill House Trust

Oakham Town Council

Postcode Places Lottery

Visions Childrens Centre

COOP

Rutland County Council

Uppingham Town Council

Change Agents UK

The Grange Garden Centre

Leicester and Rutland Community Fund

Getting help in Neighbourhoods

Hubbub

Rutland Agricultural Society

Tesco Oakham

Oakham Castle

Global Birdfair

Burghley House

Welland Vale Garden Centre







Alex:07929 989 432   Claire:07811 424 430   Clare:07971 959 039

[info@rootandbranchout.co.uk](mailto:info@rootandbranchout.co.uk)   [www.rootandbranchout.co.uk](http://www.rootandbranchout.co.uk)

[f/rootandbranchout](https://www.facebook.com/rootandbranchout)   [@/rootandbranchout](https://www.instagram.com/rootandbranchout)