

# **Sussex Organic Link**

## **Update Report**

**July 1999**

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## **1. Introduction**

Sussex Organic Link (SOL) is a project run by Common Cause Co-operative, a community organisation based in Lewes, East Sussex. It is a pilot project offering work experience on organic farms and funding for further training in rural skills to unemployed people. The project received funding for two years (1997 and 1998) from CountryWork, a fund administered by the Sussex Rural Community Council. The project has provided work experience and bursaries for ten beneficiaries and voluntary labour on four farms. Administration of the project continues since some of the beneficiaries are still doing their work experience or seeking training courses.

As a direct result of the SOL pilot project, Common Cause, in partnership with East Sussex County Council, Plumpton Agricultural College, East Sussex Rural Development Area and Sussex Rural Community Council have developed a follow up project: Organic Agriculture Training in East Sussex (OATES). The partnership is currently applying for funds from INTERREG with partners in the Seine Maritime area of France. One of the key aims of OATES is the establishment of a new course in organic horticulture designed for unemployed people and run by Plumpton College.

## **2. Objectives of SOL**

- To provide work experience and training opportunities for unemployed people in Sussex who want to gain experience in organic agriculture.
- To promote links between local consumers and local producers of organic produce in Sussex.
- To support organic agriculture and rural development in Sussex.

## **3. Description of Activities**

SOL has a management committee of three people, including a representative of one of the farms, Ashurst Organics. SOL advertised through local groups and employment centres throughout East Sussex, including Brighton. Applicants were selected for interview, partly on a first-come-first-serve basis, partly on the basis of the information that they provided on their application forms, and partly so that beneficiaries were representative of both rural and urban locations. Successful Applicants were interviewed and allocated a farm. In the first year, the project had funding for three placements and worked with one farm. In the second year, the project had funding for six placements and worked with four farms.

In return for committing to 15 days work on the farm, beneficiaries received a bursary grant of up to £300 to pay for a course providing training in rural skills. The project

did not, in itself, run training courses. The beneficiaries themselves had to find and select a course with help and approval from the project. The organic farms provided

beneficiaries with refreshments and transport costs and in return benefited from the voluntary labour. The links made between the farms and the beneficiaries in some cases led to beneficiaries going on to paid employment on the farms.

In 1998, the grant from CountryWork also covered the production of a resource booklet to support the consumption of eating seasonal, locally produced organic vegetables. It contains nutritional and historical information on vegetables sold in local organic vegetable box schemes as well as recipes (including those to tempt children to eat vegetables) and storage ideas. The booklet was produced as a collaborative effort with Ashurst Organics who run an organic Vegetable Box Scheme. Recipe ideas were collected from subscribers to the box scheme. The final product is a booklet: *Gluts for Tea. A guide to making the most of your vegetable box.*

#### **4. Jobs created**

The project created part-time employment for a co-ordinator, an administrator and for the producer of the booklet. In addition, the project led to part-time employment for some of the beneficiaries on the farms. By supporting organic enterprises, the project also indirectly contributed to local rural development and enhancement of the environment.

#### **5. Training**

One of the biggest problems for the beneficiaries completing their work experience placements was the lack of relevant training courses available to them. In particular there were no courses on offer in the region in organic horticulture or agriculture. In the event, some beneficiaries elected to spend their bursary money on tools and equipment to set up organic allotments.

#### **6. Project Success**

Overall the project was highly successful. A total of 10 beneficiaries (2 shared a bursary award) have undertaken work experience and a number of these have completed training courses. Four organic farms were involved in the work experience placements and benefited from the voluntary labour. A number of part-time jobs were

created and lasting links were made between individual unemployed people and local farms. An assessment of the project from the point of view of both the beneficiaries and the farmers is underway. A final report of the project will contain the results of the assessments.

The least successful aspect of the project was the training. There appear to be few training courses in relevant rural skills available - or information about relevant courses has been very hard to find. As a consequence, some beneficiaries have been very slow to take up their bursary money and some of the training money remains unspent (but still allocated to beneficiaries who are keen to eventually find a course).

The booklet, *Gluts for Tea. A guide to making the most of your Vegetable Box* has been widely distributed (including to an organic box scheme in London and to individuals around the country). It has brought in a small income to the project. In addition, Common Cause worked with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to launch the booklet at ESCC's annual Weald Wood Fair in 1998. ESCC together with Common Cause produced a display poster to promote the consumption of seasonal, locally produced food. Over the two day fair, Common Cause volunteers ran a stall selling the *Gluts for Tea* booklet and offering free tastings of freshly pressed apple juice and courgette chocolate cake (a recipe taken from *Gluts for Tea*) which attracted many children as well as adults.

## **7. Current Status of Project**

All but one of the beneficiaries have now completed their work experience on the farms. (The beneficiary who has not yet finished only recently took over a 'half' placement which another beneficiary decided to leave as a result of getting a job). Only three beneficiaries have used up all their bursary funds. Four beneficiaries have part used the bursary and three have not yet started a course. Beneficiaries are being helped and encouraged to find appropriate courses.

## **8. Budget**

A detailed listing of money spent and income received is attached together with a summary of the accounts. A number of key points are noted:

### 1. 1996/97 Accounts

- The bursary money from 1997 has not been totally spent. Beneficiaries are still taking up courses.

- The insurance money was not spent in 1997 since farms had their own insurance to cover the beneficiaries. The money has been allocated to the production of the *Gluts for Tea* booklet, whose budget allocation was overspent.
- Some of the administration money was underspent in 1997. This will be accounted for since administration continues for those beneficiaries who are still taking courses or plan to take courses.

## 2. 1997/98 Accounts

- The amount of time spent on the production of the *Gluts for Tea* booklet and the organisation of the stall at the Weald Wood Fair was considerable. While a significant number of hours were donated, it was decided to use a proportion of the under spent 1997 budget to make up for this as well as income generated by the booklet itself.

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### Summary of SOL Accounts 1996/97

Item	Budget	Expenses	Volunteer	Income	Balance
Administration and publicity	651	529.47			-121.53
Bursary	900	522.65			- 377.35
Insurance	260	00.00			- 260
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,811</b>	<b>1052.12</b>			<b>- 758.88</b>

### Summary of SOL Accounts 1998/99

Item	Budget	Expenses	Volunteer	Income	Balance
Unspent CountryWork grant 1997 (excluding bursary money)				381.53	- 381.53
Administration and publicity	580	557.53			- 22.47
Gluts for Tea	240	883.80	395	356.11	+ 287.69
Bursary	1800 (6x300)	813.87			- 986.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2620.00</b>	<b>2255.20</b>		<b>737.64</b>	<b>- 1102.44</b>

## SOL Accounts 1997/8

### COSTS

Amount	Invoice	Date of Invoice	Issued by	Budget
114.31	Labour and expenses	10.10.97	T. Jewell	Admin. /Publicity
46.00	Management	16.9.97	Common Cause	Admin.
5.00	Membership CC	16.9.97	Common Cause	Admin.
190.00	Labour	16.9.97	C. Pavledis	Admin. /Publicity
170.00	Labour	16.9.97	M. Mathias	Admin./Publicity
4.16	Expenses	16.9.97	C. Pavledis	Admin.
90.00	Horse Course	18.1.98	Working Horse Trust for A.C.	Bursary
22.00	Orchard Day /travel	20.3.99	Common Ground for L.G	Bursary
155.65	Wild Wood Workshop/travel/ accommodation	10.5.99	Heaven Farm for L.G.	Bursary
75.00	Course	(awaiting receipt)	Upstart Services Ltd for A.C.	Bursary
180.00	Permaculture course	(awaiting receipt)	Bryn Thomas for T.B	Bursary

## SOL Accounts 1998/9

### COSTS

Amount	Invoice	Date of Invoice	Issued by	Budget
60.00 (Vol. 20)	Labour	20.1.99	C. Pavledis	Gluts for Tea
200.00 (Vol.130)	Labour	25.1.99	T. Jewell	Gluts for Tea
162.97	Labour and Expenses			Admin./Publicity
14.80	Labour and expenses	2.2.99	S. Rideout	Admin./publicity
8.70	Travel interview	30.10.98	D. Pearce	Admin./publicity
41.30	Labour and expenses	4.12.98	S. Rideout	Admin./publicity
290.00 (Vol. 245)	Labour	9.98/ 12.1.99	M. Mathias	Gluts for Tea
57.82	Labour and expenses	18.10.98	S. Rideout	Admin./publicity
193.80	Photocopying	24.9.98	Castle Copy Shop	Gluts for Tea
78.00	Photocopying	24.9.98	Castle Copy Shop	Gluts for Tea
35.00	Labour	12.10.98	C. Lowery	Gluts for Tea
22.60	Labour and expenses	25.8.98	S.Rideout	Admin. /publicity
203.55	Labour and expenses	13.7.98	T. Jewell	Admin. /publicity
45.79	Labour and expenses	7.6.98	R. Rideout	Admin. /publicity
27.00	Press and Cups	10.98	Middle Farm	Gluts for Tea
140.00	Permaculture Course	18.1.99	Bryn Thomas (for R.H.)	Bursary
152.93	books for course	9.4.99	for D. P.*	Bursary
300.00	Course fees	30.3.99	Brunel University (for J.E.)	Bursary
66.99	equipment for allotment	20.4.99	for R.H.	Bursary
78.95	equipment for allotment	2.5.99	for R.H.	Bursary
75.00	Course		Upstart Services Ltd for C.R.	Bursary

Vol. = voluntary time

\* D.P was only able to do half the required work experience days and so received half the bursary.

### INCOME

Amount	Item	Budget
356.11	Sales of Gluts for Tea Booklet	Gluts for Tea

