



OPEN FOOD
NETWORK **UK**

2020

Annual Report



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1. A message from Lynne, CEO

It's hard to believe that it was only one year ago that we had our first OFN UK Gathering in Birmingham. That's the kind of marker that helps you remember just what a year it has been! In the week of our gathering the total turnover across all UK enterprises was £7k. Two weeks later it was £14k. Three weeks after that it was £40k. In the first lockdown our collective turnover peaked at about £60k and has now stabilised at around £50wk per week. OFN UK is seven times bigger than it was a year ago.

What those numbers don't reveal is our emotional human experience of this time. This is a story of ravenous upheaval across our communities. A time of no supermarket delivery slots and empty supermarket shelves. A time when you were on the phone finding out who needed food, comforting worried people and coordinating ever growing teams. The fear, the uncertainty. You held these stories with and for your communities.

It seems appropriate for all of us to take this moment, one year and an eternity from our last AGM, to celebrate all we have overcome, mourn all we have lost and reflect on what we have achieved. This year our communities demonstrated that another food system is not only possible, but in fact more resilient than the dominant systems.

This year will be throwing a whole new set of challenges, particularly for those of us most affected by Brexit. While there is much that is difficult, one thing is for sure - community is key. Over the coming year a huge part of our focus as OFN UK will be to support this work in putting equality, diversity and accessibility at the centre of our food systems.

It is such a joy to be working with this bunch of incredible community food system pioneers that put accessibility and sustainability at the core of everything you do. Thanks for inspiring me and the whole OFN UK team every single day!

2. Highlights of the year

Year at a glance

The Open Food Network community

- “How our amazing team and all the incredible people running community food enterprises, both established ones and new start-ups, coped with the massive demands created by the pandemic. Collectively, we exhibited proof of the goodness and strength of the human spirit in times of difficulty.”
- “How we, as a team, managed to deal with such a massive increase of enterprises joining without losing the “soul” of the Open Food Network.”

The Global Open Food Network community

- “Being part of a global community of great people who are building better food systems for the world.”
- “The first online Open Food Network global gathering, which meant more of the team could attend and feeling more of a part of the global community.”

Events

- “We enjoyed our first ever face-to-face gathering of the Open Food Network UK community in March in Birmingham.”
- “Speaking at the Oxford Real Food and Farming Conference with the global team.”

The Open Food Network website and working with producers

- “Helping producers get up and running - and then seeing them thrive.”
- “Witnessing how much difference community food enterprises are making in the world”
- “The photos on mobile and the new look shop front look AWESOME!”

In 2020 we facilitated the trade of **£2.3million** of local produce from **1101** producers across **93,000** orders



In the last year we grew our team to **13** part-time team members



In 2020 we answered **1831** support requests



In 2020 we supported **121** Community Food Enterprises to trade online



In 2020 we grew to **20** Open Food Network Global Instances



In 2020 we made **3826** Contributions to the code



VISION

Diverse Food Systems

Diverse food systems enable more projects and businesses selling and distributing from more farms. The food economy is diverse, vibrant and inclusive, celebrating provenance and culture.

Agroecological Production

Improved markets that meet the needs of agroecological holdings, making it easier for farmers to transition to diverse holdings that build soil and biodiversity. Short supply chains mean less waste.

Healthy Communities

Communities, producers and institutions collaborate to increase access and awareness on nourishing food. Events, skill sharing and celebration build cohesive, inclusive communities.



WHAT WE DO

Software Platform

Easy to use platform and tools that make running a community food enterprise simple for shoppers, producers and the team to coordinate local sales, production and logistics.

We build a vibrant network of community food enterprises (CFE) with the knowledge, confidence and resources to thrive.

Data & Research

Contribute valuable data and research to build the evidence base for short supply chains and community-driven food systems.

Learning Community

Learning exchanges online and in person to share experience and problem-solve collectively strengthening the networks and movements in community food systems.

Resources & Mentors

Brilliant support in business planning, processes, community engagement, marketing, partnership building to enable inclusive, accessible, nourishing food systems.

We live in a world in which toxic food is produced and distributed by multinational companies. The Open Food Network exists to enable networks of communities to feed the world.

4. Thriving Food Hubs

Understanding the needs of community food enterprises

This year we put significant effort into understanding the journey of food enterprises that join the Open Food Network community, so that we can better support their needs over time. Particular attention has been paid to our onboarding process. We give more support to new registrations to help them start to trade, which includes:

- A personalised email after registering.
- Follow up emails if they have not been able to set up and start trading.
- Many more videos and detailed customer guide walk throughs.
- A weekly drop in call for personal support.

In the next 12 months we aim to continue to streamline this support process by being more proactive in helping our users and streamlining our processes.

Support update

During the first lockdown in March 2020 we saw a huge increase in demand for purchasing food online. As a result, new food enterprises continued to register on the platform at a much faster rate than pre-lockdown. During this time, the brilliant support team responded to all support requests within 48hrs. Even better, 91% of support requests were handled within 2hrs.

Despite the significant growth in user support needs in the past year, we have been able to maintain a personal approach. After all, the ability to speak to a real person and to get help whatever your computational or educational ability is what sets us apart from many other online retail platforms

The support team now handles software user requests through the vTiger - a CRM software tool which allows any team member to pick up on a case and see its history. This has helped us to improve our workflow and team collaboration on support cases.



Our mission is to help food enterprises thrive. In 2020 we started developing ideas on how the team could best support existing food hubs to grow into their full potential and become thriving food hubs. Under the banner of our Thriving Food Hubs project we are transforming our support and resources available to food enterprises in the following ways:

- ★ A new Resources section due to launch in April 2021.
- ★ We have been making detailed investigations into what food enterprises need and when - as well as collecting case studies to shine a spotlight on their journey to a thriving food hub.
- ★ We have delivered over thirty webinars on a variety of topics - from marketing and shopfront optimisation to lockdown support and accounting. These are well attended and create lots of opportunities for enterprises to interact with each other.
- ★ Marketing health checks, which include a review of the enterprises online presence and a two hour Zoom session followed up a few weeks after with a 30min check up to review progress.
- ★ Shopfront health checks where we identify shopfronts which could be more effective and make better use of what the platform has to offer.
- ★ Thriving Food Hubs Facebook group - an interactive space where food enterprises are able to connect and support each other.
- ★ Group coaching sessions with hub managers to help promote entrepreneurial thinking and problem solving.
- ★ The Superstars Signal Group, where enterprises can support each other and get fast updates from the support team.
- ★ Plus, a huge number of amazing new blogs, weekly software update notifications, weekly bulletins and a regular newsletter as well as an active and collaborative social media presence.




**Sharing stories, experience and ideas
to help community food enterprises
thrive**

5. Software Platform

This year was a huge year for the software platform. With a nine-fold increase in turnover and 15 fold increase in traffic at the height of the first lockdown our software and infrastructure was pushed like never before.

Although at times the system was quite slow to use, we are very pleased to report that at no point did we experience an outage due to the load. This is a testimony to the incredible work done by the global delivery team. Here are some of our biggest achievements this year:

-  **Performance Work** - across the platform we made pages load faster. As we continue to grow we'll continue to need to make improvements, but our huge growth this year demanded some huge performance improvements.
-  **Mobile Shopping Experience** - We redesigned and streamlined the mobile shopping experience, improving the cart, checkout and most importantly, making the shopping experience beautiful and full of images.
-  **Tech Upgrades** - We upgraded the frameworks on which OFN is built to supported releases. This brings huge security and performance benefits as well as making it easier to attract new developers to the community. We also decoupled the platform from the open source ecommerce platform on which it was originally built which increases our development speed significantly.
-  **Compliance Work** - This year we were hit with the legal requirement of secure card authentication, which meant a total redevelopment of our payment gateway Spree. We also added the ability for enterprises to add their own Terms and Conditions meaning hubs can meet these legal requirements.
-  **Little things to bring joy** - We delivered a range of small improvements to the OFN experience and usability over the course of the year - tweaks to the customers, producers and orders pages and auto saving of shopper baskets. We really love getting these little fixes out!

The UK community is kept up to date with the latest developments via posts in the WhatsApp and Thriving Hub Facebook groups, and, more recently, information is also added to the weekly email bulletin sent to UK enterprises. So what's up next?

IN PLAY

- ★ Rails 5 Upgrade - A key upgrade of the Rails framework.
- ★ Adjustments refactoring - To simplify the way tax and fees work.
- ★ Harmonising customer balances across the system.
- ★ Improving Metrics and Monitoring.

UP NEXT

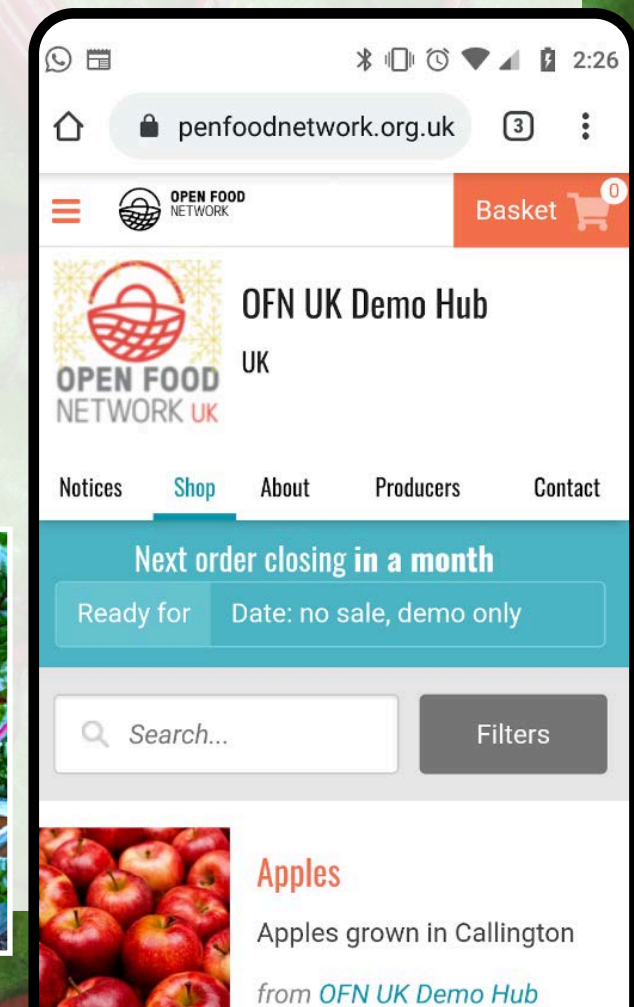
- ★ Consumer Unit Prices - Price per unit, a compliance feature.
- ★ Terms and Conditions - Legal relationship between hubs and platform.

IN INCEPTION

- ★ Backoffice uplift (Phase one of Network Feature).
- ★ Tax reports - Two reports to improve tax and fees information.

IN PREPARATION

- ★ History of invoice changes - ensuring invoice changes are accurate.
- ★ Invoice numbering - a legally compliant invoice feature.
- ★ API - improving the interoperability of the Open Food Network.



6. Communications and events

EMAIL

In 2020 we introduced a new “Hub of the Month” feature in our monthly newsletter and we launched a new weekly email bulletin. We now have 799 newsletter subscribers with 20% of these regularly opening and clicking on our emails. We have 26 subscribers to the weekly bulletin and the rate of engagement is high at approx. 50%.

PRESS

We were covered in a variety of media outlets both local and national in 2020. A few highlights include an interview with Lynne Davis in The Independent, coverage in a piece BBC Food did on affordable sustainable food, and when The Courier Scotland reported how the Open Food Network was enabling producers of speciality cheeses to survive the impacts of lockdown.

Social media

Twitter

550 new followers
3,794 profile visits
272,200 impressions
431 mentions

Facebook

726 new followers
41,132 people reached
9,726 engagements
871 link clicks
718 shares

Youtube

4,708 views
233 hours watched
149 new subscribers
38,703 impressions

Instagram

1,843 followers
162 posts
817 account reach in Feb
217 interactions in Feb

EVENTS

In March we organised our first ever face-to-face gathering of Open Food Network software users in the UK. We know that our amazing community have such brilliant experiences building some of the best projects working for food sovereignty in the country - so we wanted to bring everyone together to celebrate!

In May we held a global gathering of all the Open Food Network instances around the world. This was the first time to do this online and as a result many more of our community were able to join in. [Here is a link to the full recording](#) of the UK showcase and [here is a link to a two-minute snapshot](#).

We also hosted weekly COVID response webinars throughout the first lockdown and we have continued to run occasional sessions on this topic through the Thriving Food Hubs webinar programme.



We hosted over 30 weekly webinars since June 2020



7. Partnerships and projects

PARTNERSHIPS

Sustain is doing important campaign work towards healthier and more sustainable food systems, which are publicly accountable and socially and environmentally responsible. This year Cobi and Nick from the OFN UK team were elected as trustees of Sustain.

Better Food Traders gave us permission to adapt this video which they produced - [see an example for Tamar in this video](#).

We worked with Sheffield University on a research programme to understand the impacts of the pandemic on the local food sector. We wanted to understand and support enterprises and policymakers in managing the impacts of the pandemic and record important learning for the future. The researchers worked closely with many OFN producers and hubs.

Crowdfunder UK will work with Kay and Louise to host a series of webinars in March about crowdfunding. They will also help build a set of resources for the new OFN UK website for Food Enterprises to use in the future when they are planning a crowdfunding campaign.

PROJECTS

Welsh Government funding

We are working with Social Farms & Gardens, Land Workers' Alliance and DTA Wales to fast-track five innovative food hubs in Wales. In April 2021, we will be inviting applications from anyone interested in starting a food hub and providing five of those applicants with funding and support to develop successful community businesses.

All the learning from this project will be added to our resource base to help future businesses.

Building Food Equality

We are working to help address the inequalities present in the food system and demonstrate sustainable alternatives. In this project we will collate inspiring case studies from across the OFN community. We will research barriers and limitations to both enterprises and shoppers that limit the transformational power of online community food enterprises. We are hosting food equality webinars on this topic to share learning and inspiration too.

Sustenance Partners

Funded by Innovate UK we've been working with the South West Good Food Network, the Mutual Credit Services and Food Plymouth to explore shared logistics, food accessibility and opportunities for mutual credit in Cornwall and Devon.

Food Hubs and Climate

In collaboration with the University of East Anglia we've been working with a researcher to understand how online food hubs compare to conventional food purchasing from a carbon emissions perspective.

Through analysis of OFN data and interviews with shoppers and hubs, this research explores food choices and movements.

We participated in a range of panel discussions exploring food systems and open source technology

- Co-ops UK
- Royal Ag Uni
- Soil Assoc Scotland
- Ecodyfi Development Trust
- Wales Real Farming Conference
- Oxford Real Farming Conference
- Northern Real Farming Conference
- UN 75 Expert Panel on Global Food Security
- Numerous Community Food Enterprise start up panels - [here is an example with the BRACE group](#)
- Liverpool Uni Management School
- Centre for Alternative Technology
- Wester Ross UNESCO Biosphere
- Plunkett Community Shops
- Forward Democracy
- Food Ethics Council
- Open Up Summit
- Mozilla Festival

8. Food Enterprise stories

All the Food Enterprises across the Open Food Network community have done amazing things over the year that was 2020 - so we want to say a massive thank you and well done to everyone! Here are just a few highlights:



Slow Food Birmingham

[Slow Food Birmingham](#) joined the Open Food Network in 2020 as a result of the first Covid-19 lockdown - and they have been very busy. Aside from their regular Wednesday collections, they have also been educating their local community about the concepts of slow food. One of their aims is to ensure that everyone has access to high quality food, so they have been involved in #Brumtogether to help ensure nobody goes hungry in Birmingham. Another of their aims is to help to build a fair, equitable, resilient and sustainable food system. For more information on how they are working towards food equality, check out this conversation with Kate Smith [which you can view here](#).



[Cambridge Food Hub](#) runs a business to business model, rather than business to customer - which is relatively novel amongst food enterprises. They have been running a healthy start vegbox scheme to ensure that families on Healthy Start vouchers can have access to high quality, affordable food. More recently, Cambridge Food Hub has been involved as part of a group that desire to bring the principles of [doughnut economics](#) to Cambridge, as well as working towards creating the physical infrastructure necessary for a [food hub](#) in Cambridge.

[Cultivate](#) have had a busy year with the Open Food Network, with about 30% of their trade coming through their shopfront. Everything they sell is sourced from within the county and they pay producers fairly. They also keep carbon emissions low by not allowing the use of new plastics and they deliver primarily via bike courier. Customers can get food, detergents, and household goods from Cultivate's online shop. In the next year, they are planning a full switch to the platform as there is a clear values match between our organisations to increase the impact of local food.



Stroudco your local online grocer

[Stroudco](#) have had a good year. Aside from moving to the Trinity rooms community hub, they have also weathered the storm of COVID-19 and the impacts upon the economy - whilst also [working with local businesses](#) to ensure greater local resilience. These quotes demonstrate the great work they have been doing:

"The community of Stroud has great resilience because of its ability to cooperate and Stroudco, with the Open Food Network, provides a fantastic service that not only delivers essential goods to those that need them but at the same time supports local businesses like our own."

- Nikhil Girish, Supplier

"Our friendly local delivery system is great for those who are self-isolating; we can drop off boxes one week and collect them the next; able to access narrow lanes that many larger delivery vehicles often struggle with"

- James, Stroudco Director

Stroudco is involved in the #shoplocal campaign, which was created to ensure more people shop locally in the area. Additionally, they enable their customers to donate to both Stroud District Foodbank and The Long Table month. Also, The Long Table Freezer of Love pay what you can meals are available to order through Stroudco.

9. Meet the team and board

CEO and Product Manager

Lynne has made building global food sovereignty her purpose and passion. She trained in biodynamic agriculture and worked on a number of commercial livestock and vegetable holdings, including Dean Forest Food Hub and Street Goat in Bristol. Lynne has worked on agricultural policy with the Landworker's Alliance, La Via Campesina and the RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission. She is on the board of the Ecological Land Cooperative. Lynne has a BE in Software Engineering and an MSc in Agricultural Economics.



Support Team

Jo spent 15 years working in the digital sector and before joining the OFN she led the Digital Innovation team at Lush Cosmetics. Jo is passionate about how technology can play an integral role in building a sustainable future for us and our planet, as well as helping as many people as possible have access to local, quality food.



Support Team

Louise is a senior member of the OFN support team with over 3 years experience of using the platform. Louise has a background in scientific computing, having completed a PhD in Computational Chemistry in 2014, and she is passionate about supporting small business and helping others to use technology.



Food Hub Marketing

Kayleigh is a sustainable food marketing specialist and has worked with a wide variety of food businesses, publishers and not for profit organisations, including Pukka Herbs, Immediate Media (BBC magazines) and community food enterprises. Through her work with the Open Food Network, Kay has acquired an expert understanding of which marketing techniques are most effective in supporting food enterprises to market.



Community Facilitator

Nick Weir is a founder of Stroudco Food Hub and Stroud Community Agriculture before helping to start Open Food Network UK. With a background in IT account management, he spent 3 years coordinating an international collaboration of online food hubs to find the best solution to their software needs. Nick works with development agencies and other support organisations to develop community resilience as well as supporting new community projects from first steps through to self-sufficiency.



Support Team and Digital Communications

Cobi is the founder of a social enterprise connecting smallholder farmers in North-East Nigeria with markets. For Cobi, global food equity can only be achieved by first addressing the fractures in smallholder-dependent value chains. Cobi has a degree in Human, Social, and Political Sciences and an MPhil in African Studies from the University of Cambridge. In her spare time, Cobi is learning Python and R. She hopes to put these programming languages to good use in her quest for food justice for all.



Support Team

Joe is a food poverty researcher and has presented papers at academic conferences on the topic as well as having volunteered for Good Food Oxford as a food poverty intern. Passionate about agroecology and permaculture, Joe is also a board member of the National Forest Gardening Scheme and was a research intern for the Permaculture Association. Joe has a BA in Biological Sciences from the University of East Anglia and a Master's in Agroecology and Food Security from Coventry University.



Digital Communication Lead, Case Studies and Research

Francesca has a BSc in Gastronomic Sciences, a MSc in Food Policy, and she's now enrolled as a PhD student in Agro-food Economics and Policy at the University of Bologna. Her research is focused on local food systems, agro-food policies and short food value chains. After working with Slow Food Italy, the RSA, and Eating Better, Fran joined the OFN UK in 2019 to manage social media channels and is now working on case studies and research.



List of Directors: Duncan Catchpole, Mags Hall, Anslem Ibing, James Millar,

List of Directors: Sara Rock, Jon Theodosiou, Jack Townsend, Doro Warlich

10. Open Food Network Global

There are not-for-profit Open Food Network organisations in 20 countries all signed up to a global set of Open Food Network values and all using the same open source code base to build alternative food systems from the grass roots upwards.

During the pandemic we saw >850% growth in the use of the Open Food Network platform in established countries and a big increase in demand from new countries – particularly in the global South – wanting to deploy the platform as a basis to build short food supply chains.

The Open Food Network team is looking for partners to support this global growth and help fund the infrastructure to make it possible.

All of the global instances have many great highlights of 2020 and here is a small selection of the brilliant work they have been doing.



Australia recorded the impacts of COVID-19 on the food system documenting how community food enterprises responded - and they won the Mozilla Foundation's COVID-19 Solutions award!



In addition to this, over 2020 they helped 730 people set up as an online shop or supplier, processed 41,348 orders and managed 56 software releases and expanded the team from a team of six to twelve - as well as launching the Agro-ecology & Regenerative Agriculture Knowledge Commons and the Open Food Network Connect!

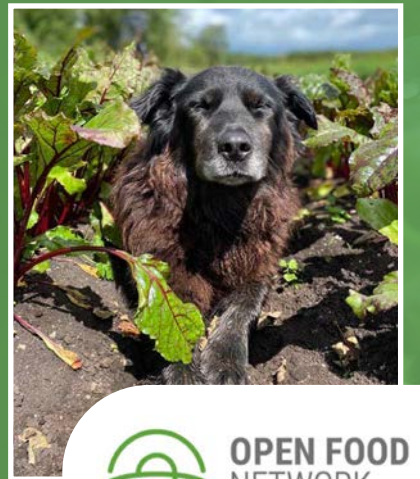
Canada's report Tech Enabling Online Distribution, supported by the Ontario Trillium foundation, was published. Other positive impacts include the proliferation of local farming networks and improving access to local, sustainably produced products.

In numbers, 637 different customers are accessing 8,519 different local food and farming products through these networks, valued at \$1.2 million annually.

Their work has measurably improved small farm livelihoods and collectively 12 women entrepreneurs are returning over \$902,000 to the pockets of local, small scale, ecological growers and artisans annually.

Ireland has seen overall orders on the site increase by 367% and the number of shoppers increase by 414%.

Cloughjordan ecovillage won an Innovate together grant from Rethink Ireland to set up a hub which will provide sustainable routes to market for small producers across Tipperary. Roscommon Produce Network, a part of Transition Town Ireland, was set up and includes vegetable growers, sourdough bakers and some wonderful volunteers. OFN Ireland also has a monthly newsletter which you can view here



11. Accounts

Financial activities: March 2020 - February 2021

	TOTAL
Income	
Consultancy	580.00
Gifts and Donations Income	48.50
OFN Plans	
Basic Plan	29.46
Scale Plan	15,262.95
Starter Plan	5,527.16
Total OFN Plans	20,819.57
Services	2,384.43
Support Packages	116.67
Tax Refunds	1,147.44
Total Income	£25,096.61
Cost of Sales	
GoCardless Fees	196.29
Total Cost of Sales	£196.29
TOTAL	£24,900.32
Expenditures	
Awards and Grants	2,928.39
Bank charges	77.97
Dues and Subscriptions	475.47
Events	266.50
Internet Expenses	4,909.80
Office/General Administrative Expenditures	170.74
Payroll Expenses	
Pension	476.37
Taxes	0.00
Wages	26,841.00
Total Payroll Expenses	27,317.37
Professional Fees	10,157.52
Accounting	2,859.86
CEO	19,300.00
Communications Manager	3,000.00
Marketing	12,875.00
Social Media	3,875.00
Software Development	139,247.99
Support	12,494.17
Total Professional Fees	203,809.54
Transferwise Fee	300.45
Travel and Meetings	893.84
Total Expenditures	£241,150.07
NET OPERATING INCOME	£ -216,249.75
Other Income	
Grants	417,390.50
Total Other Income	£417,390.50
Other Expenditures	
Unrealised Gain or Loss	0.00
Exchange Gain or Loss	-559.63
Total Other Expenditures	£ -559.63
NET OTHER INCOME	£417,950.13
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	£201,700.38

Balance sheet: as of February 28th 2021

	TOTAL
Fixed Asset	
Total Fixed Asset	
Cash at bank and in hand	
CaxtonFX GBP	-525.97
CaxtonFX USD	1,006.84
Transferwise EUR	1,067.95
Transferwise GBP	15,993.33
Transferwise USD	3,039.80
Unity Trust Bank	215,725.07
Total Cash at bank and in hand	£236,307.02
Debtors	
Debtors	1,878.82
Debtors - EUR	0.00
Debtors - USD	0.00
Total Debtors	£1,878.82
Current Assets	
Prepaid Expenses	0.00
Undeposited Funds	1,644.25
Total Current Assets	£1,644.25
NET CURRENT ASSETS	£239,830.09
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	
Trade Creditors	
Accounts Payable	-3,238.31
Creditors - EUR	0.00
Creditors - USD	0.00
Total Trade Creditors	£ -3,238.31
Current Liabilities	
Accruals	0.00
Benefactor funding brought fwd	0.00
Esmee grant unspent	0.00
HMRC VAT Suspense	0.00
Lush grant unspent	0.00
Payroll Liabilities	
HMRC	-1,893.65
Pension	-142.52
Total Payroll Liabilities	-2,036.17
VAT Liability	416.23
Total Current Liabilities	£ -1,619.94
Total Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	£ -4,858.25
NET CURRENT ASSETS (LIABILITIES)	£244,688.34
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	£244,688.34
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	
Other Liabilities	1,499.57
Total Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	£1,499.57
TOTAL NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)	£243,188.77
Charity funds	
Retained Earnings	-1,055.22
Surplus/(Deficit)	244,243.99
Total Charity funds	£243,188.77



OPEN FOOD
NETWORK **UK**

The Open Food Network UK

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[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)