

Slow Food Berwick-upon-Tweed Chair Report, March 2024.

It is with immense pleasure that I present my third and final report outlining details of the Berwick Convivium social programme, festival, and finances for the reporting year 2023-2024. As I did last year, I start my report by expressing a sincere thank you to our elected and co-opted committee members and officers, our annual festival sponsors, traders, and producers, our recently increased number of thirty-eight active members, and the many volunteers and supporters for their continued engagement with us as we strengthen the offering to Berwick and the surrounding areas.

Membership numbers were dwindling for numerous reasons, and it is crucial that we maintain a minimum of twenty members to continue as a convivium. Over the summer and autumn, we offered various incentives to increase our membership and I am delighted that we now have more subscribing members than historically. We are reviewing how to extend our membership in a more inclusive manner.

The management committee convenes several times over the year with free space hospitality extended from the Castle Hotel, Wallace Green and a pre-Christmas meet at a personal residence. The management committee continues to benefit from the one source access to our resources that are all contained within the dedicated Convivium Google Drive. Throughout the year our Officers were Ken Hardy as Treasurer, Laura McGinlay as Vice-Chair and Millie McRobbie as secretary. Millie & Ray McRobbie are members of the management committee and joint Festival Directors. Jo Thomas is a member of the committee and in December we co-opted Alison Edwards to the management committee to allow us to develop our communications offering and to help to develop our strategy. I thank each of them for their commitment to the convivium. Throughout the year we stay connected with our members through our Newsletter sent in June, August, October, and December. We use Mailchimp to share messages to our group lists as required to promote our events and initiatives.

On an ongoing basis, I extend our gratitude for the ongoing support and generosity from Andrew Smith and Roger Peple at Kreative Technology who generously host our websites, maintain our email accounts, and offer ongoing advice whenever required.

For my third report as chair, I am delighted to confirm that our finances remain extraordinarily strong across our bank accounts, with due diligence from our Treasurer who shall convey this detail in his financial report.

For the first time, we were invited to complete a detailed annual return to Slow Food UK to describe our various activities. Our team responded with vigour and enthusiasm, and we submitted this in December. It contains extensive detail, and much of this is replicated within this report.

The first part of our return to SFUK detailed our Advocacy Activities:

MAY - Visit to Newcastle University staff/students' "[Green Finger Forum](#)."

Invited to talk about Slow Food and the Berwick group and to learn about their project. Shared information about SF principles and sustainability and learnt how the Newcastle work had developed over two years. This project has inspired a potential initiative in Berwick for 2024 - "Grow, Cook, Eat".

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JUL – Participated in “What a Wonderful World” Festival, Alnwick - water use/river/sea theme to Festival, so a ‘Slow Fish’ focus was adopted at the Berwick SF slot.

BSF members prepared and served sustainable fish and seafood (plus veggie and vegan) snacks, using sustainable products and local and/or small producers. All producers were credited. Sources of on-line information on sustainable fish/seafood and fish seasonality were provided. There was local and regional press coverage of BSF participation.

JUL – Prior Park First School awarded grant of £2000 for school gardening programme

A school in one area of Berwick had already started a gardening project for the youngest pupils, via donations and volunteer time. The donation has allowed them to expand to cover all year groups and to develop a community gardening project. BSF intends to link with “Greener Berwick” to support this project to ensure sustainability and potential to expand to other schools.

NOV – Foraging Pixies - Talk and Tasting

A BSF member-led event with a local company. Talk on local foraging opportunities, sustainability and educational potential, plus delicious food, and drinks from foraged ingredients.

The second part of the return to SFUK listed our Education Activities:

JUN - “Time for Lunch”

Participated in and publicised SFUK initiative, extensive SM coverage, promoting local, independent establishments and venues/walks/options for lunch breaks.

JUL – Prior Park School - see above.

AUG - Food Education at Berwick Food and Beer Festival - Food education provided via the free demo kitchen featuring informative sessions around bokashi lacto-fermentation composting, growing your own microgreens, gluten free baking & low carb high fat diets.

Free children's activities creating and cooking light wrap pizzas.

NOV – Foraging Pixies - see above.

The third section of the return to SFUK details our Biodiversity Activities:

JUL – Prior Park School - see above.

NOV – Foraging Pixies - see above.

We were then asked to list our Supporter Activities:

MAR – Evening reception for Festival volunteers

‘Thank you’ drinks reception for volunteers, prior to the AGM.

MAY – Supper Club at Northern Soul Kitchen (NSK)

Event at local, independent venue that uses food that would otherwise end up in landfill.

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MAY – Visit to Cheviot Brewery Visit

Brewery tour to small, local producer in north Northumberland (regular at Berwick Food and Beer Festival). Talk on establishment and development of the business and tastings.

AUG – 16th Berwick Food and Beer Festival

Largest annual community event in Berwick. Attracts up to 10,000 visitors from Friday evening to Sunday: producers' market, demonstration kitchen, children's cooking activities, drinks marquee and live music. Slow Food stall in producers' market.

Support and promote regional and small producers from the North-East and Scotland.

Promotion of Slow Food movement (advocacy).

Food education & Free children's activities (as above)

OCT – Evening reception for Festival volunteers

'Thank you' drinks and supper for Festival volunteers at local, independent venue.

NOV – "Call My Bluff" Wine Evening

Wine tasting event at a new, independent Enoteca, Coxon & Coxon Wine Rooms in Berwick.

DEC – "Christmas with Soul" – Festive Dinner

Festive social event and Christmas quiz!

FEB – "Low Carb Evening"

An evening of delicious low carb food, homemade fizz, and great chat regarding the low carb lifestyle

All our activities are open to our members to attend, and most are also open to guests and non-members. Undoubtedly, the major event for the year was our hugely successful 16th Berwick Food and Beer Festival that took place outside of the Barracks including part of our usual space and this was held earlier in the summer than usual. Thank you again to our festival volunteers with the setting up and closing of the site as well as assisting during the various events over the three-day weekend. Most of this time is unpaid and we established a thank-you event soon after the festival ended.

Our planning for the BFBF this summer is well underway. Following the success of the last two years, the management committee has fully endorsed the renewal of Millie & Ray as Festival Directors for a third year who both receive an honorarium. For the first time, there is agreement for an honorarium for the Festival Treasurer.

The redevelopment at the Barracks does mean that our storage space was terminated, and I wish to convey our thanks first to English Heritage who allowed us to use the space over many years and then to Julie Kennedy, Project Manager at Berwick Community Development Trust who allowed us to safely store our items at an alternative location. Between committee members we decided what to

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donate or discard and the rest was stored until the festival week. We then reviewed which of our assets we required for future events, and these were retained. BSF donated £350 to the Food Bank as appreciation of the support from the BCDT over the springtime.

Whilst we have still suspended our bursary and trader support funding due to concentrating on core committee work, we hope to reinstate this community support in the new committee year recognising that we need to develop our existing framework for inviting applications and following through on grants provided. As you will have read above about the school food gardening project at Prior Park First School, we awarded £2000 and further details of this, and future projects shared at the AGM by Laura and Jo. In January, we made a financial donation to support the volunteer appreciation celebration dinner in Newcastle organised by Northern Soul Kitchen, Berwick.

We are one of the largest Slow Food convivium's in the UK, and I want to thank Shane Holland at the national office of SFUK for his continued support and advice when consulted. I am delighted that he has shared some comments for our AGM thanking the current management committee for ensuring our continuing success.

After a successful first congress in Italy, I am invited to be part of the conference organising committee and to speak at the World Conference on Food Science & Technology in London this August in my role as Chair of the Berwick convivium. SFUK & BSF will publicise our involvement spreading the word of Slow at such a prestigious event on social media if sponsorship is identified to allow participation.

Both I and the members of the management committee will be ready to receive and respond to any questions relating to this report during the first part of the AGM. I am delighted to confirm that we have members willing to stand for election and to offer their time and experience on the committee over the year ahead. These nominations will be presented for endorsement at the AGM.

My report has outlined some of the highlights of a most rewarding year where we have increased our involvement within our community significantly. I have decided not to stand for re-election for the position of chair allowing succession to my earnest colleagues who are devoted to ensure the continuing success of the convivium. We have discussed plenty of ideas and events to progress this year including the possibility of developing a loyalty offering for members.

Thank you for being a member of the Slow Food Berwick-upon-Tweed Convivium.

Kev.

Kevan Wylie.
Chair (2022-2024).



Slow Food[®]
Berwick-upon-Tweed