

## Earth's Annual Report by the Chair

June 16<sup>th</sup> 2022

Welcome to you all this afternoon. The presence of members of the City of Ely Council is much appreciated, and especial thanks to Councillor Chris Phillips deputy mayor, and Mrs Mary Roan who is his deputy mayoress. Earth has had a long association with the City Council who have been generous in their support with grants over the years.

As with most charities there has been considerable disruption to the annual cycle of events since March 2020.

At last we are back on schedule with an AGM in June after 2021 when the AGM was held in September.

This 27-month period has seen considerable changes and many challenges to the continued running of Earth, but through it all the commitment of the staff to provide this essential core service for the users has been commendable. We are slowly working our way back to seeing past users returning and we now have a commitment to attracting new users to this haven of peace in Ely.

We have gained a new Trustee in Richard Hobbs who is able to give us valuable guidance in many areas based on his many years as a councillor at City and District and County level and knowledge of the working of many Ely organisations.

Very sadly we have seen the death of Mike Rouse who joined us for a short while as a committee member. There can be hardly an organisation in Ely that does not owe something to this Gentleman who was such a respected and well-loved figure in Ely.

The diligence of our secretary, Richard Birch, to renew the lease arrangement with the County Council is showing signs of reward. As well as the unrelenting paperwork and managerial support I have had over the last year I have been buoyed by his encouragement and good cheer.

Further 'selling our services' has happened to hopefully ensure we are on the preferred provider list with the LDP. This is all in parallel with management /provision changes within care provision anyway. For this we can only wait and see

Thank you to Granville Hawkes, our treasurer, for ensuring that finances remained buoyant during lock down and ensuring that we have a healthy budget on which to move forward and the ability to implement much needed modernisation with communications, and effect essential repairs to the hut (which has sprung a leak).

And then there are staff changes.

Peter Llewellyn left us last year and we were joined by Lydie Luis who has become a well-respected staff member with much enthusiasm, horticultural and social media skills, to add to her ability to work well with the clients and others. Lydie has galvanised our wonderful service users to create a sensory garden which we hope to open to other visitors, particularly those who seek solace from the peace of a garden.

We have recently been joined by Mr Andrew Austin. His sphere of experience is slightly different, but no less interesting and relevant. There are many new ideas and directions we can take without losing the peaceful essence of Earth and the benefits of gardening to so many in society.

**Sarah Dickson** has been the driving force for the charity since the beginning and her constant dedication to Earth and all the users, families and trustees is worthy of a medal. So much so that she was probably the catalyst that ensured that Earth received a £500.00 award from Ely Heroes. She would not like to take the credit, but I'm sure it is hers with the help of Peter. We had a simple but worthy presentation day earlier in May this year when Naomi Sherwood and the business supporters of Ely Heroes visited the site.

Sarah is now about to hang up her trowel and spend more time with Geoff and turn her hand many other activities that she has an interest in. I don't think Sarah will leave us entirely, I sincerely hope not, and there will always be a place for her here. So very many thanks.

Thank you also to our John Sinclair who has returned as our volunteer and is so important in maintaining the tidiness of the allotment which is provided for us free by the Allotment Association.

Our fundraising was rather limited last year, but Thomas Parsons Charity have given us a sizeable donation that will go a long way to ensuring the winter integrity of the hut.

Earth's only presence at a local event last year was at the Santa visit at Ely Museum. It was a great success and we must capitalise on this for events such as Apple Day and the planned Christmas Fair. Help is always appreciated.

A major concern for the charity is the recruitment of Trustees, and without them the ability to continue becomes critical.

Personally, I intend to stand down as Chair next June and have not fully decided as to whether I can commit further time to the charity. We now only have four committee members, three of whom are trustees. This meets the constitutional requirements but is not sustainable.

I do not like to leave this on a rather brutal note, but we are not alone in this dilemma. Please spread the word and consider anyone you feel would like an opportunity to help develop this worthwhile charity.

Suzanne Lindsay

Chair Earth