

Highbridge Community Farm (HCF)

Notes for Stakeholders

Introduction

“A stakeholder” can be an individual, a couple, a family or two friends. To become a stakeholder costs £25 initially, and then an annual renewal fee every January thereafter. A stakeholder commits to a minimum of 10 hours work per month, every month, in return for a fair share of the total produce sold, at roughly 1/3 of shop prices. Where there is more than one person in a stakeholding, one of them is referred to as the “primary stakeholder” and the other, as the “secondary stakeholder”.

In May 2016 we became incorporated as a registered Co-operative society, so every individual aged 16 and over (whether a primary stakeholder or a secondary stakeholder), is also required to purchase a £1 share in the Co-op.

Our status as a Co-op means that everyone is expected to work together, to build a strong and self-supportive community in a positive relationship with each other. Such a community effort has to have mutual trust, and a certain amount of compromise, as fundamental components. Being a Co-op also means that we carry on business on an inward facing basis, i.e. we deal only with our stakeholders, as opposed to for example, selling on a retail basis to the public. We are not precluded from making a profit from our activities, but any profits we may earn have to be re-invested in our project. None of our stakeholders are paid for work done. We need to have sufficient money to be able to pay essential bills, like insurance, buying tools and equipment, fencing, seeds, manure, diesel, etc., and to pay Mr Henry Russell, the owner of the land that we occupy and use, the rent payable under our tenancy of that land, and the cost of the other resources that he provides for us. Because we do not sell food to anyone other than stakeholders, if ever we have a glut which we cannot otherwise shift, we try to donate it appropriately. However, by growing a wide range we hope to avoid large excesses of any particular crop. All produce is shared fairly amongst stakeholders requiring it, so sometimes if a particular crop is in short supply, restrictions are applied.

From time to time, mistakes do occur and there may be things that some stakeholders do not agree with, so we ask for your tolerance and involvement in the decision making process, and encourage all stakeholders to actively share ideas. We aim to operate with a minimum of rules and structures so that we can just get on with growing food and enjoying the fresh air, exercise and company of others. However all stakeholders must act to safeguard their own and other people’s safety and well-being, so please do not hesitate to bring the attention of your team leader any matter that gives you cause for concern.

Work commitment

The 10 hour MINIMUM commitment per stakeholder per month is based on the amount of work needed in each team to produce crops for all HCF stakeholders, by:

- Preparing and fertilising the soil – including digging, mulching, manuring, removing stones, making compost
- Sowing seeds, potting on, planting out
- Weeding and watering
- Harvesting crops and getting them ready for immediate sale, or for storage
- Providing cover for other team stakeholders whilst they are on holiday or sick
- Essential community tasks

Hours of work do not include the tea break, or time spent “picking your own”. If you do not fulfil your hours commitment, the consequence is that either your fellow team stakeholders have to do extra hours to cover yours, or - the crops suffer, and are not produced in enough quantity/quality to meet all our community stakeholders’ needs.

When you are away on holiday you need to make up the lost hours at another time, and this is best done during busy times such as planting, watering or harvesting.

Please discuss with your team leader which days/times are most suitable for you, any changes that may arise (e.g. holidays, sickness), or if you are having trouble meeting your minimum hours commitment. This helps your leader to plan the team work load and crop production so that the whole project can run smoothly.

There are some times in the year when tasks simply cannot wait, for example planting seeds, potting on or picking beans and berries. We rely on all team members making an extra effort at those times above the minimum commitment, to ensure the best harvest for all.

Essential community tasks include helping other teams when they are particularly busy (for example summer fruit and potato harvesting), and also things like turning the compost, weeding the fence line, and re-painting the infrastructure. During the winter months when some plots are dormant, there are always other tasks to get involved with, not necessarily within your own team.

There are also opportunities to contribute your time and skills to all sorts of other tasks that need to be done to help our community thrive, but apart from our "A team" who are dedicated to building and maintaining the infrastructure of sheds, compost bins etc, these hours are in addition to the minimum 10 hours per month per stakeholder of veg/fruit cultivation. Examples are buying the seeds and other things we need, financial and membership administration, online communications, Saturday morning catering, recruitment and wider community outreach, organising social events.

Harvesting and purchasing food

We aim to grow enough food for all stakeholders to have a fair share - this means taking what you need for consumption by your household(s) only, and not for friends/neighbours/extended family. When supplies of a crop are limited, we ask that you respect the restrictions placed by the team leaders on the quantities that each stakeholder can take each week, month or season. If you have a joint stakeholding, then the restriction applies to all of you as one stakeholder, not to each of you.

To pay, either:

Leave cash in the tin which is in the sales area on Saturday mornings, and otherwise in the big green shed (there is a book there also to write in an IOU if you don't have enough cash)

OR

Pay a regular amount – £5 minimum - online, and keep a record of how much you have bought so you know when you need to top that up

Bank details: Name: Highbridge Community Farm Ltd. Account No.: 6582 5013 Sort Code: 08-92-99 Reference: PROD your surname

Crops are either harvested by the relevant team (THO – Team Harvest Only), or as Pick Your Own (PYO). The price boards in the Sales area and the weekly email Update, detail what is available and the prices. Please make sure that you know how to PYO correctly, in order to avoid crop damage – ask your team leader if unsure.

On Saturday mornings, produce goes on sale from the 11am tea break whistle. At other times, look in the blue and silver cool store for team harvested produce, and check the board for what is on PYO.

Children

We encourage families to come to the farm, but children must be supervised at all times by their parents or responsible guardians, who are entirely responsible for their safety and well-being. They must stay within our fenced areas, away from hazards such as the agricultural machinery moving around and the deep pond.

Children should learn to understand the growing process, so that they contribute positively to it and do not cause damage to crops or tools. We have some tools especially suitable for children to use, please ask your team leader where to find these. A play house and toys are also provided in a central place, to be used only under supervision.

It is important to teach children that all farm produce must be washed in clean water before eating (to remove any pond water residue).

Dogs

Stakeholders who wish to bring their dog within the fenced area of the farm should keep the dog on a lead at all times and tethered near to where they are working, so that it is not able to get onto any growing area. Any fouling must be properly cleared up and taken off site. At tea breaks please keep your dog close to you and to the periphery of the communal area.

Gates

It is important to keep the gates into the fenced area closed at all times, to prevent animals straying into the field and to prevent young children from wandering out.

Health and Safety

Highbridge Farm is a working farm, and all need to be aware of potential hazards. Please ensure that you are familiar with the contents of our HCF Safety Guidelines, and follow the advice.

A First Aid kit is available in the tea cabin for all stakeholders to use if required. You may wish to check with your GP that your tetanus protection is up-to-date.

Tools

Tools are available in the sheds for you to use but please remember:

- Carry spades, forks and other sharp instruments with the tines or blades pointing down to minimise the risk of injury if you trip. Make sure that you know where other people are and that you do not hit anyone, particularly when turning round; remember the part poking out behind!
- When not in use, spades, forks and similar tools should be stood upright with the head firmly in the ground. Rakes etc. should be left lying down clear of paths with tines buried in the ground.
- When you have finished with a tool please clean it in the trough and ensure it is dry before putting away in the place where you found it.
- A comfortable pair of gardening gloves and a kneeling mat are things that you may like to bring for your personal use.

Soil

Because we are growing intensively, we need to replenish nutrients. We make our own compost both solid and liquid, and teams take turns in compost management. If required we top up by buying in manure, Progrow, and Maxicrop.

It is important that soil is not removed from the farm, so please take care to remove as much soil as possible from produce before it is taken home. Also remove excess soil from weeds before they are added to the compost heaps, because too much soil mixed with the green matter arrests the composting process.

Toilet

We have a bucket for urine only which is regularly emptied onto the compost bins, and an Eco Composting Toilet which has a diversion system that separates urine and solid waste. Your team leader will show you how to use this – please follow the instructions, and switch the light off when you exit.

There is also a flushing toilet shared with other Highbridge farm occupants, please use this for solid waste where possible.

No Waste

Please do not bring anything to the farm with the idea that it “might be useful” – ask first! And don’t expect to find a litter bin - it is everyone’s responsibility to take any waste they bring, home with them.

Photography

We take photographs as a record of our work and produce, which may be used on our websites (both public access and stakeholders only) or in advertising/marketing activities. We hope that you are happy for any images that may include you and any children or guests that you bring to be used in this way, and to clarify the position, we assume that you are, unless you explicitly notify us otherwise on your Application form.

Please do not publicly share photos that you take at the farm, that include people who you do not know, as they may have requested “No photos”.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

We have a Policy and a Privacy Notice to ensure that we conform to GDPR 2018.

Websites and Social Media

Website - <https://highbridgecommunityfarm.org/>

This is an external facing website for the wider community and general public, and also has a private area for HCF members only. This area contains things like the recipe book, finance reports, and information for stakeholders. The website administrators will register you on this, when you join.

Blog - <http://communityfarms.blogspot.co.uk>

This is a blog of our history and achievements from the point of view of one of our founder stakeholders, Andrew Ross.

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/highbridgefarmcommunity>

WhatsApp – all teams use this for communicating with each other, and your team leader will add you to yours.