

# Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden

## Trustees Annual Report

For the period

April 2022 to March 2023



## Reference and Administration

### Charity name, registered number, and address

Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden (FoLGWG)

Registered charity number 1176172

Llanfrechfa Grange

Llanfrechfa

Torfaen

NP44 8YN

### Trustees

Mrs Janet Mary Smith MBE - Chair

Mrs Jane Christine MacDonald Nehaul - Vice Chair

Mrs Angela Mary Fry – General Secretary

Mr Christopher John Parsons - Treasurer

Dr Umapathy Sivagamasundari - Volunteers Secretary

Ms Bobinca Gwynne Wilson - Membership Secretary

## Structure, Governance and Management

The **Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden** was established as a small charity in 2015 and registered with the Charities Commission in December 2017.

The charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governed by a detailed Constitution. The current trustees are four of the founder members with a further two appointed in 2016 by the founder members. The charity is run entirely by volunteers.

### Governance Arrangements

The Walled Garden is owned by the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board as a part of the larger Llanfrechfa Grange manor and The Grange University Hospital estate. The garden is an integral part of the hospital landscape providing a tranquil and inviting green space physically linking the old house to the University Hospital.

Responsibility for the redevelopment of the garden sits with the gardens' Trustees who are supported by a vibrant group of volunteers. The charity enjoys a close working relationship with the Health Board Executive, the Works and Estates Department and staff based on the site.

A 10-year lease has been negotiated and was signed in March 2022. The lease includes the garden, attached nursery, Gardener's Cottage, and a strip of land outside the east wall.

The charity has structure and contents insurance with the National Farmers Union and Public Liability insurance through a block arrangement with Keep Wales Tidy.

A Risk Policy/Register is supplemented by a 'Guidebook for Volunteers', 'Safety Instructions' and 'Principles for Working in the Garden'. These documents are reviewed periodically to

reflect changes of practice in the garden and to ensure compliance with any relevant legislation.

New volunteers receive induction and safety briefings and are required to follow the safety instructions and working principles.

### **Associate Membership**

Associate membership can be obtained on payment of an annual membership fee of £5. At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the charity had 92 Associate Members, many of whom have been members for several years. Members receive our quarterly newsletter and other garden related information and links via e-mail, including advanced notice of garden events. They also have access to a dedicated 'Members Only' part of our website where they can download minutes of meetings, learning materials and other updates on the garden. Many of our members are also active volunteers.

### **Volunteers**

The charity has more than fifty registered volunteers, several new ones having joined in year and with many committed to regular sessions in the garden. The working arrangements introduced in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic were stood down in 2022/23 with volunteers free to come and go as they please. The daily rota, established to manage numbers attending during the pandemic has however continued, ensuring a daily presence in the garden.

### **Supporters**

In addition to its members and volunteers the charity has continued to receive support from the Health Board's senior officers and staff, and from local businesses and organisations.

### **Objectives and Activities**

The objectives of the charity are to redesign and restore the Victorian walled garden at Llanfrechfa Grange as a recreational or leisure time resource for the benefit of the public and healthcare staff who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances, or for the public at large in the interest of social welfare and with the object of improving the condition of life of those using the garden.

With due regard to the Charities Commission guidance on public benefit the Friends of Llanfrechfa Grange Walled Garden have continued to develop the garden as an uplifting green space for the benefit of all.

The garden had remained closed throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic with strict working arrangements in place to enable volunteers to safely continue with its development. As restrictions were lifted during the latter part of 2021/22 the gates were left open when volunteers were on site and casual visitors welcomed in. Plans to ceremonially open the garden in spring 2022 followed.

Formal Trustees meetings are held quarterly interspersed with regular gatherings in the garden and WhatsApp, text and e-mail interactions. An established volunteers' WhatsApp group continues to enable daily update reports and provides a platform for social interaction, support, and light relief. Several WhatsApp sub-groups have also been established as a way of managing specific workstreams within the garden. These now routine ways of working have ensured effective communication and have facilitated the maintenance and continued development of the garden.

## **Achievements and Performance**

2022/23 began with a major push to make the garden inviting and safe ahead of our opening ceremony at the end of April. Several working party days throughout March saw 20 tonnes of self-binding gravel barrowed in and compacted, providing an attractive and wheelchair friendly top dressing for many paths and a large seating area. New ornate black and gold steel gates were installed, providing bold and welcoming entrances through the north and south walls. Flower borders, the vegetable plot, the tunnel and greenhouse were all kept neat and tidy as the spring growing season progressed.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> around 150 invited guests attended the grand opening ceremony. Formal presentations were made by the charity's chair, who provided a potted history of the garden from its construction in the 1850s to the present day. Dr Gill Richardson, the Health Boards previous Director of Public Health and currently the Welsh Governments' Deputy Chief Medical Officer, spoke of the health benefits of outdoor spaces and conveyed the best wishes sent by Andrew Goodall, the Welsh Governments' Permanent Secretary, and Judith Paget, Chief Executive of NHS Wales. Dr David Hepburn, Consultant in Intensive Care Medicine, cut a red ribbon spanning the north gates to declare the garden formally open to all. Both congratulated the volunteers on achieving a beautiful garden and wished them well for the future. Guests then enjoyed light refreshments in the early summer sunshine with music provided by the Newport U3A choir.

Throughout the year the trustees and volunteers have continued to work on the garden layout and planting plans, with some areas maturing nicely and other previously barren ones coming alive.

### **The northeast quadrant**

The vegetable garden continues to employ No Dig and Moon Sowing principles, with a wide variety of crops being grown. Work has begun on building a costermonger's barrow from salvaged timbers to display the produce for sale. Concrete foundations were laid in for a long low retaining wall to be built around the plot and the wall 'dry built' using salvaged dressed stone. Work to cement these in place will begin when skills and manpower to do so become available. Unfortunately, the polytunnel cover was destroyed by winter storms but was successfully replaced by a volunteers' working party weekend in late March. A large heated propagator table has also been built inside the tunnel.

### **The southeast quadrant**

To mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee a red, white and blue garden was created either side of the steps in this quadrant. Resplendent with a huge crown and sceptre and Max the Vax,

our 10 ft 'vaccinator' scarecrow, redressed as a Welsh Guard to preside over the Jubilee celebrations. Later in the year the planting in this area was changed to create a drought resistant Mediterranean garden.

Significant soil improvement work was undertaken in the dahlia bed to improve drainage, and a low retaining wall and ornate timber trellis added to provide a backdrop to the bed. The greenhouse had its annual spring clean and additional shelving was added to house trays of plants raised from seed.

### **The southwest quadrant**

The demonstration beds around the lawn have matured well since planting the year before. The soil in the last bed, the previously barren area in front of the south wall, has been significantly improved and planting began to create a 'rainbow bed' of bold colours across its length.

A small number of slates on the Gardeners Cottage roof were loosened in winter storms, giving rise to safety concerns. The south gate has therefore been closed and the area cordoned off until repairs can be carried out.

### **The northwest quadrant**

This quadrant was the first to be planted up in 2020 with a soft colour palette surrounding several seating areas. Some of the planting has been revised and new shrubs added to maximise impact. Work began on the foundations for a shelter in the corner with a red and black quarry tiled floor and a stone bench built against the wall; all constructed using salvaged materials that, once completed, will have an open timber framed shelter erected over it to provide much needed shelter from the elements. A power supply for the water feature has been laid in.

### **The Nursery**

The nursery area outside the south wall, fenced off in 2021, has been developed with two discrete areas; one for growing on plants for the garden and the other as a plant sales area. This has proved to be an immensely valuable addition to the garden enabling propagation of existing plants and contributing significantly to income generation through sales.

### **Outside the Walls**

New beds have been developed outside the east wall, providing a colourful screen to hide our compost bins and storage compound. Some seating areas in the wider grounds of the old mansion house have also benefitted from spare plants from the garden as our volunteers waste nothing!

### **Events**

We hosted our 5<sup>th</sup> 'Have a Grow Day' in June as part of a UK wide celebration of community gardening organised by the Not for Profit organisation Social Farms and Gardens. Several hundred visitors enjoyed light refreshments and took part in a variety of activities which, together with a plant sale, raised significant funds for the garden.

The 2022 AGM was held in the garden on a lovely sunny day. The Charity's Annual Report and Annual Accounts were presented and later submitted to the Charities Commission.

Plant and crafts stalls were taken to the Ponthir Music Festival in August where more valuable funds were raised for the garden at this fun local village event.

Throughout the autumn many volunteers turned their energies to preparing craft items and preserves to sell for Christmas. Craft stalls were held outside the Grange University Hospital through December.

Wreath making workshops were also held on two weekends before Christmas with over 100 keen participants in total.

All of the public facing events have served to promote the garden and to raise valuable funds.

Several social events for volunteers were held throughout the year. These included a Queen's Jubilee 'street party'; a Barbecue; a Diwali Festival of Light celebration and a Christmas party. These gatherings offered opportunities for volunteers to relax and enjoy the garden and to meet up with others who come in on different days.

### **Administration and Planning**

A new Volunteers' Handbook has been developed and was distributed in July to all existing volunteers. Copies are now included in new volunteer induction.

A new incident reporting process has been developed and implemented, with any recorded incident reviewed at Trustees meetings.

Six monthly planning workshops have been reintroduced with days held in September and February where volunteers review progress to date and agree plans for the next 6 months.

Quarterly partnership meetings have been reintroduced with the Health Board's new CEO, with the first and very positive meeting held in November.

### **Communications and Making Connections**

The charity produces a quarterly newsletter in electronic format with paper copies available in the garden. The newsletter is e-mailed to all Associate Members and is published on the charity's website and Facebook page. The newsletter and social media sites are used to provide updates on progress, to call for volunteers and members, and to share items of interest associated with the garden.

The charity has connections with several Not-for-Profit organisations as sources of information, support and advice. These include the Community Land Advisory Service in Wales (CLAS Cymru), Tyfu Fyny, Social Farms and Gardens, local Associations of Voluntary Organisations, the Hardy Plants Society and the Gwent Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers. We are also supported by specialists in garden design and plant choices, and the 'no dig' approach to growing.

We also have welcome support as required from Torfaen Council Volunteers Co-ordinator, the Health Board's Communications Team, and the Keep Wales Tidy Torfaen Environmental Project Officer.

Our lease has been submitted for registration to HM Land Registry by Shoosmiths Solicitors. This is part of a continuing legal support arrangement via LawWorks, the Solicitors Pro Bono Group.

### **Donations, Fund Raising and Grants**

The charity has received many donations in kind during the year including plants, flowerpots, and seeds. Financial donations have also been received from individuals and groups. Monies received are used to support planting and hard landscaping plans and for the general upkeep of the garden.

Funds are raised throughout the year though the sale of plants and produce from the garden. Three major fund-raising events were also held including the 'Have a Grow' day in June, Wreath Workshops in November and December and Craft Fayres in December. These collectively raises over £3,000.

Four grant applications were made during the year, three of which were successful.

- Llanyrafon and Croesyceiliog Community Council awarded £250 towards cost of obelisk plant supports for the northwest quadrant.
- Ponthir Community Council awarded £200 towards the cost of polytunnel repairs, and
- ABUHB Charitable Funds Committee awarded £2,560 towards the cost of top-dressing paths.

The charity is grateful to all individuals and organisations for their support and generosity.

### **Awards**

In July the garden received a **Green Flag Community Award** for a fourth consecutive year. Awarded by Keep Wales Tidy the Green Flag is the benchmark for exceptional parks and green spaces that are managed to the highest standards by volunteers.

Since the official opening in April, the garden has received a steady daily flow of visitors from the local community as well as hospital visitors and staff. Patients have also visited the garden either under their own steam or in wheelchairs pushed by friends or relatives. Feedback from visitors has been overwhelmingly positive and at the end of 2022/23 trustees and volunteers looked back with pride on a successful first year of being open to the public. All are looking forward with enthusiasm to the continued development of the garden and to welcoming more and more people into this vibrant and inviting green space.

### **Financial Review**

The financial year end of the Charity is 31 March, with this review covering the year to 31 March 2023.

The financial position of the Charity remains strong with a balance of £13,835 at 31 March 2023 (31 March 2022: £8,298).

Balance sheet as at 31 March 2023				
£'s	31-Mar-23	31-Mar-22	Movement	
	Actual	Actual	£'s	%
Unrestricted	9,675	6,747	2,928	43.4%
Restricted	4,160	1,550	2,610	168.3%
Endowment	-	-	-	N/A
<b>Net Cash</b>	<b>13,836</b>	<b>8,298</b>	<b>5,538</b>	<b>66.7%</b>

The charity had a net increase in cash of £5,538 in the period as a result of both a reduction in expenditure and an increase in revenue. Expenditure fell to a more typical level at the garden, following significant spend in the prior year. In addition, the Charity was grateful to receive grant income in the year totalling [£3,010]. This comprised:

- Ponthir & Llanyravon CC (£200) towards cost of polytunnel cover replacement.
- Llanyrafon and Croesyceiliog Community Council (£250) towards cost of obelisk plant supports for north west quadrant
- ABUHB (£2,560) for top dressing paths.

At the end of the financial year the latter two grants together with a Bellway Homes donation of £1,350 from 2020/21 for 'art in the garden' were unspent. and are carried forward as restricted funds (£4,160).

Income statement for the period 1/4/22 - 31/3/23				
£'s	FY23	FY22	Movement	
	Actual	Actual	£'s	%
<b>Income</b>				
Unrestricted income	7,749	8,020	(271)	(3.4)%
Restricted income	3,010	-	3,010	N/A
Income	10,759	8,020	2,739	34.1%
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Unrestricted expenditure	(4,821)	(11,748)	6,927	(59.0)%
Restricted expenditure	(400)	(500)	100	(20.0)%
Expenditure	(5,221)	(12,248)	7,027	(57.4)%
Unrestricted income	2,928	(3,728)	6,656	(178.5)%
Restricted income	2,610	(500)	3,110	(622.0)%
<b>Net income</b>	<b>5,538</b>	<b>(4,228)</b>	<b>9,766</b>	<b>(231.0)%</b>

As touched upon above, the garden has held key events during the year and these, along with the continued kind support of members, volunteers and visitors to the garden has led to sales remaining broadly consistent with the prior year.

Expenditure at the garden during the year largely funded maintenance work with smaller projects invested in. This meant that total expenditure fell by £7,047 on the prior year mainly through a reduction in building materials (£2,900), plant and compost (£2,300) and garden sundries (£1,500).

As noted earlier, local businesses have shown generosity in providing goods and services either freely or at discounted rates, which has helped the garden to progress to its current stage. We would again like to thank them all for their continued support.

The Charity has seen a return to stability in 2022/23 which has been through the continued hard work and support from members, volunteers, supporters, and visitors. This has allowed



the Charity to continue to develop the garden in line with its objectives and charitable aims while remaining financially robust. We look forward to seeing what 2023/24 brings!

## Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the above trustees' report.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

*J M Smith*

**Janet Mary Smith**  
**Chair**  
**5<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

*J C M Nehaul*

**Jane Christine MacDonald Nehaul**  
**Vice Chair**  
**5<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

