

Back to Front - Annual Report:

(Reporting Period from April 2020 – March 2021.)

Chair's Welcome:

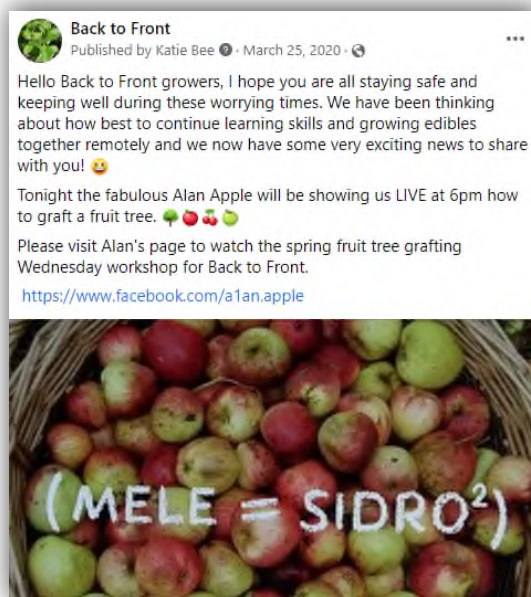
On behalf of the Back to Front Trustees I would like to offer a warm welcome to our fourth annual report since becoming a registered charity *in December 2016 (Back to Front CIO - Registered Charity Number 1170920)*. This year was our hardest one yet as the global Coronavirus pandemic hit the UK just before the start of this reporting period. Many of our plans had to be put on hold as we had finished the end of last reporting period in a full lockdown. This was far from ideal, but we were determined to carry on and we had all the skills, knowledge and experience gained over the previous three years which provided us with a strong foundation and enabled us to react quickly and get creative.

We revised all our plans and made the decision to focus on what we could do safely and remotely. As non-priority shops were closed and everyone was discouraged from travelling in their cars, it made trips to garden centres out of the question and pictures of empty shelves and talk of seed and food shortages circulated. Many people panic bought and stockpiled what they could from toilet paper to tomatoes.

The weather was fantastic in spring 2020 and as the lockdown progressed local people were really making the most of the little bit of outside space they had. We found people who had not grown food before were much more interested in having a go, especially where they were concerned about food shortages, online deliveries and fresh items not being available and not being able to get to shops. We had cancelled all the in-person arrangements we had in place for spring 2020 and the foreseeable future after that and we decided to do as much as we could that could be shared on social media so that we could continue to inspire and support others remotely, even if we could not grow together. This meant demonstrating more in our own yards and setting up a "seed swaps" WhatsApp group so that people could drop off any surplus seeds and plants to each other on their daily walks.

Despite the challenges of Covid 19 I am very proud of what we were able to achieve this year. We could not have done it without our amazing team of trustees, our partners and supporters. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen and Katy for their creativity, energy and resilience, Peter for his boundless patience and understanding, Alan for his passion for fruit trees and willingness to share this with us too and Trisha and Esther for their consistent plant donations to the Back to Front project. I would also like to thank our local growers new and old for sharing our enthusiasm for growing edibles in small urban spaces.

Katie Greaves, Chair of the Trustees of Back to Front CIO.

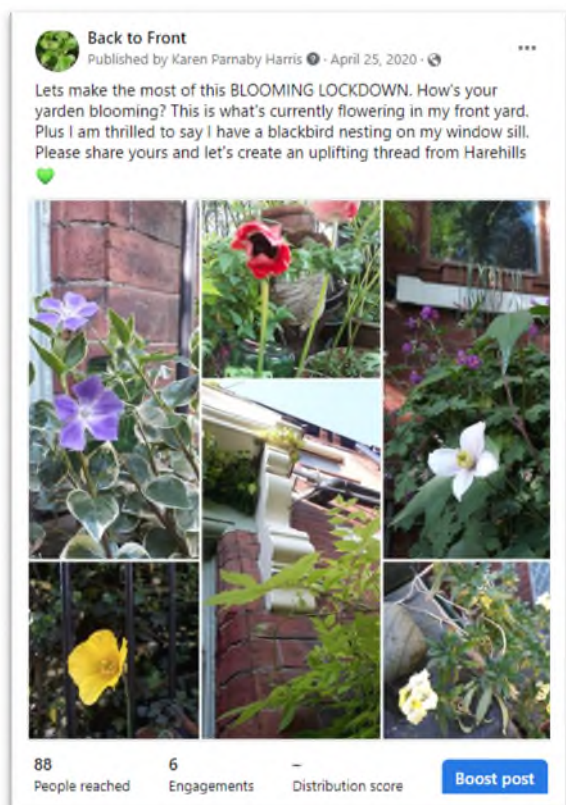


Introduction: **Creating Connections.**

Our main aims for this reporting year had to change overnight but we still wanted to keep local people growing the Back to Front way. We had to get more creative than ever about how we would manage this as all our planned sessions and community events had been cancelled. We identified the best ways we could continue to reach our growers safely despite all the restrictions and decided to focus on what we could do on social media and with the resources we already had in place. We then divided our focus for this reporting period into four distinct strands, these were:

- **Continuing our local networking opportunities online,**
- **Celebrating outside space and inspiring growers who were shielding or growing edibles for the first time,**
- **Continuing connections with socially distanced in person opportunities,**
- **Planning for the future – Our Next Steps.**

Once we had our objectives in place, we shared out the workload between the local trustees. Karen and Katie focussed on the social media and finding or creating safe opportunities to connect in person. Katy set up a seed swaps WhatsApp to help local growers share what they had and ask if they were short of anything. The hope was to support local growers, combat loneliness and to keep people connected despite the UK Lockdown.



We shared the positive stories and our beautiful photographs on social media at every opportunity. Month by month we started to notice our posts were reaching more people and getting more reactions. New people were contacting us through the various groups on social media and meaningful connections were starting to be made across the area.

We pooled our efforts with some of the core members of Harehills in Bloom and Harehills Community Watch too. We were able to make safe socially distanced contact with local residents who were shielding, and packets of chilli seeds were dropped off up and down the hill as residents went on their daily walks, as more locals made contact with each other. Strawberry plants were exchanged for homemade carrot cake, and a batch of vine weevil nematodes were shared in a joint effort to help save a community planter we discovered was under attack from evil vine weevils.

1. Continuing our local networking presence and growing opportunities

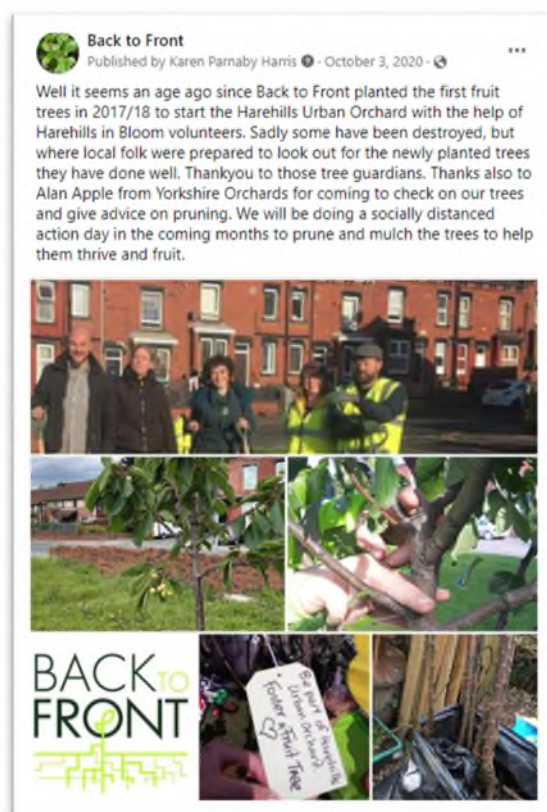
We had already built up a network of like-minded local groups and organisations over the past few years so this aim was identified so we could continue to support each other when and where it was most needed during this reporting period.



We were aware we wanted to carry on working with more experienced growers so we could stay connected ourselves and learn more about growing edibles. One of the first things we tried was to use our page to **share online food growing workshops and positive opportunities** offered by others. We also promoted online any plant shares from local groups such as Space2 so they could reach as many people as possible.

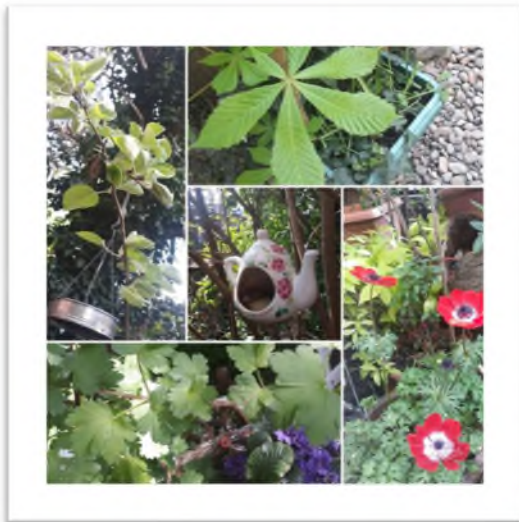
As an educational charity we were keen to look to continue to explore and develop ways to share our own knowledge, experience, and skills with others. We had just completed the online fruit tree grafting session with Alan Apple from Fruit Works as the lockdown began so this year we kept in regular contact with him. We did several orchard related posts to promote fruit tree growing and our growers seemed very keen to learn and explore more.

When it was safe to do so Karen showed Alan several of the sites around the area where we had planted an orchard of fruit trees and where there was an orchard sitting locked away in a local park. There seemed to be plenty of scope to nurture and develop the **Harehills Orchards** and possibly attempt some top grafting techniques on established flowering trees as if they take, the grafts become fruiting branches. Leeds City Council were supportive of us trying this on the flowering trees on their land and we were delighted that our persistent networking online had transpired into real world educational and skill building opportunities for local growers too.



Spurred on by this we contacted local growing group **Harehills in Bloom** to help promote growing **wildflowers, bulbs and pollinator plants** around the area. On our daily walks we started to photograph and document what was blossoming and fruiting in Harehills to share with others and let people know about the diversity that can thrive in a built-up urban environment.

We also shared our progress on the **local community page Harehills Community Watch** and this meant more and more people were becoming aware of the Back to Front project. Donna, a local resident contacted us to let us know how much this had meant to her: "At times, when the lockdown was first introduced, being locked up for 23 hours a day was hard. Also, having no accessible outside space, the local park was invaluable. This made me realise just how important social media, community groups and local people are."

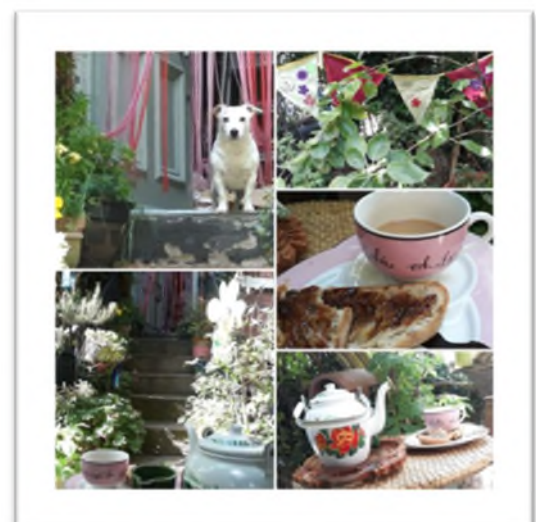


One of the highlights of my days and weeks were the beautiful and inspirational posts from Back to Front. I saw these posts shared on HCW and HIB and was amazed. The photographer has made the flowers pop! The posts were so pretty but also, there were the practical posts. I come from a family of keen gardeners but found myself with just a tiny back yard. Concrete slabs and a brick wall. What was I to do? I visited their Facebook page, and gathered inspiration, ideas for projects that I would never have dreamed were achievable in such a small space, and also just the pure joy I took from the beautiful posts.

Whilst there is still a long way to go with my "yarden", I now have a small but perfectly formed outside space. I have bird feeders made from broken teapots, I leave a spoonful of sugar water for the bees, even my flowerpots are planted to attract pollinators. I didn't know what a pollinator was before lockdown! Safe to say, the posts from Back to Front have helped retain my sanity, given me the sanctuary of my own personal little paradise, and inspired me to dream of what more can be done. That is why I wanted to send this message, to say thank you, unsung heroes indeed! If you could perhaps forward this to all the Back to Front people for me please so that they can be aware of how they are valued? I would really appreciate that. Thank you for your time, both reading this chapter of war and peace, but also for all the joy that you bring to our community."

2. Celebrating outside space and inspiring growers who were shielding or growing edibles for the first time

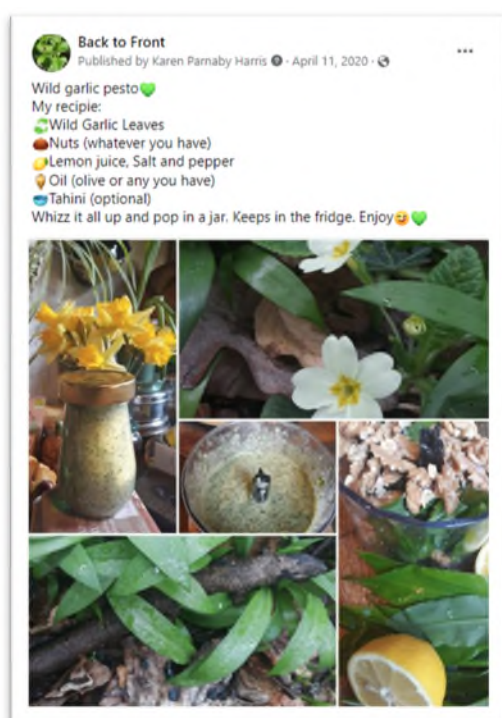
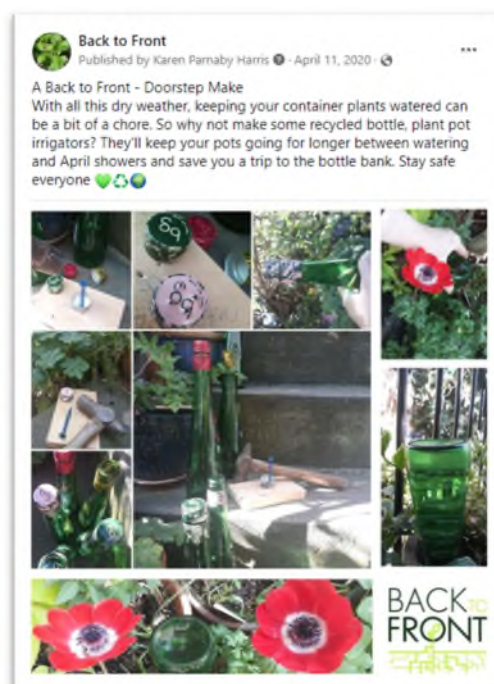
Making the most of outside space and connecting with nature had become more important than ever during the pandemic, and many people started growing food at home for the first time ever. We have always valued our little gardens, yards and windowsills and used them for food growing so to deliver this objective without being able to offer our usual in person workshops we decided to provide visual garden inspiration with practical tips, recipes, cooking experiments, DIY recycling projects and share our own attempts at food growing. What came out of this was more



successful than we could have imagined as it became a genuine celebration and fantastic record of what can be achieved in very small outside spaces.

As Katie's garden became the plant store, Karen had been tasked with trying to communicate some of the activities we might cover in workshops and pop-ups and bringing them to life through the Facebook page. The first we tried was a **Make Do and Mend - Doorstep Make** because we had covered container watering in a previous workshop and Karen showed us how it could be done in style with what you have at home. Connecting what we have covered in our previous workshops and showing it in situ worked well as it acted as a recap for growers who have been with us for a while but provided fresh inspiration for people who had only just joined the page.

At this stage of the lockdown it was hard getting shopping deliveries and supermarkets were struggling with keeping shelves stocked and it felt like the whole country was baking banana bread.



We were all at home spending a lot of time cooking too and we shared our various **Home Grown and Locally Foraged Cooking Experiments** on and off the page with our Back to Front growers to offer inspiration about what could be made from locally grown and foraged edibles. Some notable examples that made it onto the Facebook page were the Wild Garlic Pesto, Wild Garlic Bud and Flower Pickling, Hawthorn Leaf Suet Pudding and a celebration of Elder flowers and berries.

All the posts included a selection of beautiful photographs demonstrating the plants and process which in themselves were a feast for the eyes. Growers who had been inspired by the posts would send us their efforts and recipes; it was fantastic to hear them tell us they had shared these recipes and results with their neighbours too.

Spending more time at home during the lockdowns had some other benefits, as we had the time to try out some of the more ambitious **DIY Garden Projects** that we might usually not have the time to do. Karen had been wanting to repurpose an old wardrobe into a planter for some time and she documented her progress over a couple of months. It was inspirational to see it take shape and it was another great example of reimagining something you already have and giving it a new purpose.

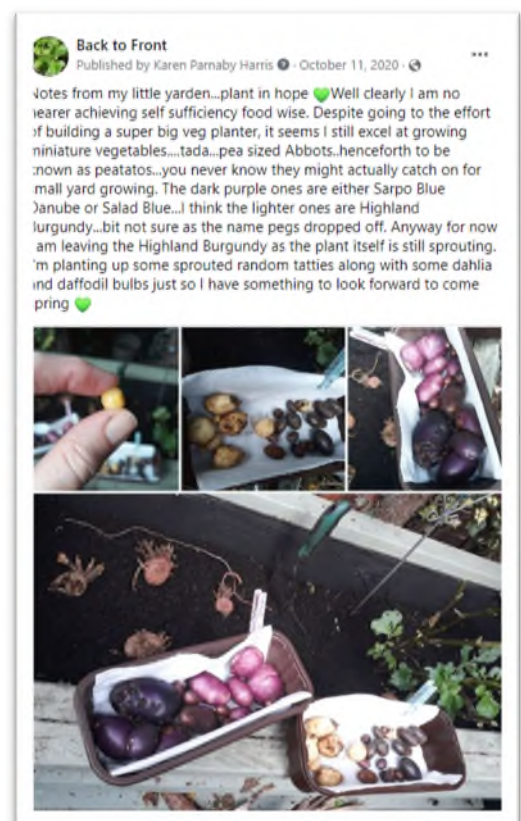


As well as the impressive makes and bakes, we continued to share our own gardening experiences, successes, and challenges with trying to grow new things such as potatoes and raspberries. Growers would contact us off the page to ask for **Growing Tips and Techniques**. We are all enthusiastic dabblers who have been involved with the project for years so felt confident enough to share our knowledge, experience and skills with people who were new to growing edibles.

When we asked one new grower who we had helped get started how they had got on growing edibles, Jane replied and told us just how invaluable our support was. They had been having such a tough time entertaining a toddler and getting hold of fresh items to eat in lockdown and had contacted us after they had bought whatever seeds they could and then realised they did not have much space to grow or know where to start.

“Thank you for being so helpful when we first decided to have a go at growing veg in our garden at the start of the pandemic. We were complete beginners and all the information out there felt very overwhelming - what equipment we’d need to set up, what to grow where, when to plant etc etc. Your clear tips on starting simple, picking a few things we know we will eat and arranging those things into the beds we had, thinking about companion planting and crop rotation. We’re now expanding our garden plot as we’ve grown the best veg we’ve ever tasted and I’m so addicted I’ve spent all winter counting down the days until we can get out there and start again.”

It was so lovely to hear that another family have not only had the confidence to start growing edibles and have had some successful harvests but that they have also got the food growing bug and are wanting to continue to grow even more, so their garden will continue to not only look good but taste even better.



3. Continuing connections with socially distanced in person opportunities

As many of our activities had moved online, we made sure we prioritised this strand of work throughout the year so that **planting, maintenance, seed swaps and plant sharing** could continue in these Covid-19 times.

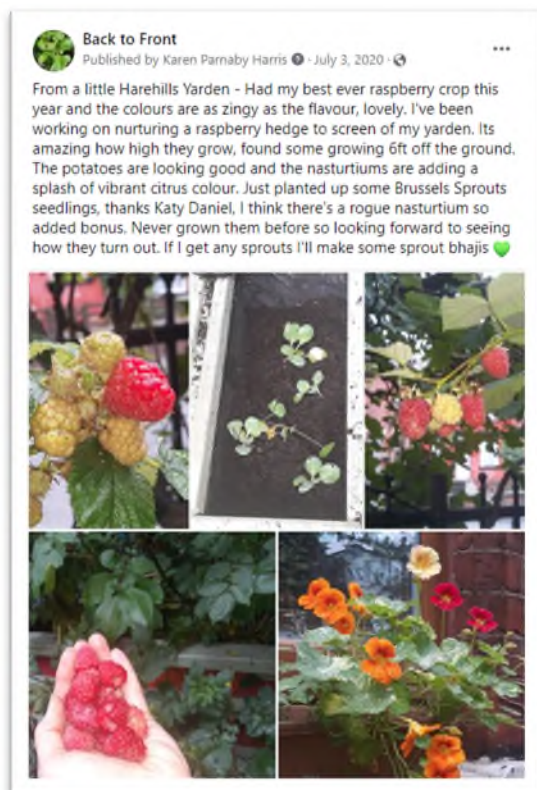
Karen had sourced a colourful range of potatoes from a Potato Day just before the lockdown that we were able to deliver. Katy set up a “**seed swaps**” WhatsApp to enable growers to let other people know what they had a surplus of and ask if anyone had spare seeds or plants that they could not get hold of, then we would help organise socially distanced drop offs or collections from our little gardens as part of the local daily walks. Our regular contributors contacted us to say they had our usual strawberry plants and tomato plants, so Katie organised to use her garden as a base and we were able to distribute these from there.

We shared with our existing Back to Front growers easily but thanks to our social media presence we started to be contacted by other growers, Jenny was one local grower who got in touch:

“When the pandemic first hit, I was put into the extremely vulnerable category and told to isolate.

At the time, I don't think anyone realised how long we would be isolating for, and it was definitely a struggle. What gave it some bright points was being able to reach out and find people locally where I hadn't thought to do so before. I found Back to Front and Harehills in Bloom, and they've been brilliant. There are some really lovely people involved, who would do almost anything to help someone out. I'd had a particularly bad attack of vine weevil grubs and I'd lost all of my strawberry plants to them, and someone very kindly brought me up some new ones! (They were subsequently lost to the vine weevil grubs the following season too, but never mind!)

I was also able to give them some nematodes of my own to kill off some vine weevil grubs in their planter, and I gave a lady a cake just because she was so lovely. All from socially distanced front garden drop offs! I'm still involved with the groups however I can be, and if it wasn't for the pandemic then I don't think I would have been. So there have definitely been positives to it all along the way, and things to be thankful for.”



In addition to the plant shares, we usually run a variety of seasonal sessions each year and these sometimes take the form of pop-up activities at community events where we can reach a large number of participants and teach them a growing skill and give out seeds. As this was not possible during lockdown, we decided to run very small, localised sessions on our own streets. The first was the **Microgreens Spring Seasonal Session**.



Karen made up kits and instructions to inspire residents to have a go and distributed these individually. The kits were well received, and the pictorial nature of the instructions meant it could also be given out and understood by people with little English. Preparing kits like this in advance rather than running larger group activities was one of the ways that allowed us to continue to teach people about 'fast food to grow' but in a covid safe way.

By the Summer the lockdown restrictions had been lifted slightly but many of our growers were still being cautious and did not want to meet up for workshops so the next activity we planned ended up being a pop-up educational skill building session that we then shared on social media. At this time there was a clear interest in taking cuttings rather than risk going to a garden centre, especially as the pandemic had really disrupted what was available to buy. To continue the self-sustainable theme, we researched making our own rooting hormone to help the cuttings take.

Katie discovered that you could make a **natural rooting hormone** out of soaking willow shoots and as there is a willow growing locally, we decided to try it out. A group of our young growers who had received strawberry and tomato plants and were regularly updating us on their crops asked if they could help, so rather than just do social media post we organised a **Summer Holiday Street Session** as the activity could be done outdoors, socially distanced and without sharing tools.



We also organised an **Autumn Socially Distanced Orchard Maintenance Session**. This was at the time of the 'rule of six' where up to six people could meet outdoors. We followed all the guidance and planned a hedgerow planting, mulching and maintenance session at the Edgware Orchard as the trees and planting activity could be done whilst keeping two metres apart. We had enough gloves and tools that growers did not have to share, and it was a very productive session.



All the fruit trees received the TLC they needed, and we put a row of whips in that should start to form an edible hedge. As some volunteers from Harehills in Bloom had joined us we also put a few bulbs in around the trees. All those who attended agreed that it was great to be outdoors and getting stuck in.

4. Planning for the future – Our Next Steps.

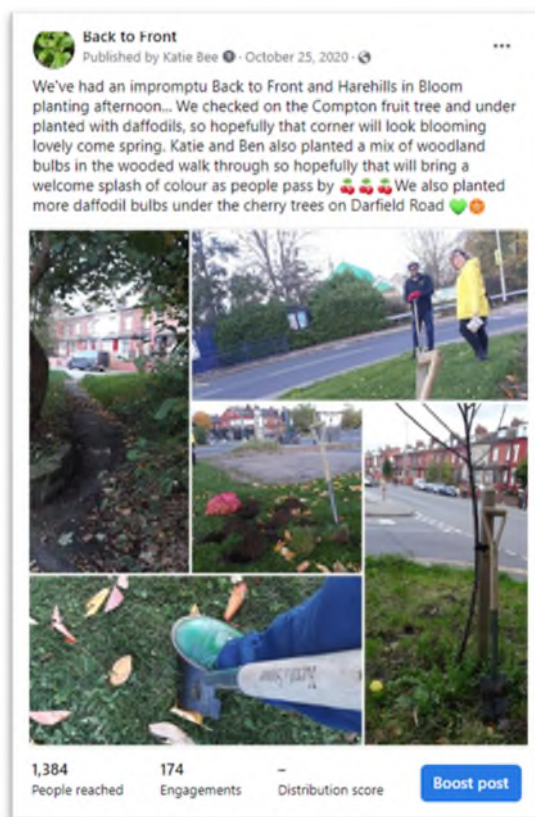
This year had more than its fair share of challenges, but it did at least give us an opportunity for reflection. A key development to come out of this year was that we decided to start looking into the possibility of a revamp of the Shine Hub as the edible and herbal beds there were looking tired and the lower area had been shaded by a new fence put up by the nursery school. We hope to start to plan, liaise with Shine and come up with the seed of an exciting new project next year, covid restrictions permitting. At this stage, being realistic, we imagine this might end up being a three-year project. We do not want to rush it through as we want to be able to realise some of our more ambitious ideas in order to make the most out of the space and ensure it meets all our needs in a flexible way with room for us to continue to grow.

The ever-changing situation with the pandemic had made planning difficult throughout this reporting period as the lockdowns coincided with our busiest times for planting when we would hold action days, seasonal maintenance sessions and workshops. We had become more confident running our own sessions and this gave us greater flexibility to plan them when they suited us and our growers rather than arranging workshops around the availability of another organisation.

As the Covid numbers started to rise again in the Autumn and another lockdown began we responded by forming a small working party of local growers who could be called on at short notice to tackle pressing tasks rather than how we would previously operate which would often involve organising a community action day well in advance.

This new style of working was very productive as we could work around the changeable Autumnal weather, the everchanging covid rules and restrictions and still meet to get an important job done. We found it also helped to keep the core growers of Back to Front and volunteers from Harehills in Bloom connected without the additional pressure of organising and then hosting a big event or session where we always end up separated from each other. We even had the time to have productive informal conversations and discuss our ideas. Ben from Harehills in Bloom told us “The socially distanced meet-ups organised by Back to Front were a great excuse to get out of the house, meet people and do some good. It was something that really made me feel that I was adding something positive to the community and improving the local area as well as returning to social interaction with like-minded friends.”

When we shared our efforts on social media we noticed it was well received and reached large numbers and engagements. We decided that although we would still organise and take part in bigger action days when it was safe to do so, this way of working was something we all wanted to keep up in the future.

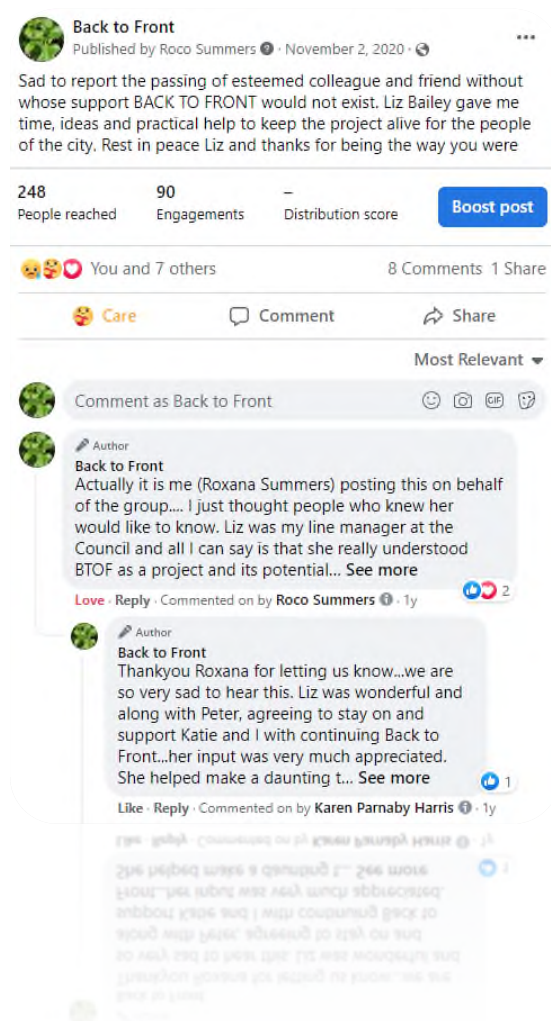


Special Dedication - November 2020

We cannot recap on this year without expressing our heartfelt loss of Liz Bailey in November 2020.

Liz continued to act as secretary of the Trustees when Back to Front moved from Space2 into local community management. Without her knowledge and guidance this transition would not have been so successful. Liz continued in her role as secretary whilst undergoing treatment, a testimony to her care for Back to Front and its aims.


We will miss Liz dearly, but remember fondly the quiet, self-effacing woman who helped a small community project flourish and grow.



Partners up to 31st March 2021: Alan Apple from Fruit Works, Shine, St James's, Compton Centre/LCC, Space2, Trisha and Esther for plant donations, the local Harehills Groups - Harehills in Bloom and Harehills Community Watch.

Funding up to 31st March 2021: Money left from Esmée Fairbairn, Learning Partnerships totals £8659 at the year-end. Support came from Alan Apple, Leeds City Council, local ward Councillors, Shine and Harehills in Bloom.

Appendix 1 Charities Commission Accounts

 CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES	Back To Front CIO		1170920		CC16a
	Receipts and payments accounts				
	For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2020	To	Period end date 31/03/2021	

Section A Receipts and payments					
	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Learning Partnership Sparks Funding	100	-	-	100	60
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	100	-	-	100	60
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	100	-	-	100	60
A3 Payments					
Admin costs	120	-	-	120	60
Events	140	-	-	140	827
Gardening sundries	-	-	-	-	170
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	260	-	-	260	1,057
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	260	-	-	260	1,057
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 160	-	-	- 160	- 997
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	8,819	-	-	8,819	9,815
Cash funds this year end	8,659	-	-	8,659	8,818

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Bank account	8,659	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	8,659	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	K. Greaves	Katie Greaves	24/01/2022	
	P. Cruikshanks	Peter Cruikshanks	24/01/2022	