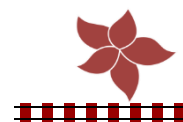


London Road Station Partnership



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Funding and finance is fun!

[Slide 1] We repeat this mantra to ourselves at London Road Station Partnership because we are very reluctant fund-raisers; funding and finance can sometimes seem like barriers to doing the 'fun' bit of a station partnership or any other community activity. Getting together with a group of friends and neighbours to make something happen, in our case gardens and a historical exhibition at a station: that's what we do, and that's what we enjoy. Worrying about where the money's going to come from can put a dampener on great ideas and motivation. So we have another mantra too: we do what we do with what, and who, we have. In other words, there's a lot you can achieve even with just the resources you have around you. Getting out there and doing the 'fun' bit – whatever that is – is the *most important thing*, because without that vision, enthusiasm and energy, there's no chance of getting funding in any case.

Really, I should be talking about getting 'support' rather than 'funding' because a lot of what you need to for a station partnership can be **free**. But ... because 'support' doesn't begin with 'f', and a lot of *positive* 'f'-words keep cropping up in this talk, I'm using 'funding' here rather loosely to talk about finding resources, whether that's money or donations in kind. I'm going to review in what follows how we 'funded' our station partnership at London Road Station, Brighton over three different stages of development. I've also included, particularly in the final sections, ideas which were put forward by participants at the GTR Station Partnership event on 12/1/2016: thank you for these!

STAGE 1 Getting started

So how did we get started at London Road Station? [Slides 2 and 3] We're a small, suburban station just outside the centre of Brighton in the middle of a residential area and our Victorian station building is a focal point in our community. The station is well-used and staffed in the morning, so we were not faced with the challenge of trying to keep it open. What we did want to do was to improve the environment around the station, and in particular, transform two small plots of sad waste land into community 'pocket' gardens, one of which would be for edible growing.

I think we were quite surprised when in 2011, Southern Railway just said 'Yes, go ahead', and with the help of the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, we set up the London Road Station Partnership. Seven of us started by clearing the abandoned plots of rubbish and rubble, which didn't require any resources other than brute force, some heavy-duty rubbish bags and our own tools. But pretty quickly, we came up with a shopping list of things we needed to go further: soil and compost, water butts as we had no other water source, containers for planting vegetables as there was a risk the ground was contaminated, and of course, plants and seeds themselves [Slide 4].

This was when that rather mythical entity, **'the community'** sprang into action. It went something like this: Jim knew someone who was doing a garden makeover and wanted to get rid of good top soil: could we collect? Diane and Simon said yes, they could. Rhiannon on the corner was moving house: did we want the mature contents of her compost bin? Yes, we did – and we spent a sweaty and slightly smelly summer afternoon shifting it. Then Madeleine knew stables that were happy for us to collect farmyard manure – another smelly afternoon but the garden was grateful. Meanwhile Rob had got in touch to say that our local recycling centre would donate some of its soil enhancer to community gardens near its depot: after an email to the local manager, a lorry with 30 bags of organic soil enhancer arrived at the station along with two Veolia employees to help up dig it in.

As news of our garden project spread, people started dropping round with plants and plant pots. Seedlings and packs of seeds were donated. Members of the station partnership propagated plants from their own gardens and we got better at asking for things and 'repurposing'. We set up a first raised bed using old scaffolding planks given free (and delivered) by a company in Worthing who had been working in our area. The planks were held in place by 2x2" stakes 'repurposed' from abandoned estate agents' boards [Slide 5].

We also put in a request to Southern Railway for start-up funding of around £150 to cover two water butts and some woodchip to stop the newly renovated plots from getting muddy. The railway company had made it clear that we needed to function as an independent entity, generally finding our own resources, but they have periodically provided funding for specific items. We also found out that Southern Water was running a scheme to provide community gardens with water butts, so we applied and were given a third one.

What we learned at this first stage was to **beg, borrow and ... build relationships**. The **'building relationships'** bit, like the **'fun'**, was probably the most important thing. Without it, we wouldn't have got the funding and support we've benefitted from; and, indeed, there would have been no point in funding us! The fact that so much of our station garden has been donated by neighbours and volunteers means that there is a genuine sense of ownership in our community, and that really has engendered a willingness to invest and donate further, in whatever way people can.

We realised this when shortly after we'd started, the owner of the small carpentry business located opposite the station, A.A. Taylor, gave us an unsolicited cheque for £100. We didn't even have a bank account! Suddenly, we really were a 'proper' community group; we called a slightly more formal meeting, agreed a constitution stating our aims and values, elected 'officers' (a Coordinator and a Treasurer) and set up a 'community bank account' with the Cooperative Bank [Slide 6].

STAGE 2 Linking up with bigger groups and setting up specific projects

By the end of our first growing season (September 2011), we'd had a lot of fun setting up our edible plot and planting out our shady triangle, and local people regularly stopped to chat and visit. But where were we going to go next? One idea was to set up a **composting site** for our community. Many people in the area live in flats and have either no garden or only a very small yard, so nowhere to recycle kitchen veg waste. And of course the compost would provide us with free soil enhancer. To achieve this, we linked up with **Brighton & Hove Food Partnership** who were promoting schemes for community composting. In collaboration with our local council, they provided us with worktop caddies for composters to bring their fruit and veg waste to our station site, and two compost bins.

We also wanted to involve the wider public a little more in our edible growing by providing planters of herbs, available to all, on the station forecourt. For this, we made one of our first grant applications, to **Brighton & Hove Food Partnership's Good Food Grant** scheme. This small-scale local funding was aimed at small groups promoting healthy eating and food growing. The application form was straightforward; we were required to show how our project would meet the scheme's objectives, what we were going to do and why, what precisely the outcomes would be and what activities would be associated with them, and how we would measure success *[Slide 10]*.

At the same time, we found out about another scheme, run by Action for Rural Sussex and Brighton Permaculture Trust, to promote the growing of local apple varieties *[Slide 7]*. The scheme would provide us with a **mini-orchard** of seven miniature fruit trees, help us plant them as part of a community event, provide a free apple-themed lunch at the event, give us a free place on a fruit-growing workshop and expert help with pruning over the first two years. The only snag was that we had to find £200 – and within a month, to enable planting to take place before the spring set in. Oh yes, and we also had to build four raised beds, repaint a wall, set up battens and training wires for the trees and fill the raised beds with good, fertile soil *[Slide 8]*.

I think most of us were so intrigued by the idea of having a mini-orchard in a small plot of around 12m² that we just decided to go ahead, even though we didn't immediately have £200 to invest. As a fall-back position, we reckoned we could all make a donation of around £10-£20 and we might just be able to raise cash donations at the planting event; we'd probably have tried crowdfunding if we'd known where to start. *[Slide 9]*

In the end, we were successful in obtaining £100 in **sponsorship** from our local pubs, situated on either side of the railway line. We invited the publicans to the event and when it was over, of course, we all trooped into the pub for a celebratory drink. We were also given free a truckload of excellent compost from a local company called Countrystyle. The truck arrived at 7.30am in the morning and desposited its load on the station forecourt. Thankfully, a panicky message the night before to the residents' association mailing list resulted in a crew of neighbours with wheelbarrows shifting steaming compost before work – much better for you, and much more fun, than the gym!

We were also lucky in that we were able to talk to both Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (possible funders) and Brighton Permaculture Trust (the providers) about whether we could apply for some funding under the BHFP Good Food Grants. Timing was the problem: funding under that grant scheme would not be confirmed until a month or so after the end of the planting season, so instead we put in for funding to cover the later training part of the mini-orchard project, rather than the purchase of the trees themselves. We were successful in our bid for both the herb planters and the fruit growing training. The planting event was a great success with around 50 people watching our MP and local resident, Caroline Lucas, plant the first tree, and then staying around for lunch on the station terrace *[Slides 11 and 12]*.

We could have used that event to shake the donation tin – after all, there was a 'free lunch' on offer - but in the end, we decided not to. Over the years, we've found it important – at least some of the time - to avoid monetary exchanges at our community events; so much daily interaction takes the form of monetary transactions that it's refreshing when an event doesn't involve money. It's also a way of saying thank-you to the people who've given support, and strengthening a sense of involvement. That said, often these events see people *wanting* to make a donation – it's one way of

feeling part of what is going on – and there's no doubting that cake sales, seed sales, plant sales, anything sales are engaging ways of raising funds at the same time as letting people know what you're doing.

Our second stage, then, was all about **linking up with bigger groups** where we had shared aims (e.g. for us, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and Brighton Permaculture Trust), **applying for grants, approaching local businesses and involving the local community through events** [Slide 11]. We learned through this stage all about formal management of our finances, using budget software on offer from Brighton Resource Centre.

Learning about finance and funding

One of the key distinctions we had to keep in mind in managing our finances was the difference between **core funding** and **project funding**. Core funding is for general expenses, including supplies, such as compost for us, and basic overheads, such as photocopying, and paying for staff or premises, if your group has to do this. Project funding is related to specific projects, for example our mini-orchard or our herb planters. [Slide 13] We also learned about **matched funding**. The idea here is that if you raise £10, then a particular fund will match that. In a number of grant applications, you need to demonstrate that you have raised, or will be able to raise, the same amount as you are bidding for. But here's the thing – community groups like station partnerships are often making big investments 'in kind' if not in cash: our time, our space, our tools etc. And in some cases, you can count these as 'matched funding'. We made a bid for £600 to a fund called Community First for plants, attendance at a plant design workshop, soil improver and other garden sundries. Against that £600, we put 40 volunteer hours, costed at £11.09 giving £444, and 4 m³ of soil that Brighton & Hove Cityparks had promised us with an estimated value of £200. We could also have put against it a donation of £200 which we'd been given from another local business, and an estimated £70 of plants which volunteers would donate, but we had easily matched the £600.

Often the focus for grants is on specific projects as outcomes are likely to be very clear and assessable, but that can make it tricky to keep up a basic level of core funding for all those small expenses which come with doing what you're doing. This is where monetary donations and sponsorship are wonderful – they allow you much greater flexibility. But in all these cases, it's worth remembering that a relationship of **trust** has been set up: grant-awarding organisations, local businesses and neighbours are all putting their trust in you, in recognition of the 'fun' you have created for a particular community, and you need to show **accountability** and **transparency** in how you have spent their money. This is where the link with your constitution comes in handy: the constitution states your **key aims** and **objectives**, along with your values (in particular, equal opportunities), and in the absence of a particular project specification, it is *the* guide as to how you will spend the money. Which is why grant funders always ask for a copy ...

STAGE 3 Involvement with a national scheme and sustaining the partnership

[Slide 14] After the success of our projects in 2012-13 – our composting scheme, our herb planters and our mini-orchard - we needed to sustain our activity and our motivation. We were lucky enough to get involved with a national scheme, The Big Dig, which had received funding to promote volunteering at community gardens. Brighton and Hove was one of the cities linked into the scheme,

and our old friends, the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership (BHFP), were administering it. As a Big Dig garden, we had to encourage more volunteers to get involved through, for example, open days and bi-annual Big Dig days. We had to log all volunteers at our sessions, make a quarterly report and in return, we were given small quarterly payments to cover administration and other volunteer costs. The 'administration' funding was calculated to cover a couple of hours per quarter spent tallying volunteers. We donated this payment back into our core funding. We used the 'volunteer' funding to cover our supplies of tea and biscuits, publicity and printing costs. [Slide 15] The further advantage of being part of the Big Dig scheme through BHFP was that we were networked with local and national groups; we enjoyed visits to and from other community gardeners in Brighton and Hove, we had visits from national Big Dig representatives and we even had a number of students doing research projects about us.

More building relationships, more networking, more visibility gave us more confidence, more motivation and also more rewards. We won awards (and cash prizes) from Brighton & Hove City in Bloom in 2013, 2014 and 2015 and we were awarded Southern Railway's Best Community Station in 2013, with a cash prize of £1000, which we spent mostly on three large planters for the platforms. Though sometimes we have felt a little strapped for core cash, we've managed – much to our surprise – to keep going for five years and there is still real commitment (and some cash in the account) to continue. I think we still concentrate first on the 'fun', but miraculously, the funding has seemed to follow. We have never bid for very large sums of money to fund large capital projects, but we have had some success applying to small local funds, and our local businesses and neighbours have made generous donations. Just as we thought at the beginning of last year that our core funds were running low, a neighbour who's always enjoyed a chat when we're working at the station dropped round a cheque for £200.

Where to go ... who to go to ... some practical pointers

Finding out about funds and fund-raising [Slides 16, 17, 18 and 19]

We've had a lot of help from Brighton & Hove Food Partnership who send around a quarterly funding digest indicating possible funds that community gardens with edible growing can apply for. There may be a similar umbrella group in your area.

Sometimes your local council or the support group for local voluntary organisations – ours are Community Works Brighton and the Brighton Resource Centre – will provide advice on fund-raising and lists of local funders. They may also put you in touch with people who want to volunteer.

Get your local representatives and other community leaders involved

Make sure your local councillors and other community leaders know what you're doing: invite them to events or to visit. They may well know of organisations or businesses who can help. They may also know of specific sources of funding.

Getting more volunteers

There are lots of people out there who want to volunteer, and lots of companies, schools and schemes who'd like to offer appropriate volunteering opportunities. Register your contact details with a local volunteer coordinator (we're registered with Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and with

Community Works) who will put people interested in volunteering in touch with you. We have several committed volunteers from outside our immediate area who've come down this route. We also had a great time in the summer of 2014 with a group of young volunteers who created a mosaic at our station as part of the National Citizen Service scheme.

Good places to try for 'sponsorship' or donations in kind

Supermarkets, recycling businesses and garden centres are often good sources of support for gardening projects, be it small grants or discounts or donations in kind; our local B&Q DIY store, for example, has discounted plants for us at the end of season and also donated tiles for the mosaic project. Veolia, the recycling company which gave us free soil enhancer, funds projects in the vicinity of its centres. Particularly if you're organising an event, nearby pubs and cafes will often help you with donations or discounts, and may lend equipment.

Publicity, visibility

Publicity is really important in fund-raising: the more people know about what you're doing, the more people will want to be involved, so do involve your local Councillors and MP, your local businesses and your local media. And use your own social media, in particular Twitter, to thank sponsors and donors. A photo tweet showing your group with the plants bought with money from X is an excellent way of acknowledging your sponsor! You can also get local businesses to sponsor particular bits of your project; on Lewes station, almost all the planters have been sponsored by local businesses who agree to pay an annual subscription to keep the planters planted.

Some online sources of information and guidance

Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP)

The ACoRP Station Adoption Handbook available from <http://acorp.uk.com/station-adoption/> is an extremely helpful source of advice about setting up and maintaining a station partnership, including fund-raising. They also award small grants to station partnership projects.

Brighton Resource Centre

A fantastic place for community groups. They provide detailed information on Raising Money and Managing Money on their website.

<http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/raising-money/>

Crowd funding

Just a much more effective (online) way of shaking the donation tin! Many of the websites, are aimed at raising very large sums of money for semi-commercial ventures but crowdfunder and justgiving both look appropriate for smaller projects

<http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/help/how-it-works/>

<https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com>

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

A large, independent grant funder – probably for larger projects – but a video on their Apply for funding page gives an excellent insight into the things that grant funders look for in a funding application: <http://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/apply-for-funding/>

Funding Central

This is a government site providing a lot of information on applying for funding. Some of the information tends to be aimed at larger voluntary groups and larger grant-awarding bodies.

<http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Page.aspx?SP=6299>

Localgiving

A very useful site which can help you set up online fundraising

<https://localgiving.com/howitworks/matchfund>

The Lottery

The 'Awards for All' scheme is aimed at smaller grants for community groups.

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/awards-for-all-england>

The Railway Heritage Trust

This organisation helps with the restoration and upkeep of railway buildings so if your station partnership is involved with building works, this may be a useful source of funding.

<http://railwayheritagetrust.co.uk/rht-grant/>

Sussex Community Foundation

An organisation which manages funds on behalf of Sussex donors – they make grants typically between £1-5K to smaller community groups

<http://www.sussexgiving.org.uk/>

And finally ... thank you to our sponsors

The London Road Station Partnership is grateful for support received from:

A.A. Taylor Joinery
B&Q Brighton
Brighton & Hove City Council
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership
Brighton & Hove City in Bloom
Brighton Permaculture Trust
Community First
Countrystyle
Drink-in-Brighton (*The Signaller* and *The Open House*)
The Garden House, Warleigh Road, Brighton
Gordon Chalmers Scaffolding, Worthing
Halstead Scaffolding, Brighton
National Citizen Service/B&H Albion in the Community
Southern Railway
Southern Water
Sussex Community Rail Partnership
Veolia Environmental Services, Hollingbury, Brighton
... and many neighbours and friends