



Green Synergy Strategy 2024-2027



Growing the Community Together

Best Gardening & Horticulture Charity 2023 - East Midlands

Using community gardening to support people to socialise, learn and thrive.

Green Synergy. 49 Roman Pavement, Lincoln, Lincolnshire. LN2 5RD. Tel: 01522 533077

Charity Number: 1153883 Company Number: 08399741

Email: info@greensynergy.org.uk Web: www.greensynergy.org.uk



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Green Synergy

Who We Are

Green Synergy is a well-respected Lincoln based gardening and horticulture charity that supports people to socialise, learn and thrive. Our charity currently manages two community gardens, Hillside Garden and Ellie's Memorial Garden as well as developing outreach urban gardening. Our work supports people of all ages in the most under-served communities in Lincolnshire to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Our programmes focus on supporting people in the most deprived communities in Lincolnshire to improve their mental and physical wellbeing whilst managing the green spaces in environmentally responsible ways. We deliver community gardening and therapeutic horticulture programmes, volunteering, warm and cool spaces hub activities and community engagement events to bring people together in gardens and green spaces and to support people living in Lincolnshire to come together, meet new people and have fun.

2023 was our 10th anniversary as a charity and Green Synergy was proud to have won the Best Gardening and Horticulture Charity- East Midlands in the Non-Profit Organisation Awards.



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Legal Status and Structure

Green Synergy is a registered charity and our charity number is 1153883.

Green Synergy is also a Company Limited by Guarantee. Our company number is 08399741 registered in England and Wales.

Non-Executive Board

Responsibility for the governance of Green Synergy sits with the Board of Trustees who are also Directors of the Limited company. The Trustees meet at least seven times a year and set the strategic direction of the charity. The current Non-Executive Directors and Trustees are:

Ms Caty Collier

Mrs Rachel Gibbons

Miss Susan Kernachan

Mr Ryan McCormick

Executive Team

Responsibility for the day-to-day operations, management, finance, fundraising and staffing rests with the Chief Executive supported by a senior management team and an operations delivery team. The senior management team comprises of a Garden's Manager, Community Development and Delivery Manager and a Finance and Office Manager. The operational delivery team comprises of project officers, projects assistants, garden assistants, freelance staff and a fantastic team of volunteers.

Our Vision

Green Synergy's vision is to create healthier and caring communities connecting nature, people and plants.

Our Mission

Green Synergy's mission is to inspire, enable and empower people in Greater Lincolnshire to meet, grow, learn and thrive through community gardening and connecting with nature.

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Our Values

❖ Inclusive

- We seek to be welcoming, accepting, trusting, accessible and non-judgemental with our diverse communities.

❖ Understanding

- We care, support and empower people, plants and our places to thrive and feel safe.

❖ Respectful

- We treat people with dignity, fairness, integrity and respect at all times.

❖ Collaborative

- We work towards productive partnerships to enable communities and people to connect and grow.

Our Cornerstones

▪ Person Centred

- We take an empathetic approach through active listening, acting and supporting people where they are at in an accepting environment.

▪ Sustainable

- Managing our resources responsibly and protecting the sustainability of our people, places, finances and our plants safely.

▪ Growth

- Enabling people, places and our organisation to grow through skills building, partnership connections and income development.

▪ Innovative

- Adopting creative, agile, responsive and resourceful approaches to our services, communities and organisation.

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Our Operating Principles

- ❖ All people matter and our role is to enable positive change through opportunities to have fun, improve life chances and choices.
- ❖ We place community at the heart of what we do through active asking, listening and responding to needs.
- ❖ We deliver quality services that are consistent and reflective whilst measuring, communicating and learning from our impact.
- ❖ We ensure consistent good governance, management and leadership across all aspects of the charity's services by effective and efficient use of resources to grow people, places and plants.
- ❖ We responsibly manage, protect and build sustainable spaces and operations with oversight and scrutiny.
- ❖ We positively communicate our message in tailored, inclusive and accessible manner.
- ❖ We create safe spaces for all team, volunteers and participants through effective risk and health and safety management.
- ❖ We adopt collaborative approaches to alliances and innovative partnerships with a wide range of sectors.

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Our Story

- ✚ Green Synergy was originally founded by Mary Hollis as a community group in 2012.
- ✚ We became a company limited by guarantee on 12th February 2013 and a registered charity on 20th September 2013.
- ✚ The founding principles for Green Synergy were:
 - ❖ **Synergy:** Together we can create something better. We can help to bring out the best in ourselves and each other.
 - ❖ **Sustainability:** Look after each other and our planet now and for the future.
 - ❖ **Co-Creation and Community Ownership:** Green Synergy is created together with the people it serves. Green synergy belongs to everyone who is actively involved in it and everyone who has helped to create it becomes part of its legacy.
- ✚ The primary driver for setting up Green Synergy was the discovery that Lincoln did not have its own city farm or even a large community garden. Despite being set in a very rural county, Lincoln still suffers from the same disconnections to food production, farming and the countryside as other cities. It is particularly hard for people living in disadvantage to access the countryside so, we wanted to bring a slice of it right into the heart of the city for everyone to enjoy.
- ✚ The charity received its first funding from Community First and the Health Lottery.



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- ✚ Green Synergy then supported the development of a series of community garden projects in Lincoln including:
 - ❖ Stamp End Community Growing Project
 - ❖ Ellie's Community Garden
 - ❖ Olsen Park Community Garden
 - ❖ St Giles Community Garden
 - ❖ The Global Garden – Sincil Bank
 - ❖ Birchwood Green Spaces Wildflower Areas
 - ❖ Gaunt Street Community Garden
- ✚ The charity also delivered therapeutic gardening sessions to the YMCA, Nomad Trust, Discovery House, Busy Days and Mint Lane and developed a dementia friendly gardening training course and activity programme with funding from Public Health.
- ✚ Through the hard work and dedication of the staff team and an incredible group of volunteers and Trustees, it took Green Synergy four years to find a suitable piece of land on which to deliver this type of work from one base.



Winter 2017



Summer 2019



Autumn 2022

- ✚ In 2017 Green Synergy were granted a lease on 2.5 acres of derelict land at the back of Lincoln County Hospital (owned by United Lincoln Hospitals Trust). Formerly used as allotments, the site was covered in thirty-years of brambles and fly-tipped waste. Together with the local community, hospital, schools, businesses and voluntary groups, the space has been transformed into a

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beautiful, edible, accessible, educational, healing, community space for people to enjoy.

- ✚ Hillside Garden was formally opened in 2019 and now offers a tranquil green space in an urban city with social and therapeutic horticulture activities, heritage orchard, a peace garden, a therapeutic sensory garden, kitchen garden, wildlife and conservation area, children and families garden, polytunnel and store and accessible toilet.



Hillside Garden Opening AGM 2019

- ✚ The focus of Green Synergy's work between 2017 to 2023 has been:
 - ❖ **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Therapeutic Horticulture with delivery of projects such as:
 - Better Together 2018 to 2024
 - Eco Therapy WRAP 2020
 - Green WRAP 2023
 - Green Shoots of Wellness 2023
 - Green Nature and Nurture 2023
 - ❖ **Community Connections:** Social gardening, volunteering, community outreach events and activities and activities for children, young people and families. These have included:
 - Tower Power 2017-2019
 - Tower Power Kids and Teens – 2018 to 2024
 - Community Consultations 2020
 - See How Our Garden Grows – 2021 to 2024.
 - ❖ **Skills and Learning:** Informal Training, Work Experience and Skills Building with the delivery of projects such as:

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- BBO Move & BBO Steps
- Community Renewal Fund - 2022
- Get into Gardening.
- Landscaping Courses.

❖ **Environmental Sustainability:** As a cross-cutting theme, this has informed our approach to garden management through developing organic vegetable gardens showcasing sustainable growing systems and demonstrating eco-designs.

- ✚ The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge to Green Synergy, the gardens and the local community in which we are based. The charity supported the local community and we were so grateful that Green Synergy was able to secure the funding it needed to remain fully operational. Our staff team worked exceptionally hard to adapt our projects so beneficiaries could keep engaging safely and accessing the help they need.
- ✚ In 2021, Green Synergy secured £322,000 of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to support with organisational development and to increase our engagement with local community and develop new projects and income generating opportunities.
- ✚ In February 2022 Mary Hollis stepped down as CEO to move to new challenges and the whole team thank Mary for her vision in establishing such an inspiring concept.
- ✚ In September 2022 Ali Talbot joined Green Synergy as CEO and is supporting the Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers to build the future direction, funding and sustainability of the charity for 2024-2027 and beyond.
- ✚ 2023 saw us celebrate our 10th Anniversary with a wonderful summer celebration event, the introduction of new mental health and wellbeing projects and the charity being awarded the Best Gardening and Horticulture Charity East Midlands for 2023.

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The Gardens

Hillside Garden

Hillside Garden is Green Synergy's primary gardening and horticulture site for delivering our programmes, projects, events and volunteering.



Autumn and winter vibes of Hillside and our garden lawn and borders

Established in 2017, Hillside Garden was a former quarry and then community allotments before falling into an abandoned site with fly tipping, debris and contamination. The land is owned by United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust (ULHT) and leased and managed by Green Synergy.

Hillside Garden is a 2.5-acre site comprising a garden event lawn, kitchen garden, heritage orchard, peace garden, therapeutic sensory garden, a children's garden and a wilding area.

Ellie's Memorial Garden

Ellie's Garden is a memorial garden in memory of Ellie – a much loved and respected City of Lincoln Council Housing Officer who supported tenants on the housing estate.



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Strategy Context

Green Synergy marked our 10th Anniversary from the establishment of our charity in 2023 and as the charity moves into its next decade it is an exciting phase of development from the perspective of the gardens, the team and all those we welcome to the gardens.

In order to evolve our new strategic plan, our Trustees and workforce team undertook a parallel Business Model Canvas process. This enabled the charity to explore our current and future services, the gardens' leases, our challenges, opportunities and risks. We also looked at the current and future needs of our communities and the landscape that the charity is operating in. This process culminated in a Board and Team away day to enable the sharing and fertilisation of ideas to refine our vision, mission, values and cornerstones.

Community Listening

Throughout 2023, Green Synergy undertook a series of community listening activities. The key themes that came out of this activity were:

❖ Community Value of Green Synergy:

- "I think it is getting better all the time."
- "Seeing the progress of vegetables and seeds grow into mature plants and food".
- "Extra coffee morning."
- "Enjoy the open day events they hold." "Good social activities."
- "Growing wheat, Family day, Harvest festival."
- "All the different projects."
- "Anniversary event and other events on the garden."

❖ People working together to make life better:

- "Meeting through Green Synergy."
- "Empathetic. Understanding. More teamwork. Good communication between everybody"

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- "Just keep caring for each other, checking everyone is ok like you are doing already 😊 "
- "Working with youths to give them something and keep off streets."
- "Organise breaks for both groups of volunteers and afternoon group by start "

❖ Community Concerns:

- "My concerns are about some people in the area only want to ruin anything people try to do."
- "I would say that the biggest concern is the thought of the community not being here anymore or having to restrict the days it is available."
- "The poly tunnel and the garden not been used to its potential."
- "Young kids behaviour."
- "Local people causing damage and arson especially when potatoes got pulled out."
- "Don't have one. I think there will be always some families who will appreciate coming to children's groups."
- "Vandalism."
- "Youths, Gangs, verbal abuse, harassment."

❖ Unmet Needs:

- "I would think that if sessions could be longer or more frequent then it would be better for some people who need the support of being with people."
- "Councillors could do more for elderly people."
- "More police attention – especially nuisance youths."
- "I'm not very sure. More 1-2-1 check-ins. More conversations between staff / participants."
- "We really enjoyed theatre, different sport activities, would be great do it again. Maybe trying again different music instruments,

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going for more trips time to forest, food factories, farms. (to see how to make things)"

- "Council not helpful with the local issues." "The vandalism and the uneven pavements."

❖ Making a Difference to People:

- "I think that at the moment I feel a valued member as a participant and contributed as a team while working so I'm not sure as to what could make a difference, maybe the opportunity to do bigger scale gardening projects."
- "Want buses to come back round." "Buses back on estate."
- "Access to transport (dial -a-ride) has made a difference as I am able to travel to the garden on Tues and Thursday."
- "Nothing it's worked well for me."
- "Making sure we have good lighting behind hospital making safer to use footpath. More local policing."
- "Levelling the pavements."

The reflections from the community listening are summarised below:

- ❖ Community Pride ("forgotten estate")
- ❖ Pride and ownership of Green Synergy
- ❖ Power of meeting other people
- ❖ Importance of connecting people/ space and plants
- ❖ Positive influence of Green Synergy
- ❖ Connecting people and nature
- ❖ Garden being underutilised.
- ❖ Young people opportunities – trips – get them off the estate.
- ❖ Green Synergy – a trusted space, place and organisation
- ❖ Buses issues

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Hillside Volunteers Celebration – Volunteering Week 2023.

Our Local Landscape

Green Synergy is based in the Abbey Ward in the city of Lincoln in the northeast of the city. The population of the ward is just over 11,000 making it amongst the four most densely populated wards in the city. The Abbey ward is very deprived and in the bottom 25% of all neighbourhoods in England (Source: Mapping Lincoln 2024). Its health deprivation is very acute in the worst 18% in England and the ward also scores very low in terms of income, employment, education and skills, crime and living environment. 15% of the ward population identify as coming from central and eastern Europe. Lincoln also has now the third highest suicide rates in England (December 2023).



Hillside Peace Garden

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Our Partnerships

Green Synergy is proud of the partnerships that we work with across the city of Lincoln, the county and region. Our approach to partnerships is that we can achieve so much more if we work together and we are proud to work in partnership with the following organisations.

- ✚ Abbey Access Training
- ✚ Bishop Grosseteste University
- ✚ City of Lincoln Council
- ✚ Climate Hope Lincoln
- ✚ Developmentplus
- ✚ HM Prison and Probation Service
- ✚ Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership – member
- ✚ Groundwork UK – New to Nature
- ✚ Lincoln LocalMotion
- ✚ Lincoln City Foundation
- ✚ Lincolnshire Co-op
- ✚ Lincoln Climate Commission
- ✚ Lincolnshire Community Foundation
- ✚ Lincolnshire County Council
- ✚ Lincolnshire Voluntary Engagement Team (LVET) - member
- ✚ Lincolnshire Community & Voluntary Service (LCVS)
- ✚ National Lottery Community Fund
- ✚ Natural England – East Midlands Inclusion Hub
- ✚ Shine Lincolnshire
- ✚ United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust
- ✚ University of Lincoln

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Our Theory of Change



Green Synergy Theory of Change 2024-2027



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Our 2024-2027 Strategic Objectives

Green Synergy's strategic objectives for 2024-2027 are:

- ❖ Growing People
- ❖ Growing Green Spaces Sustainably
- ❖ Growing Communities and Partnerships
- ❖ Growing Giving and Resources
- ❖ Growing Sustainability

Measuring Our Impact

Green Synergy will capture qualitative and quantitative data, feedback and reflections to support our strategic objectives. This includes the number of participants, volunteers and families with equality and diversity information and demographics with anonymity maintained. The charity will centre its impact and value measurements on the Social Value Engine and demonstrating the social value of our charity's work and our projects.

The charity's team will capture detailed feedback from participants, volunteers, parents/ carers and project partners through project surveys, reflections and questionnaires as well as community listening. We will seek feedback on the qualitative aspects of delivery, and the impact on the participants' quality of life (self-confidence, self-esteem and skills development).

As part of the process it is important that we capture participants' baseline thoughts at the start of their journey with us and then capture mid and end of programme reflections. These reflections will be built into the objectives and outcomes for projects and programmes.

Our core outcomes for our strategy are:

- i. % of participants feel their self confidence levels have improved
- ii. % of participants feel their wellbeing has improved
- iii. % of participants feel less isolated
- iv. % of participants feel they have learnt new skills

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1. Growing People

Our Growing People objective is to enable staff, volunteers, participants, beneficiaries, Trustees and wider community members to develop and grow.

We will do this by:

- a. Developing and investing in our team to grow skills, knowledge, resources and benefits through training, development opportunities and skills building.
- b. Supporting people to build confidence, efficacy and agency to improve their mental health and wellbeing journeys starting where they are at.
- c. Increasing awareness to reach the wider communities to offer more opportunities to people to support them to reach their full potential.
- d. Green Synergy will continue to and further explore opportunities of collaboration to widen what is available to staff, volunteers and participants.

We will measure this by:

- ❖ **Outcome:** % of staff and volunteers feeling supported
- ❖ **Output:** Number of workforce training hours invested by the charity.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of referrals received for our programmes
- ❖ **Output:** Number of new participants accessing our mental health programmes.
- ❖ **Note:** These measures are in addition to our core outcome measurements.

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2. Growing Green Spaces Sustainably

Our Growing Green Spaces Sustainably objective is focused on creating, maintaining and growing green spaces in an environmentally responsible approach that enables communities to socialise learn and thrive.

We will do this by:

- a. Improving people's access to green spaces to improve their physical, and emotional wellbeing and social connectedness.
- b. Providing opportunities to locally grow plants and food through gardening and therapeutic activities to improve the biodiversity of the garden's fauna and flora.
- c. Sustaining our gardens, green spaces and nature by being considerate to our environment and planet.
- d. Growing and promoting opportunities for people and communities to come together in safe spaces and have fun connecting with nature, plants and wildlife.
- e. Support the design and development of new green spaces through outreach consultancy-based services to share our knowledge and expertise to improve nature connectedness.

We will measure this by:

- ❖ **Outcome:** % of people reporting improved feelings of health and wellbeing (SVE: Connected Outcome)
- ❖ **Output:** Number of people visiting the gardens and green spaces
- ❖ **Output:** Number of species and specimens added to the gardens.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of people attending our events



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3. Growing Communities and Partnerships

The Growing Communities and Partnerships objective is focused on promoting and developing a collaborative approach to existing and new partnerships and alliances that benefit our participants, team, community and our partners.

We will do this by:

- a. Positively communicating and delivering events and activities to grow our profile and reach new audiences in different ways through strategic and place-based partnerships and alliances.
- b. Developing meaningful partnerships to create opportunities for people and their families to grow and improve their life chances.
- c. Forging new partnerships and collaborations to create new opportunities benefitting our participants, the charity and our partners.
- d. Proactively promote our work, considerately listen and respond to the community, partners, staff and volunteers to act on their needs.

We will measure this by:

- ❖ **Outcome:** % of our community feel they are listened to.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of impressions generated on our social media channels
- ❖ **Output:** Number of events and workshops delivered.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of new partnerships created.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of partnership agreements signed
- ❖ **Output:** Number of children and young people positively supported.



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4. Growing Giving and Resources

Our Growing Giving and Resources objective is focused on developing our volunteering programmes as well as the giving, fundraising and income for the charity to achieve our vision and mission.

We will do this by:

- a. Developing the range of our volunteering programmes to enable more people to access volunteering opportunities.
- b. Creating and developing new income, fundraising and trading streams to support the sustainability of the charity.
- c. Growing our supporter base through our new Membership, Patrons and Ambassador programmes
- d. Developing partnerships with corporate organisations to support our work and our sustainability.

We will measure this by:

- ❖ **Outcome:** % of non-grant unrestricted income generated
- ❖ **Output:** Number of volunteer hours supporting the charity.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of workshop participants
- ❖ **Output:** Number of new members.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of productive corporate partnerships formed



Lincolnshire Foundation Partnership Trust Group Volunteering Day – 2023

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5. Growing Sustainability

Our Growing Sustainability objective is focused on our commitment to manage and develop our charity, gardens and green spaces through an environmentally sustainable approach.

We will do this by:

- a. Strengthening our governance to meet our charitable public benefit and increase the impact with our communities.
- b. Developing our environmental management processes to support the gardens and green spaces sustainability.
- c. Securing clearly defined and sustainable leases to enable effective, safe and efficient land and premises management.

We will measure this by:

- ❖ **Outcome:** Increased value of green spaces and gardens. (SVE outcome: Environment)
- ❖ **Output:** Number of volunteer governance supporting the charity
- ❖ **Output:** Signing on leases for Hillside Garden and Ellie's Garden
- ❖ **Output:** Number of environmental workshops delivered
- ❖ **Output:** Number of corporate volunteering garden sessions delivered.
- ❖ **Output:** Number of plants grown and planted on the gardens



Hillside Wildflowers

Best Gardening & Horticulture Charity 2023 - East Midlands

Using community gardening to support people to socialise, learn and thrive.

Green Synergy. 49 Roman Pavement, Lincoln, Lincolnshire. LN2 5RD. Tel: 01522 533077

Charity Number: 1153883 Company Number: 08399741

Email: info@greensynergy.org.uk Web: www.greensynergy.org.uk

Delivering our Strategy

To enable Green Synergy to plan, deliver and measure the impact of our strategy, an annual Service Delivery Plan will be produced detailing our delivery outputs, project delivery, outcomes measures and resources required for each year of the strategy.

Progress on the strategy will be reported to the Board of Trustees in each governance cycle. Green Synergy will also provide an annual update of our progress through the Trustees Annual Trustees Report and accounts.

We look forward to working with our staff team, valued volunteers, trustees, partners and funders to make a positive difference to our communities by connecting people, plants and nature.



Growing our Community Together

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