



# Stepney City Farm

## Trustee Information Pack



### About Us

Stepney City Farm is a community based City Farm and Rural Crafts Centre in the heart of Stepney. The farm helps local people experience rural life and promotes a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. An experienced staff team work together with many volunteers to offer a welcoming space for people of all ages, cultures and races.

As a Working Farm, our menagerie of livestock including donkeys, pigs, sheep and goats and our growing spaces continue to bring smiles to volunteers' and visitors' faces. We constantly strive to improve living conditions for our animals and inform and educate the public about food production and animal welfare. As well as the larger animals, we also care for many small animals including ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs, ducks, geese and chickens. These animals rely on the care of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who also offer a huge range of educational, environmental and creative projects for the community.

The farm runs a thriving community growing club, offers cheap allotment space and hosts craft days and classes through our Rural Arts Centre. In addition to a wide range of projects and services, we grow and sell an a range of natural, organic farm produce – from eggs and salad vegetables to pickles and preserves to pork and lamb – in our Farm Shop and our Café serves freshly made breakfasts, lunches and snacks inspired by the produce growing and being reared on the Farm. And there is a weekly Farmers' Market.

The farm is a registered charity but receives no government assistance. We are entirely self-financing through the generous donation of our volunteers' time and our wide range of fundraising activities. This is a truly exciting time to be involved with the farm. We need fresh ideas and involvement from new trustees to help us make the farm a central part of the lives of all those who live and work in Tower Hamlets.

### Our Objectives

#### The "Charitable Objects"

To promote, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Stepney and the surrounding area, the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation, of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social and economic circumstance or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of lives of the said inhabitants.

To provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity, disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the object of improving the conditions of the lives of the said inhabitants.

Advance the education of the public at large, in agriculture, horticulture, crafts, country life, protection and improvement of the natural environment through best environmental practices especially by encouraging reduction, re-use and recycling, and related subjects.

# The Trustee Experience:

**"I became a Trustee because I wanted to do something for the local community. My experience at the Farm has been, at times, challenging but overall extremely rewarding and I feel immensely proud to have played my part in what we have achieved. I have learnt so much from some truly inspirational people, both on the farm and from the organisations we have been privileged to work with."**

**Jo Pertwee, Trustee, Stepney City Farm**

## The Role of a Trustee

### What does it mean to be a trustee?

The job of the trustees is to govern the farm charity. This means that we are responsible for ensuring that the farm's aims, as laid out in our governing document (or 'constitution') are met using all the resources and skills available.

A trustee is a member of a group of people who are responsible for the success of the farm. This involvement directly benefits both the farm, and the local community, in many different ways. Here is just a flavour of what you can expect:

- ★ You will help to decide the future direction of the farm.
- ★ You will participate in making decisions that really matter to our community.
- ★ You will help to support your community through ensuring the services we provide meet the needs of the people we serve.
- ★ You will ensure that we deliver great services for the people who need them most.
- ★ You will be learning many new skills and gaining confidence in a whole range of different areas. Trusteeship is a great way to increase your skills and experience. You will learn how the farm is run, what kinds of problems we come up against and the best ways to solve them. You will also learn many other specific skills, for example: how to present accounts and how meetings are chaired.
- ★ You can represent your sector of the community and ensure its voice is heard.
- ★ You will have something that looks great on your CV. Being a trustee shows that you have real maturity and commitment and that you care enough about your community to want to give something back.
- ★ You will have fun – trusteeship can be challenging, but also a lot of fun. It is a great opportunity to make friends with people who share an interest with you, but whom you might never otherwise meet.

- ★ Working together to overcome problems can give you a wonderful sense of team spirit. You'll be able to share in and celebrate the successes you have helped bring about.
- ★ You will increase your network – as a trustee you will have regular contact with other influential people – not only other board/committee members, but staff and participants from all walks of life.

### What will I get involved in?

The board of trustees is responsible for the good governance and proper direction of the farm. This includes the financial health of the farm and ensuring that the services and activities on offer are interesting, inclusive and useful for everyone in our local community. The board of trustees also oversees the development of the farm's aims, objectives and goals.

Working as a member of the board of trustees, you will help to ensure that the charity:

- ★ Is mindful of its charitable objectives when making decisions on all farm matters.
- ★ Acts in the best interests of its users (and future users) at all times and promotes and develops the farm in order for it to grow and maintain its public benefit.
- ★ Complies with various legislative and regulatory requirements, and acts properly according to its governing document.
- ★ Maintains sound financial management and control of the charity's resources and receives proper oversight to ensure efficient administration of the charity and its resources.
- ★ Ensures a fully effective and appropriate system for the recruitment, appointment and monitoring of the work and activities of the farm's management.
- ★ Maintains absolute confidentiality about all aspects of the trustees' business.
- ★ Recognises a situation when it may be more appropriate to wind-up the charity (*for example, where there is no longer a need for the charity to*

*provide the services it does or because the charitable objects are no longer relevant to the community).*

### What experience do I need to become a Trustee?

You may have an image in your head of what a typical trustee is like, but trustees come from all social and cultural backgrounds, can be young or old, and have a variety of personal situations. As long as you can give a certain level of commitment and are trustworthy and honest, almost anyone can become a trustee. Being a trustee is about bringing your own unique insights, vision and support to the farm.

It's not just about 'traditional skills' such as legal, financial and management – the kinds of qualities we value are:

**Great People Skills** – the board of trustees needs people who can encourage team working, are good at problem solving, are not afraid to ask difficult questions and are willing to take an active role in decision-making.

**Different experiences and perspectives** – we want to be inclusive of all the communities we serve and so we look for trustees who bring different perspectives from a range of backgrounds, cultures and abilities.

**Values** – we have an important duty to run the farm properly... and all trustees need to demonstrate basic values such as honesty and integrity.

**Energy** – we need enthusiasm, motivation and a fresh outlook to help carry the farm into its next phase of life.

### How do I get started?

Taking on any new role can be a daunting experience. To help ensure that your experience of joining our team is positive and rewarding, everyone at the farm is committed to helping you find your feet. This means we will spend as much time with you as you need to help you understand the farm and the role you undertake. As part of this, prospective Trustees are expected to attend at least 3 months of meetings before the board votes on their appointment.

As part of this, you will receive a full induction and ongoing advice and support from a more experienced trustee via a buddy system to help you to be successful in your role.

### What will be expected of me?

Meetings are held at 7pm on the second Thursday of every other month and last between 1-2 hours. These monthly meetings alternate between a Trustee meeting and an All Hands Farm Meeting. We ask that you:

- ★ Make time to read any supporting documents.
- ★ Arrive punctually for meetings.
- ★ Take an active role in decision-making.
- ★ Spend a minimum of 8-10 hours a month on Trustee duties including attending meetings.
- ★ Be prepared to commit to 12 months as a Trustee and ideally give 3 months notice if you wish to leave the board.

Some of our trustees get involved in other activities around the farm, are members of sub-committees or provide project support for some other activities. We welcome participation in these types of activities but it is entirely your decision to what extent you become involved in these types of 'extra-curricular' projects. What we do ask is that every Trustee is assigned a particular area of responsibility e.g. Finance, Fundraising etc. depending on Farm needs.

### Who can apply?

The farm needs people from a wide variety of backgrounds. For the board to be truly effective it needs to have real diversity - with people who have a range of skills, attributes and personal experiences to help work towards the aims and objectives of the farm. In addition:

- ★ You must live locally to the Farm and Tower Hamlets.
- ★ You need to be over the age of 18.
- ★ You must not be bankrupt, disqualified from running a business or have a conviction for dishonesty
- ★ You must pass a DBS check.

### How do I apply?

Please send your CV and a covering letter to **jo@stepneycityfarm.org**. If you don't have access to a computer, please write to us at **Stepney City Farm, Stepney Way, London, E1 3DG**. If you'd like to learn more about the farm or the role, one of our trustees will be happy to share their experiences with you. Please call us on **020 7790 8204** to arrange this.

## The Trustee Experience:

**"I love the way I feel as if I am helping to create a village for my children within Central London. I learn something new every time I go there and it has helped me to develop both personally and professionally."**

**Dr Elizabeth Venables, Trustee, Stepney City Farm**

## Trustee Resources and Further Reading:

### National Council for Voluntary Organisations

"Good Trustee Guide"

<http://www.ncvo.org.uk/component/redshop/themes/9-charity-law/P16-good-trustee-guide>

### The Charity Commission

Information on Becoming a Trustee:

<http://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/media/94159/cc3text.pdf>

<https://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/trustees-staff-and-volunteers/trustee-role/becoming-a-trustee/>

### Small Charities Coalition:

Why become a Trustee?

<http://www.smallcharities.org.uk/why-become-a-trustee/>