

### **Nineveh Trust – funding report May 2025**

In May 2024, Stepney City Farm was grateful to receive a donation of £4,000 from the Nineveh Trust to support the role of Communities Programme Manager, along with the resources needed to deliver programming and activities.

Running three days a week, our Communities Programme comprises therapeutic farming activities supporting and engaging some of the most vulnerable and underserved communities in Tower Hamlets, including our bi-weekly Greencare group, our community growing beds, and bespoke one-off tours and workshops for other service providers.

### **Highlights of the Communities Programme over the last 12 months**

In May 2024, the Farm was delighted to take ownership of a new beehive and colony, donated by a corporate partner looking for a more suitable location for it. The Communities Programme Manager has since undertaken beekeeping training and worked with our Schools Programme Manager to develop a set of pollinator workshops which have been rolled out to our Greencare and community groups. Groups have loved having hands-on experience with the bees and have been learning a lot about the importance of pollinators to our wider food system.

In June 2024, the Communities Programme Manager successfully secured a partnership with Kew Gardens to fund a new educational mushroom growing enterprise. The “fungarium” has been set up in a metal shed with an electrical supply to power the necessary climate control equipment, and our community groups have been able to help with the processes of inoculation, cultivation and harvesting. By September, we were excited to have our first crops of wine cap, oyster and shitake mushrooms, and groups have been learning all about the ecological benefits and applications of mycelium.

#### *Inoculating logs with mycelium:*



1. Drilling the holes



2. Plugging the holes



3. Sealing with wax

In July 2024, the Communities Programme Manager worked with local Bangladeshi women's group Ocean Women's Association to deliver a large Eid festival on the Farm including all faiths. The group worked with our café to cook traditional dishes to feed 100 people, and our Sylheti-speaking Food Growers got involved with choosing music, running stalls, and making sure that the 60% of our allotment plot holders who speak little or no English were invited to the event.



The Communities Programme Manager was also able to work with our Sylheti-speaking Food Growers across the year to organise Sylheti-language versions of popular workshops including composting and permaculture principles.

Also in July, our Greencare group did a special series of sessions helping to develop the habitat around our large wildlife pond, first established in 2021. They built dead hedges, ideal for encouraging a range of insects, and did pond dipping sessions to help monitor and record the rich ecosystem of pondlife which has developed over the first four years.

In August 2024, the Farm's seasonal produce offer included a wide range of fruit and berries, providing an ideal opportunity for our community groups to learn about methods of preserving and utilising seasonal gluts. With our many elder trees laden with elderberries, the Communities Programme Manager ran a special workshop on making elderberry syrup – known for its use by herbalists through the ages to relieve cold symptoms. Our Greencare volunteers learned how to identify and harvest elderberries, and process them into a syrup that they could take home.

In September 2024, the Communities Programme Manager delivered a Farm tour and plant identification workshop for Kin Structures, stewards of community centre the Soanes Centre, a space providing learning opportunities for local children and young people in ecology and natural science. Kin Structures support the space in all sorts of ways, and through this collaboration we learned that the Soanes Centre is under threat due lease issues. The Communities Programme Manager has since been able to help with linking them in with local support networks and spreading the word, strengthening local ties and extending the Farm's impact.

Also in September, the Farm took part in the annual City Farms & Gardens Harvest Festival at Lambourne End. This is always a great opportunity for our volunteers and local communities to get involved, and several of the Greencare group were able to go along and represent the Farm, take part in competitions, and learning more about animal showing and rare breeds which they would not have the opportunity to experience in Tower Hamlets.



In October 2024, the Communities Programme Manager ran a special hop planting activity with the Bow Geezers, a community group for older men at risk of isolation, who have one of the community growing beds on the Farm allocated to them. From the late 1800s until the 1970s, hopping was an annual event for East Enders who would spend two weeks at the beginning of September picking hops, a tradition that some of the group are old enough to remember - in fact for some it was their only holiday of the year. The group decided to team up with the Walthamstow Beer Project to plant hops around the Farm, and in September 2025, they'll be harvesting them to create our very own Stepney beer. The project is made that much more interesting by the discovery of hop seeds from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on our site in a ceramic pot by the Museum of London in 2010, an echo of the pastoral past of Stepney.



In November 2024, the Greencare group learned all about vinegar extraction. Evidence suggests that indigenous and folk healers across the world have made vinegar medicines for thousands of years. The group experimented with making their own fire cider – a non-alcoholic herbal remedy - from seasonal Farm ingredients. The Communities Programme Manager took the group around the farm and dug up horseradish, harvested sage, thyme, rosemary and nettles and a few onions, garlic bulbs and chilli peppers. These ingredients have important anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties, and are rich in immune-supporting vitamins and minerals – perfect for supporting health over the cold winter months.





In February 2025, the winter theme continued with a fermentation community workshop. Fermentation is an ancient technique of preserving food, used to produce foods like wine, cheese, yogurt, and kombucha. Fermented foods are rich in beneficial probiotics and have been associated with a range of health benefits – from better digestion to stronger immunity. The group made sauerkraut – fermented cabbage - a tasty, nutrient rich and long-lasting accompaniment to spice up all sorts of winter meals.

In April 2025, the Communities Programme Manager partnered with Trees for Cities to organise for six of our community groups to plant trees in Stepney Green Park, further contributing to the improvement of our wider local area. The groups planted 16 Gingko, Crab apple and Cherry trees - species selected for their ecological benefit, resilience in difficult environments (given the poor-quality soil and historic rubble of WWII), future shade provision and visual interest, as well as to create more wildlife habitat and sequester carbon.

In May 2025, we were excited to bring back our annual May Day Festival on the Farm for the first time since before the pandemic. The Communities Programme Manager secured additional funding for hip hop / folk fusion band Folkdance Remixed to run Maypole dancing public workshops across the day; we had public sheep shearing demonstrations; free have-a-go pottery wheel sessions; thirty stalls of produce and crafts; and the London Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers were on hand to show visitors how the sheep wool would be spun into yarn.

Going on into 2025, we have planned additional traditional craft workshops including natural fabric dyeing; Bangladeshi vegetable carving; and fan making.

### **Outcome indicators:**

The outcome indicators used to measure our success over the year were:

#### **1. 150+ Tower Hamlets adult beneficiaries from marginalised communities directly engaged in sessions:**

We have 13 different local community groups using our community growing beds. These are allotment plots reserved for community organisations who do important work locally, and whose service users don't have access to outdoor spaces. 12 of these groups are local to Tower Hamlets, and the 13th is a group of



patients from a Forensic Mental Health Inpatient hospital on the other side of Victoria Park to the Farm. These groups visit weekly and often come in groups of around 10 people.

19 different workshops were delivered for community partners, all from Tower Hamlets. This totals at 223 participants. These groups include some of our community groups such as the Geezers, Home Ed Farmers and Ocean's Women's Association as well as one-time visits from local groups such as Bart Health and U3A Tower Hamlets.

Additionally, our Greencare group has 75 regular attendees, 42 of whom are based in Tower Hamlets. All are marginalised with lived experience of trauma and a range of physical and mental health needs requiring varying levels of support.

## **2. 95% of participants learning something about where their food comes from, and ecological farming practices:**

In our most recent Greencare participation meeting, 100% participants said that attending the Farm had taught them more about where their food came from, and the importance of ecologically minded farming practises.

Feedback from our Community workshops has included:

- "The whole session was very educational, the parents were very grateful to learn about the health benefits from using herbs. Also coming out to the farm and enjoying a session outdoors was great for the adults and children to socialise and have fun." - St Paul's Shadwell Church: Tower Tots
- "It felt wonderful being able to see all the children being taught what we learnt as we went around the farm - a beautiful sight; this reconfirmed to me what a valuable local community resource the farm represents and how important ecological hotspots like this are in the city." - U3A Tower Hamlets

## **3. Baseline increases in feelings of confidence and reduction in feelings of isolation:**

There is a significant improvement in confidence and reduction in isolation in participants in the Greencare group. All members of the group at the most recent participation meeting reported that attending the farm had improved their confidence, their knowledge and their sense of "being part of a community." Additional feedback we received included:

- "A place to get confidence in myself, it gives me confidence, getting out and talking to people. And learning to love myself."
- "A chance to interact at another city farm with more people, social, wonderful friendships with like minded people. A calm space."
- "When I first started feeling low and depressed and talking to and meeting everyone it made me feel good – a very welcoming and happy space."

Additionally, feedback from our community growing bed users shows that the value of having a regular allotment to tend to as a group is significant, improving mental health and consolidating relationships

within the community. Stepney Community Trust shared that "the women that use the bed have greatly benefitted and would like to continue. It helps them with their isolation and mental and physical well-being." We have also had feedback from the 19 workshops that these have also been beneficial for the participants:

- "The surroundings were calm, peaceful and beautiful and it was a really lovely experience to learn about the farm's history and purpose. Several of the beneficiaries approached me to say that certain smells, like that of the mint, or sights, like the lily pads in the ponds, reminded them of good memories from their home countries. They expressed that it was nice to have the opportunity to be reminded of home, which can have difficult connotations for those claiming asylum based on LGBT reasons, in an atmosphere that was kind, calm and joyful." - Micro Rainbow's local social group
- "The session allowed the kids and mums to engage in physical activity which was very good for their mental and physical health - it also allowed them to connect socially which is a big need for our more isolated beneficiaries." - Home Ed Farmers



***A big thank you to the Nineveh Trust from all of us at Stepney City Farm.***

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Hawkins'.

Clare Hawkins  
Chief Executive Officer  
8 May 2025