

WIRRAL ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK

Working to improve the quality of life in Wirral

Annual Review 2021



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Wirral Environmental Network is a non-profit, non-party political coalition of individuals, groups and organisations, working together for a more sustainable society and the respect for nature and the environment. The aim of the organisation is to advance the education of the public about the preservation of our world's natural environment, ecological sustainability, natural resource conservation, waste management, recycling, and the principles of Fairtrade within Wirral and the surrounding area.

Current activities: Lifelong learning, Learning In Deprived Communities, WEN Crafters, WEN Reclaimers, Falkland Road Organic Gardeners, Green Hub @ St James Garden, WEN Flower Arranging, Alleyways project, Aquaponics, Re-use & Recycling Projects, Cool Communities. E news & quarterly newsletter (Wirral Evergreen) - website - information service.

Trustees' report

The last 12 months has seen another year of Covid-19 disruption to Wirral Environmental Network. However, it has also been a year when the environment and climate change has continued to rise in the public's awareness, becoming the number 1 public concern in the UK in the aftermath of COP26 in Glasgow. The Liverpool City Region has ramped up its engagement with the issue, producing a "Year One Plan" and a pathway to Net Zero - *"a Landmark report that reveals the scale and pace of change needed to make Liverpool City Region zero-carbon by 2040 or sooner."* In addition, the LCR Community Environment Fund, which has funded WEN's work at the St James Green Hub, is starting to show a different model for funding local community environmental initiatives, and may point towards a more stable financial environment for the charity going forward. We are delighted that WEN was one of the projects that was chosen to be funded – increasing our profile across the city region, and delivering real change on the ground, in the heart of Wirral. In the last year, WEN became the first Carbon Literate organisation in Liverpool City Region, and we also helped encourage the wider community take-up of Carbon Literacy courses funded by Liverpool City Region.

From a Trustee perspective, WEN is going through a period of change. Processes that were adequate in the past have had to be revisited and updated. We have reviewed our governing documents, changed the format of our meetings with the move to online working and put in place a forward agenda to make sure we are dealing with key strategic topics. Informed by our annual members survey, we have also produced a vision for where the organisation could be by 2030. We have also created a risk register for the organisation and started to take action against some of the key risks that the organisation faces. With the loss of our chair and treasurer, and with the review comments of our independent examiner in mind, we will be updating how we present our accounts going forward, and are still in a process of transition to updated governance arrangements. However, the main focus is around what we have achieved in terms of the aims of the charity – environmental education. Since WEN was originally formed, there has never been a more pressing need, or greater demand, for environmental education, than we see at this present time. WEN's outreach and impact, through newsletters and social media, as well as courses and projects, continues to grow, as do our partnerships and the reputation of the organisation both locally and nationally – thanks to the efforts of our team and volunteers.

Nick Drew. On behalf of the WEN Trustees.

Gardening and sustainability projects

2021 report – before the winter fair

I am writing this report just before our winter fair which seems odd as the weather has been so great for November and reflecting on the year at WEN and yet again I am amazed what we have accomplished.

From my point of view, we have managed to run most of the garden classes including Zoom classes at the beginning of the year. The classes include practical gardening, A-Z of gardening, garden club, Royal Horticultural Society Gardening level 2, Open Awards level 1 (with Lifelong Learning) - including tree and shrub identification and pruning and horticulture through Lifelong Learning (through Learning in Deprived Communities, LIDC) with a large element around composting linking it in with 2024 and all compost being peat free.

Kenny and I managed to carry on the good work with garden volunteers / FROG and plant growing. The plants being used in Alleyways project, packs for schools based on easy growing, selling on site etc raising money for WEN so my big thanks goes to all who helped to support us. We wouldn't be at Falkland Road without your help and support.

WEN Crafters - who meet every two weeks on Tuesdays.

They have carried on through this year (at home sometime) coming up with some great ideas (all items being made from recycling materials) and creating some wonderful items for sale which is now always on display in the community area of WEN bring in approx. £350 – but this only from April and before the Christmas Fair ! We just need to find better ways to advertise and sell their merchandise as this is great for morale and for WEN

The Reclaimers WEN group - meet on a Tuesday based around woodworking.

They are helping with bigger maintenance tasks and looking at creating items from old wood. Things include fixing the raised beds which had been looking very tired now is big priority, created a new compost and leaf collecting area, Christmas trees from pallets (19 which have gone to a road in Prenton who have based their community linking event around OUR trees – look out for results in next Evergreen). They also made the containers used in the Alleyways project in Birkenhead (adding £750 to WEN pot) and are coming up with new ideas for the coming year. We are also making more usable areas for the group including making one of the containers more user friendly for the group and a larger area for them outside.

The Alleyways Project which Kenny and I ran with the council added 3 more alleyways this year and the council have put in for grants for 3 more alleyways – 2 in Seacombe - so fingers crossed as these will be the first 2 in Seacombe. Something that we must build on with help of local councillors

Liscard pop ups and sessions with individual groups

Naomi, I am sure, will cover this but from the sessions point of view we will have reached over 400 people showing them a number of different activities and educational linked sessions including up cycling, love food hate waste, importance of plants, recycling, and introduced them to Energy Project Plus.

General items

Wen also held teacher training-based courses around trees, separate compost workshops (through Lifelong Learning) linked with mini tree project in Wallasey with Lynn Struve (Eco Schools Officer) and other one off workshops.

Maria Harper Caine also joined WEN this autumn and she will be involved with LIDC courses and hoping to start a floristry (sustainable) based courses / group which will involve using greenery we grow at WEN and showing people how to grow their own flowers amongst other things - so welcome on board Maria.

Carol Seery.

Falkland Road Organic Growers (FROG)

The most obvious event of 2021 was of course Covid which effectively inhibited any group activities until the end of March. After that up to 6 of us were able to meet outside which suited FROG perfectly. Onions and broad bean had been planted the previous autumn so there was the need for some checking by individuals. However, they survived the cool and wet early spring to grow well come the sunny April.

The group got together to plant potatoes, and later borlotti beans, kale and Brussels. Later still carrots and beetroot did well, and the beds looked full of colour from rainbow chard and flowers from wild rocket, loved by the bees. The summer was warmer and drier than normal so much of the work was watering. We had mulched earlier with some of the manure from the previous year and that inhibited too many weeds.

We worked with Carol in the polytunnel to plant tomatoes and it was so hot that the aubergines did really well. Carol provided us with ideas and plants and bulbs that the group and Margie, the queen of potting on (off) could work with. We were unable to do our usual fundraising at the tea shop in Roydon Park but with seed sharing etc we managed on very few funds.

We missed the social activities of previous years as no one wanted to risk meeting in pubs or coffee bars but we enjoyed the weekly get-togethers and chats. The warm weather meant we could sit outside most workdays offering support and hope for better things next year.

Judith Anton – Chair FROG.

Sustainable lifestyles projects

Community Green Hub @ St James Community Garden

We revitalised and rejuvenated a large unused, overgrown and neglected area in Birkenhead North, which was previously a target for flytipping. Working with local residents and community groups we developed this as a community space for people to develop their horticultural skills, host a tree nursery, grow your own spaces, an orchard, pollinator and wildlife areas. We planted an urban hedge around the site, distributed trees and plants to local residents. It has become community garden that residents and lots of different groups enjoy. Highlights have been the horticulture training delivered by Carol and Maria, the medicinal herb workshops, tree care sessions from the Tree Wardens, the absolutely incredible support from volunteers and the work with other organisations including North Birkenhead Development Trust and Bee Wirral. Sessions at the Green Hub have expanded and have included talks and discussions on energy efficiency, zero waste and the National Food Strategy. The garden continues with seed gathering and cuttings to start the plant nursery for next year.

We trained 72 learners, via 47 workshops and sessions, welcomed a further 100 visitors and participants and the site hosted additional family holiday activities for 30 families and 112 young people. Thanks to Liverpool City Region Community Environment Fund.

Liscard in the Green

We held Environmental themed pop ups at the Cherry Tree Centre demonstrating activities for green and healthy lifestyles. Particular focus on energy and water awareness and efficiency, healthy plant-based food options, low cost cooking and reducing food waste, growing your own.

Huge thanks to the team (Carol, Ali, Karen, Annie, Jill and Stasia from EPP) who led the grow your own, vegan food tasting sessions, energy efficiency and prepared 400 environmental information packs. We directly spoke to at least 350 people which is brilliant and there were many highlights. There will be over 1500 Tete a Tete springing up around Liscard next spring. In private gardens, residential homes and community spaces. We have introduced countless people to the beauty of Kale (!) and cheaper, local, seasonal veg. Many particularly keen on the recipe for the vegetable curry and cake and many others will be getting further energy efficiency help from EPP in the near future.

Most people we spoke to had previously been unaware of us and EPP and many are now keen to get involved in courses and volunteering. We have now been invited to run two more similar pop ups and are seeking funding to support this.

At the funders request, we also ran regular sessional group activities in sheltered and residential settings & community settings. Focused on grow your own at home, low cost plant based cooking, energy awareness & efficiency, reducing waste and upcycling.

Wirral's Climate Change Strategy – Cool2

WEN supports the community element of Wirral's Climate Change Strategy and is part of the Cool Wirral Partnership. Working alongside RethinkNowCIC we held online Cool Community Workshops and created an online, self-directed learning package to help people understand Wirral's Climate Change Strategy.

Reached 136 people through 12 group sessions plus additional briefer talks

Wirral Speaks on Climate Change (Wirral Climate Action Group)

Wirral Climate Action Group, a Wirral based Friends of the Earth Group hosted a second Wirral Speaks on Climate Change, Wirral wide public online event in April. Chaired by Roger Philips, with speakers including MPs and key organisations making a difference on the Wirral.

The Big Green List and Mersey Green Map

Our Big Green List now includes nearly 260 Wirral Community Groups, Charities and businesses which actively work to protect and improve our environment and reduce our carbon emissions. It has been used by many local and regional organisations to support their work and continues to be a key asset. We continue to help groups put their details on the Mersey Green Map, a regional view of local, sustainable and ethical groups and businesses which also holds bi-monthly networking sessions.

Wirral Tree Strategy

Alongside Wirral Tree Wardens, WEN are members of the Tree Strategy Advisory Board. Delighted to welcome Nicola Wallbank, working for Wirral Council focused on community tree planting.

Carbon literacy

8 team and trustees and 26 members, learners and volunteers from WEN undertook carbon literacy training.

Reuse and Recycling

Magenta Housing and Wirral Council are working together directly with 'Refresh' furniture reuse. We have been able to step back from regular direct hands on involvement, but continue to undertake occasional collection and deliveries and sign-post to the scheme.

WEN have become a collection point for Wirral Free Uniform for Secondary Schools (FUSS) and Free Uniform for Primary Schools (FUPS).

Communications

Our subscribers to our fortnightly e-news and social media channels is growing and Evergreen continues to be well received. Thanks to Pam for her work on Evergreen and promotion and to Laura for her continued work on communications.

Naomi Graham.

Urban Vintage - upcycling

During October I was asked by WEN, to deliver a number of community upcycling projects, which had received funding from the Liscard Community Grants.

I worked with 6 different projects across the Liscard area, Marlowe Road Church Group, St Mary's Church Group, Liscard House, and three groups who attend WEN premises. The groups varied in size from 8 to 35.

The sessions included a number of demonstrations on upcycling items which you may currently have within your home, to the group members actively getting creative and making hearts, trays, starts and paddles.

Feedback was very positive, and most people enjoyed participating in the creative craft sessions.

Positive outcomes have been achieved, I have been informed that some participants have purchased items and paints to get creative within their own homes and have started to upcycle some of their furniture. I am looking forward to seeing what they're creative talents will come up with.

Katrina Chapman.

Accounts Summary for 2020-21 financial year

INCOME FINANCIAL YEAR	2020-2021	2019-2020
	£	£
Bank Interest	17	21
Centre Support	528	612
Donations	719	935
Grants	47399	33681
Events & Sales	5587	5912
Membership	469	528
Other Income	1159	343
Room Hire	2465	2028
Service agreements (SLAs) and other income	3103	5254
Total Income	61447	49313
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Environmental Education	37979	29503
Management of the Charity	9640	9183
Total Expenditure	47620	38686
NET INCOME FOR THE YEAR	13827	10627
Balance brought forward (Excl shares)	24430	13803
CASH BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD	38257	24429
Current value of shares held	5805	6,156
TOTAL ASSETS	44062	30585

All accounts held with Co-operative Bank. Summary prepared by Naomi Graham.

Trustees

Judith Anton, Katrina Chapman, Nick Drew, Brian Parry, Perle Sheldricks, Peter Stephens.
Dave Pye (Secretary).

The WEN team

Naomi Graham (Office Manager, Sustainability Officer).
Maria Harper-Cain (Horticultural Wildlife & Conservation Trainer)
Karen Hawthorne (Volunteer Co-ordinator).
Laura Higginbottom (Online Communications)
Pam McCarron (Marketing & Communications).
Phil McHoul (Finance).
Kenny Peers (Sustainability).
Carol Seery (Garden Courses).

Patrons

Tina Fox, John Guillebaud, Jonathon Porritt, Charles Secrett, Dr Joanna Sharples, Pat Sykes MBE.

Membership

Individual 79, Corporate 25 (as of January 2022).

Funding

We would like to thank all of our funders including:

- Wirral Borough Council, Lifelong learning & Liscard Community Grant Scheme
- Liverpool City Region Community Environment Fund
- Right to Succeed and the Price Parry Trust

And all the projects that have used us to deliver activities.

