



sustainable merton

Annual
Review
2022-23



Welcome to our Annual Review for 2022-23

A message from our CEO

During the year we continued to grow our ambitions to take forward climate action projects, bringing communities together and influencing people to take positive action - both to achieve a more sustainable lifestyle and improve their health and wellbeing. We did this in the context of the major cost of living and energy crisis and with an understanding that post-pandemic, we wanted to encourage people to continue to be community-minded, have pride in their borough and continue to be kind to each other and the world we live in.



Diana (left) pictured with two participants of the High Path Balcony Project, in partnership with Clarion Housing

We have been fortunate in securing grant funding for a range of projects which has allowed us to grow our activity and the impact we have on our community. Collaboration sits at the heart of our agenda, working with statutory organisations and community groups as partners in our quest to inspire action for the good of the environment. We couldn't do everything we do without the dedication of our talented staff team, our Trustees, our wonderful volunteers and our business donors. I thank all of them for the difference they make.

This report celebrates our work and puts the spotlight on projects.

Diana Sterck

Diana Sterck
Chief Executive



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What we do

Residents, businesses and communities all have an important role to play in reducing carbon emissions and creating a more sustainable Merton. We champion and drive community climate action in the borough and are a leading light when it comes to people-led projects and partnership working.



Reducing carbon emissions



Connecting communities



Improving health & wellbeing



Increasing civic pride



Contributing to a global climate action movement

OUR KEY PILLARS OF WORK

**AIR
QUALITY**

ENERGY

**FOOD
RESPONSE**

**GROWING
SPACES**

WASTE

**COMMUNITY
CHAMPIONS**
(volunteers)

VISION

A **happy** and **healthy** Merton community, working together on the journey to a **fair** and **sustainable future** that protects the natural environment and each other.

MISSION

Mobilising Merton's community to respond to the **climate emergency** and improving **quality of life** without compromising the planet.



Air quality needs improving

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

We actively encourage positive behaviour change to reduce air pollution, such as stopping idling and promoting active travel.

CLEAN AIR DAY

On Clean Air Day, a joint event with Merton Council was held. We also visited a local school and delivered climate change presentations to 3 classes.

In the lead-up to Clean Air Day, we worked with Global Action Plan to assess air quality using a PM2.5 levels monitor. This enabled us to map out a "cleaner air walking route" for school children.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

In partnership with Merton Council, we trained and supported 15 residents in collecting data on NO2 levels in Merton.

We now have over 6 months' worth of data in 10 locations and will be looking at what action can be taken where levels exceed the National Air Quality objectives.



Greening and wellbeing go hand in hand

GROWING SPACES

Monthly Action Days and Growing Fridays were held at Mitcham Community Orchard and Gardens.



Our Growing for Good project brought together older and younger residents to build raised beds, sow seeds, nurture crops and cook with the food they had grown.

Twice-weekly sessions at Phipps Bridge Community Garden continued. 20 regular and 40 occasional volunteers harvested 610kg of produce, shared amongst our community.

BALCONY GARDENS

We worked with Clarion Housing to deliver the 'Balcony Gardens' project on the High Path estate. Residents received free planting packs and learned how to grow in small spaces, which supports our wider aim to improve air quality and increase biodiversity.

MERTON GARDEN STREETS

133 streets took part, covering every ward in the borough.

Volunteers contributed **+ 10,000** hours.

223 planting events took place.

Thousands of bulbs were planted in verges.

A **seed swap** event took place so seedlings could be grown on for the following spring.

Friendships were formed, supporting civic pride and neighbourhood action.

WORKSHOPS

We ran a 'Caring for Houseplants' workshop in partnership with Merton Plus and Merton Health & Care Together, and other nature-themed workshops to support wellbeing through green social prescribing.

Saving energy and warming homes

COST OF LIVING ACTION

We are living in an energy crisis. But we shouldn't have to choose between eating or heating our homes. We promote energy-saving behaviours and raise awareness of low carbon energy solutions.

During the year we worked with Merton Council and the local Community Response Network to support people with the cost of living crisis, with energy costs being a fundamental part of this issue.



WARMER HOMES

The Wheel brought together volunteers to make and distribute draught excluders to those requiring warmer homes. We continued to write blogs on energy-saving tips such as batch cooking to save on electricity, and we promoted our Energy Saving Handbook at Cost of Living and other local events.



Stopping good food from going to waste

PARTNERSHIP

We led the coordination of Merton's Community Fridge Network and Merton Council's Food Response Network and organised borough-wide Food Response meetings involving 15 local providers of food support.

The Community Fridge Network redistributed 68,670 kg of surplus food across 11,206 visits to the Fridge Network. This represents 154,080 meals and 204,187 kg of CO2 saved.

With our support, Clarion Housing launched 'Clarion's Rutlish Community Fridge', a satellite community fridge serving local Clarion residents who may need help with food.



GROWTH

The number of visits to Merton's Community Fridge doubled between March 2022 and February 2023 to. In response to the surge in demand for food support, we increased our staffing levels and worked with our very dedicated team of 55 volunteers Fridge Friends, who give around 350 hours of time each month. We also teamed up with the Hubbub Foundation to pilot an ebike and trailer to collect and distribute around 450kgs of food each week.



Reducing waste and creating a circular economy

THE WHEEL

In its second year, The Wheel, Merton's waste reduction and circular economy capacity-building project, developed new initiatives based on 3 strategic pillars: a digital hub, community waste reduction initiatives and resource-efficient high streets.

The Wheel delivered:

- A signposting digital hub
- A 3-day community clothes swap event in partnership with SwopItUp
- 3 repair cafés
- A 6-week upcycling project at Canons House
- 4 Project Preloved workshops
- 2 projects on Morden High Street - a waste mapping study of small, medium and micro businesses and a reusable bags trial.

The initiatives contributed to improved health and wellbeing, civic pride, social cohesion, green skills, behaviour change and income maximisation.



ACTION ON PLASTIC

We coordinate Refill Merton, the local chapter of the National award-winning Refill campaign to tackle plastic pollution. We supported 3 Refill Action days over the year to encourage more businesses to become Refill stations and to raise awareness of "food on the go" plastic pollution.

We also continued our monthly Waste Warrior Weekend litter picks with an average monthly participation of approximately 18. These are opportunities for our Community Champions and supporters to undertake litter picking action in their local area, and give back to their community.

WE R POLLARDS

The 'weRpollards' project is a partnership project with Moat Housing to improve recycling rates and reduce contamination through fly-tipping and incorrect disposal of waste.

During the year, we worked to understand the issues causing poor waste management, established an active resident group and brand identity, worked with local stakeholders and improved trust and communication between residents and their housing provider.



Volunteering

The contribution of our dedicated volunteers is key to our success. Our Fridge Friends, Repairers, growers and gardeners, Merton Garden Streets Coordinators and those who actively participate in our projects, activities, and resident-led green groups all make a huge difference in improving sustainability in the borough.

DIVERSITY

During the year we increased our total volunteers to 397, with 21% from the BAME community and together they contributed 18,031 hours, equivalent to 10 full time staff!

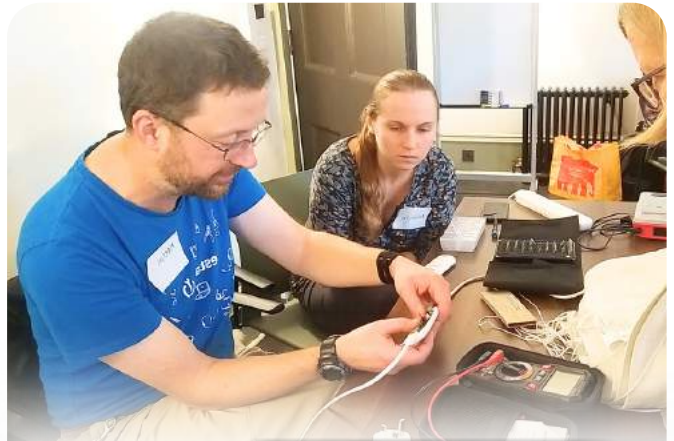


A year in numbers



400
volunteers

18,000
volunteer hours



114,965
kg of CO2 saved

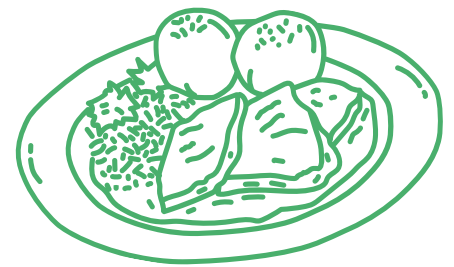
705
kg of waste prevented



5,473
visits to Merton's
Community Fridge

35,500
kg of surplus food
redistributed

75,400
meals equivalent



135
growing places

4,000
pollinator-friendly
plants

350
growing and
planting events



Finance & Organisation

OVERVIEW

Behind the scenes, our trustees and staff team worked to ensure good management and good governance.

We introduced working committees for finance, fundraising and HR, we updated all of our policies, reviewed our organisational risk assessment and ensured we met our obligations as a charity.

In 2022 we gained recognition for the second year in a row as runner up in the Merton Best Business Awards Charity of the Year.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

TOTAL INCOME: **£329,653**

TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED: **£316,250**

GRANT FUNDING

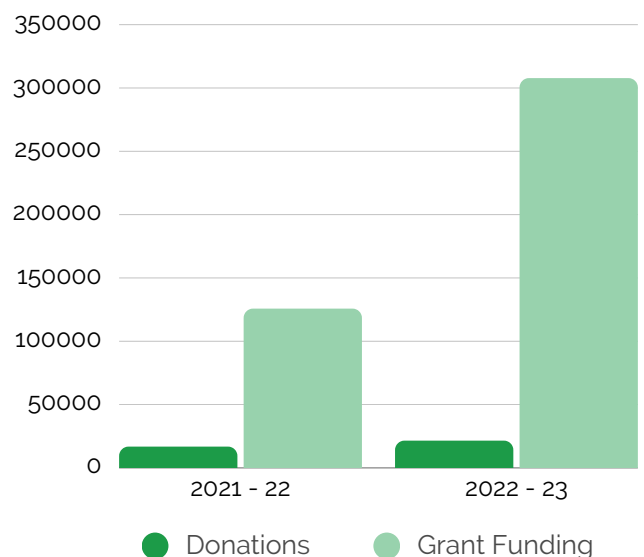
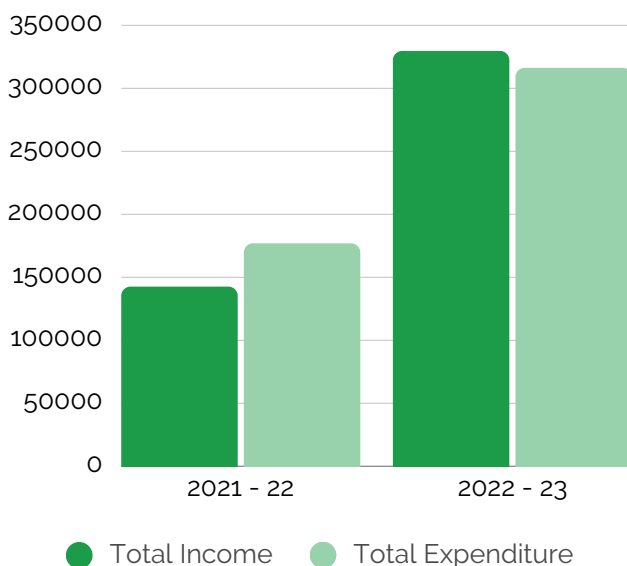
During the year our grant income increased by over 100% and we delivered 23 projects using grant funding awarded from:

- The London Borough of Merton
- Clarion Futures
- Wimbledon Foundation
- Merton Giving
- Pollards Hill Community Initiative Fund
- Tesco Community Fund
- Magic Little Grants
- NHS England
- Hubbub Foundation

DONATIONS

During the year we also received donations from local people and businesses totalling £21,528, an increase of 25% on the previous year. We have set ourselves an increased target for 2023-24.

We'd like to thank everyone who has donated and supported us over the year.



A copy of our full set of statutory accounts is available at sustainablemerton.org/policiesandreports

If you would like to get involved or support us please get in touch!



Registered Charity No. 1156639



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