

Freegle Grow-your-own Sustain Eden

Report for year one

Chris Cant, v1.2, 28 February 2014



Introduction

The Freegle Grow-your-own project is being run by Freegle UK on behalf of Penrith and Eden District Freegle, working in partnership with Penrith Action for Community Transition Ltd (PACT).

Penrith and Eden District Freegle is one of almost 400 groups across the UK helping people pass on unwanted items to others: so items are reused, clutter is cleared, your community is helped, new resources aren't needed and landfill costs are reduced. Until this project, Freegle has tended to concentrate on non-garden items such as furniture, children's stuff, white goods and electrical equipment.

The project aims to encourage people to grow more of their own fruit and vegetables, either individually or communally, with the specific aim of increasing the number of people using Freegle to pass on gardening items, ie surplus produce, seeds and plants to the equipment needed to do gardening.

The local Freegle group has teamed up with local transition town PACT to help deliver the project, as PACT is well known locally and PACT team members are keen to promote local sustainability including grow-your-own, communal growing, local food and reduced transport miles.

Freegle offers and requests are normally handled online and individual group members arrange to hand over items direct to one another. In addition, Freegle groups run occasional "Give and Take" events where free items can be brought and taken away. This project involves running more of these events, including running Freegle/PACT publicity stalls at public events and giving talks to meetings.

This project is part of Sustain Eden, a three-year partnership programme, managed by Penrith-based charity Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAFS) working with partners from the public, private and voluntary sector funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest distributor half of National Lottery good cause funding across the UK. The Fund aims to enable others to make real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.



Becky Day



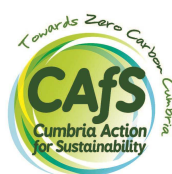
Ray and Jorie Griffiths



Django



LOTTERY FUNDED



Activities

The project uses the Freegle Direct software which has been enhanced to classify items in different categories, including “gardening” related items. Freegle users can now sign up to only see posts in the gardening category if they wish. Statistics are now available to show the number of messages in each category and the number of people involved in successful Freegle handovers. The actual count of people involved is an estimate as the Freegle software does not keep track of which people are recipients.



An online “widget” is available for others to put on their websites to show the gardening group activity and provide an option to join the group.

Freegle/PACT have run or attended 10 events in the first year of the project.

A film of the launch event has been produced along with two films of community gardening projects.

The project has received press coverage in local papers and two articles have been published nationally. As a result, Freegled seeds have been posted across the country and indeed to Canada and Australia as well.



Bolton Launch Event

The Penrith and Eden Freegle volunteers have continue to run the local group online.

An “Egg Map” website was launched.

This project has enabled Freegle and PACT to support and encourage two community projects in Penrith and one in Appleby:

- Community gardening plots around Penrith
- Raised beds to grow veg for Food bank parcels
- Appleby community polytunnel project

Statistics

Total local group membership has increased from 3330 at the start of the project to 3975 at the end of year one.

The total number of people that have successfully used the local group gardening category online is 208.

Hundreds of people have visited the Freegle stall at various public events and meetings. The number of people specifically attending gardening Freegle/PACT events is 84.

The number of seed packets given away locally or further afield is 57.

6 other Freegle groups in the UK have set up gardening category sub-groups.

106 equalities monitoring forms have been received.

A small number of people have used the phone line to get help offering items.



Emily Sharp

Conclusion

The project so far looks on course to meet its target of 500 people involved, including activity both from online members and people attending events.

The enhancements to the Freegle Direct software have been welcomed by other Freegle groups in the UK and are in use every day by most groups. It is heartening that other groups have set up gardening sub-groups.

During this year, with help from this project, PACT and Freegle has raised the profile of gardening in the area, encouraging three community projects to get off the ground and enlisted the support of Eden District Council.

The online facilities are now available to use Freegle for gardening items. The challenge is to help people use this facility and actually grow more. These goals are primarily achieved through publicity and events.

Existing gardeners need to be encouraged to share their expertise and spare produce or seeds. New gardeners need to be encouraged to start (eg on their window sill or in their back yard) and provided with the tools and seeds needed through Freegle. Gardening advice on how to do it is seen as a crucial factor in helping people to start growing.

As well as continuing the events usually run or attended by PACT and Freegle, the intention this year is to support a series of "Visiting Edible Garden" visits across Eden District throughout 2014 to share the knowledge and show what's possible.

This project has been an important learning experience for Freegle UK. It has shown that our legal situation is not satisfactory as an unincorporated association, ie one person has to sign to take individual responsibility for the project. Freegle has now decided to adopt an incorporated legal structure, an Industrial and Provident Society for Community Benefit.

The main Sustain Eden outcome targeted by this project is Outcome 3: "Communities, households and businesses in Eden use their land and natural resources more efficiently for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities". So far the project looks to be succeeding in delivering this, in particular for communities and households.

Testimonials

We have received gardening tools, wood for our raised beds, plants, flower pots, large planters, seeds and slates (for our signs) .all. thanks to Freegle allowing us to develop 6 community garden areas in Penrith so far... Joan Robinson, Coordinator Community Gardening in Penrith.

Last but not least, we think that Freegle is a great opportunity for people to give and receive very useful items, we have done both! Efisio Podda

Other comments

- *Perfect way to help each other and keep reusing rather than refusing x*
- *Brilliant service!!!! Great website.*
- *Used it before, brilliant!*
- *I don't know how I survived without Freegle. I tell everyone I know.*
- *Freegle people are so helpful. I don't think I've ever heard anything bad from the community. I would much rather my finished with stuff is used than go to the tip.*



Joan Robinson - Give Peas a Chance

