

Flo's - The Place in the Park



Annual Impact Report



From Sept 2020
until Sept 2021



Foreword and Executive Summary from the Chair - Richard



In the particularly challenging year of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Flo's - The Place in the Park stepped up to play its part in supporting those most affected. As we completed our third year we note that we have grown into an organisation employing 34 people and with a financial turnover which has doubled each year. This is astonishing given the obvious backdrop our staff have had to cope with.

We thank all involved but are particularly grateful to our community for continuing to support our work. We couldn't do it without your custom, kind words and amazing voluntary deeds.

Our space has grown as we have taken on the former bowling pavilion and refurbished it as a kitchen for the food-based social enterprises we incubate and various community spaces to hire. Once again we are grateful for Brendan Rolle-Rowan and the team from Plainlaw and Co and Dan from Jessop and Cook for their help with complex property matters.

We have expanded our partnership work with other local charities through OX4 Food Crew (where we have, with Waste2Taste, delivered 16,000 cooked meals) and increasingly through work to support the health and wellbeing of families - particularly those with very young children. These partnerships are central to our future and we have learned a huge amount and benefited from our partnership work with those mentioned above alongside Ark-T, Oxford Community Action and through our work supporting the incubation of new diversity led social enterprises Damascus Rose Kitchen and No Vice Ice.

Our nursery has received fantastic feedback from parents and from Ofsted with our first inspection resulting in an overall 'good' judgement with outstanding elements. Well done to all involved - our trustee visit left us utterly inspired by what we saw and heard!

In the last year we have worked with the City Council green spaces team to develop a new 'NaturEscape' area within the Park - please look to see how you can enjoy the space. We have also created a holistic sustainability approach that positively progresses our environmental, social, economic and cultural impact. We have two new sustainability trustees to help us with this work.



From a city and county perspective we contribute increasingly to wider strategic initiatives such as Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership, Community Action Groups, Owned by Oxford and we work closely with Oxford Hub, Good Food Oxford and Aspire Oxford. Our local councillors are very supportive and will help us determine how we can help those in and beyond OX4.

The different parts of Flo's interweave and connect with each other of course. The money we make through our trading flows back to our community work. Our food social enterprises put on events and sell their products in our cafe. Our cafe supplies our nursery with food.

Our nursery children transition into nursery smoothly as they are used to seeing the nursery (behind the fence!). This connectedness is our secret ingredient!

We said goodbye to some excellent colleagues and particular tribute should go to Helen Metz-Toomer who set up the cafe and recruited our original cafe team at just the time that the Covid pandemic first hit and to Frances Rose our amazing nursery deputy who has supported Tanja in leading and developing the team through this turbulent period. Special thanks to trustees Kirsten Dennis and Paul Roberts who helped grow Flo's from a seedling, and who are stepping down as trustees but carrying on as trusted advisors.

We look forward to exciting new developments in our new Flo's Trading ventures - the Cafe and the Shop, with a new menu, events and a new team led by Joanne Williams and we are grateful to the support of Pippa Hamwee on all things food business related.

Richard Hadfield

Trustee Chair of Flo's - The Place in the Park
Run by People, Place and Participation

Our Purpose

Flo's works to connect people of all ages in Florence Park and Cowley and provide a space where people can learn, create, relax and meet each other within a beautiful park.

At Flos we are about:

- **People** – welcoming the whole community
- **Place** – creating welcoming spaces for different needs
- **Participation** – run by the community for the community



Children from Flo's Nature Nursery help our chef, Davide, to harvest fresh beans from our garden, July 2021

Our current key areas of work:

- **Families** – especially new parents and carers of very young children and including grandparents and carers
- **Food** – as a means of bringing people together and incubating diversity led food related social enterprises
- **Nature and place** – making the most of the park and developing the community as better place to meet, eat, live, work, play, learn
- **Social Enterprise** – generating profit to support others. Sharing our learning and engaging in partnerships with purpose

In all we do, we try to consider:

- The inclusive economy – local shopping, eating, employment, childcare with all profits staying in the local community
- The climate emergency – doing what we can to reduce our impact
- Including people facing tough times because of disadvantage
- Listening and responding to emerging needs, trying things out, taking risks
- Building financial resilience through social enterprise
- Partnership working with local place based charities and enterprises.



The garden at Flo's Cafe

Part 1: Families

The Nursery

Seventy local families were supported by places at the nursery which stayed open throughout lockdowns and restrictions for a small number of key worker children and vulnerable children needing additional support.

Our nursery offers funded places for 2,3 and 4 year olds and free places including free meals to those most in need. Over the last year the nursery has supported 28 children who have English as an additional language, 13 children who have additional needs, 14 children in receipt of government funding for Two Year Olds and 8 children in receipt of Pupil Premium. During the Covid lockdowns we stayed open for keyworkers and other families who needed the extra support. In this strange and challenging year we are glad to have provided a sense of normality for the children who attended.

We maintained a rich and varied curriculum, including going for many walks around the park. Last year we have also been able to extend our climbing frame to make it even more challenging and exciting for all ages. We had our first Ofsted inspection and were delighted that the inspector agreed with our self assessment of 'Good - with outstanding features'.

We have developed new provision for our older children with Forest School sessions at Barracks Lane Community Garden, enabling us to reduce our waiting list somewhat and settle in some of our funded 2 year olds over the summer.

What nursery parents say:

"Thank you for creating the amazing Flo's nursery. We could not have asked for a better place for [our children] to go. All of your staff exude such a warmth and love for the children. It truly is like a home from home and big family! They have thrived at the nursery. We will miss you so much and never forget you." (July 2020)



Meeting the ducklings, August 2021

What Ofsted says:

"Children are well cared for in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where staff know them well and respect their individuality. Children flourish in their personal development. Staff implement a range of superb experiences that promote children's understanding of people and families beyond their own."
(Ofsted Report 2021)

"I came in a very anxious and worried mum with a special needs child and you made all my anxiety and worries go from the first day. [The staff,] what can I say. Beautiful people with beautiful hearts I can't thank them enough for all that they did to support [my child] and the difference they've made in my family life."
(Aug 2021)

"We are so proud to be a family at Flo's and think you and the team have been and continue to be incredible. We can't think of a better setting for these young people and are so grateful for your compassion and diligence."
(May 2020)

"Thank you for the brilliant work you do enriching our children's lives and teaching them valuable skills and qualities in such a kind way. Thank you for being here even among uncertainty and worry." (July 2020)

"I can't think of anywhere I'd rather send my child."
(Feb 2021)



Midwives, Mothers and Babies

As doctors surgeries were closed and hospitals overrun, Flo's opened its doors to enable our wonderful NHS community midwives to see more mothers without leaving their community - offering double the amount of clinics and attending to 540 pregnant and new mothers over the year.

A largely empty Flo's Cafe was a socially distanced waiting room for those waiting for their glucose tests - for some expectant mothers the only time they met in person with others.

What our visitors say:

"Thank you so much for the wonderful care that you have given throughout my pregnancy....we can't possibly have asked for anything more.... You are an amazing group of people doing a fantastic job." April 2021

"Thank you all so much for the wonderful, attentive and personalized care that W and I have received both during and after my pregnancy. Honestly this team represents the NHS at it best and I cannot thank you enough."

"Flo's is a much better place to have prenatal appointments. There were not the queues and waiting times like in the surgery. When there was a wait I could walk around the park."

"You always know you will meet other mothers at Flo's - it's really friendly."

"It's great to be able to come with my family - my partner and toddler can play whilst I have my appointment and everyone is happy."

"It's so great the cafe is now open again - we love the play area and know there will also be other mums to talk to.....and it's open 7 days a week."

Family support and groups

We have missed the many groups we used to host at Flo's and look forward to welcoming them back.

We have supported many families through our OX4 Food Crew and our paid takeaways for those working from home whilst caring for children. We have noticed many parents, carers and grandparents continued to use Flo's take away and garden during lockdown, and how important a focus point the playground and park was for socially distanced connection.

During lockdown we were able to run family forest school sessions for some families using the community spaces of Barracks Lane Community Garden and Oxford City Farm.

As lockdown eased we began to think about new groups. We have been particularly pleased to frequently host the Syrian Sisters and many family events and activities organised by them - both as one-off Eid celebrations and as small support groups and summer play activities. Now we are planning regular drop-in sessions and new pre-booked sessions for the autumn and some family events too. Look out for Nature Crafting sessions and the re-launch of our Grandparents' Group and some exciting Friday evening events.

We were also thrilled to host the **Oxford Poetry Library's** Many Voices Collection and pop-up events this spring and summer - a collection of children's books featuring black characters, written by black writers, or which centre an anti-racist message.

Part 2: Nature & Place



One Planet Living

Flo's is committed to becoming a more sustainable organisation and awareness and action on the climate emergency runs through everything we do.

As part of this we are using the One Planet Living framework developed by **Bioregional**. We have developed a **One Planet Living Action Plan** committed to making changes in the following areas:

- Health and happiness,
- Equity & local economy,
- Culture & community,
- Land & nature,
- Local & sustainable food,
- Travel and transport,
- Materials and products,
- Zero waste,
- Zero carbon energy.

You can read our plans here:
www.floxford.org.uk/sustainability/

We link with other community owned greenspaces in our area as much as possible. Thank you to **Restore, Oxford City Farm, Children's Allotment and Barracks Lane Community Garden** for their partnership working.

We were lucky to host one of the **Replenish** seed swaps this spring run by **CAG Oxfordshire**.



Replenish seed and plant swap in the garden at Flo's, May 17 2021



Oxford's Lord Mayor, Cllr Mark Lygo, was able to assist our very important guests to cut the ribbon at the official opening of the NaturEscape garden in Florence Park, July 31 2021

The space will be open to community groups, schools and the public and Flo's Nursery children will start using the site regularly in September 2021.

Thanks to funding from Oxfordshire's Trust for the Environment, Doris Field Trust and individual sponsorship the site was opened in July 2021 by the Mayor of Oxford. Many thanks to Kate and Laura from Oxford Garden Partners for all their work leading the design and project management on the ground and to the inimitable Jane Gallagher for painting the gorgeous sponsored stones!



Flo's new bread cabinet, made from salvaged / FSC wood, delivered by cargo bike.



Some of the sponsorship stones at NaturEscape

Part 3: Food

Flo's Trading Cafe

We took on the cafe 'in house' in April 2020 but suffered a huge set back as hospitality venues closed down as part of the national lockdown against the Covid 19 pandemic.



Cafe Manager Helen Metts-Tooma who moved to Derby in the Spring 2021 and was replaced by Jo Williams

We also developed a **take-away service** which has fuelled many hard-working largely homebound individuals - often with little time to cook in between educating their children at home.

The cafe offers a **multicultural menu** led by our Italian cook Davide. Every weekend the Syrian cook Fadia and her team offer a wonderful range of mediterranean and Middle Eastern dishes.



Davide's famous focaccia pizza slices!

The newly appointed staff, led by our Cafe and Operations Manager Helen Metts-Tooma and supported by supervisor Elisabetta Vacchetto, quickly pivoted to cook free meals as part of the OX4 Free Food Crew we set up as part of our emergency response.



Davide (left) and Fadia, with some of her delicious Syrian food below



"a place of cheerfulness in the dark. When things were depressing over 2020, being able to take my child to the park and grab a coffee and cake from Flo's meant so much and really boosted my mood."

Survey 2021

"Lovely community hub, I always see people I know, and often meet friends here. Great coffee. Set within great park. Hub for events and activities, eco conscious, diverse and inclusive"

Survey 2021

Big thanks to **Pippa Hamwee** for stepping in to help until we found our new Cafe & Operations Manager **Jo Williams**.

"It is a very important part of my walking and meeting friends routine. It has made such a difference to the area and changed the whole ambience of Florence Park - a wonderful community facility."

Survey 2021



Refill Shop

Our Refill Shop has grown in products, service and turnover. During lockdown people particularly appreciated being able to shop for affordable basic goods without plastic packaging and being served by our friendly volunteers, in safe-feeling surroundings. Many commented these trips were the highlight of their otherwise very isolated weeks.

This year, we have had 35 Volunteers doing either occasional or regular shifts who have kept the Refill Shop running throughout the pandemic. Our diverse mix of volunteers include young Duke of Edinburgh people, long term unemployed, semi-retired professionals, and some newly arrived in Oxford folk and students or those who were furloughed during the pandemic. What we have in common is the love of interacting with members of our community. We hugely appreciate their commitment to Flo's and the local community.

Helen Osborn, our dedicated Refill Shop Manager, serving our younger customers. Bewlo, two of our many volunteers.



We now stock fresh bread and free-range eggs

Three of our Volunteers have started working in the Café – going from unpaid to paid positions.

Our aim is providing good quality food, as well as personal and household cleaning products, at affordable prices. Many of our products are half the price per kilo than some local competitors - including supermarkets!

This year we have expanded our range and currently stock over 100 different products. We have been open 4 days a week from 11-5. We have also developed a **drop and collect** for our customers convenience.

Flo's Refill shop is currently open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 11am-5pm.

We are looking forward to expanding our range of products and opening hours further over the coming year. For a full list of our products, a price list and more information please see our page on the Flo's website:

floxoxford.org.uk/flos-refill-shop/



OX4 Food Crew

With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, Oxfordshire Community Foundation and amazingly generous individual donations, and support from Oxford Hub, Oxford City Council, Oxford Food Hub, Sofea and Good Food Oxford, we formed the OX4 Food Crew.

This partnership with the fantastic Ark-T, Waste2Taste and Oxford Community Action has been running now for a year and half since April 2020 and has delivered over 35,000 food parcels (OCA), over 16,000 cooked meals (Flo's and Waste2Taste) delivered by volunteers and provided much needed contact with the most vulnerable and isolated people during the course of several lockdowns and restrictions.



In a recent survey, recipients largely agreed that free meals had reduced their financial pressure (87%), reduced stress and anxiety in the household (87%), reduced exposure to COVID-19 (73%) and provided nutritious meals to their household (80%).

One recipient said: "I have no family. I am alone and have been on lockdown for almost 14 months and talking to the good people that bring the food helps me mentally cope

with lockdown, and for all this I am grateful. Thanks to all. I owe them everything."

In August we also launched a series of 3 community meals - trying out the "Pay-as-you-feel" model and serving 160 meals each time. We are looking forward to carrying forward community meals and pay-as-you-feel over the next year.

Part 4: Social Enterprise

Oxford Social Enterprise Partnership

With Aspire Oxford (which supported Flo's own incubation), we are sharing our learning and supporting others as one of six Social Enterprise Hubs in the county through the Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership.

Over this last year we have offered webinars and 3 peer-to-peer online action learning sets - and we hope to invite more people in as things open up again this year and host many more exciting social enterprise development events.

Incubation of social enterprises

With a grant from the Social Enterprise Support Fund (Power to Change) we were able to refurbish the old bowling pavilion and secure a 10-year lease from the City Council enabling us to create a food production kitchen and improved hire space for community events.

The new lease of life given to the pavilion has enabled community groups to return, and allowed us to house health practitioners in the community. We have also incubated and supported two new diversity-led social enterprises: **Damascus Rose Kitchen** and **No Vice Ice**

Key Learning

As a social enterprise ourselves, we have learned a lot this past year about what it means to incubate and support other diversity-led social enterprises. It is a journey that needs resourcing, trust, openness and willingness to have sometimes difficult conversations about cultural differences, capacity, direction and priorities. This journey is also rewarding, empowering and leads to much alongside learning for everyone involved.

The intention for development of a self-sufficient and profitable business, can sometimes feel at odds with the social purpose, support and mentoring required.

As well as the tangible results above there has been more rewarding outcomes of an atmosphere of pride and achievement amongst the women who have started these enterprises and those of us in Flo's working with them.

Incubating a new social enterprise can take 2 or 3 years in any circumstance and we are learning more about the additional considerations required for those who have experienced trauma, isolation, barriers of language, culture and connection. Financial limitations, experience, health, family and other commitments, mean that continued appropriate investment will be needed for them to thrive and grow in the next 2 years.



A meeting of all the staff at Flo's in September 2021



Volunteer gardeners from Good Gym Oxford



Snow settles on Flo's in January 2021

Damascus Rose Kitchen



This new social enterprise was born out of the vision of Nuha Abdo and some of the women who have worked together as part of the Syrian Sisters - a community group supporting refugee women in Oxford.

This has meant Flo's cultural and culinary diversity has expanded in a very joyful way. It also means that some members of the team have benefited from regular employment and gained experience of cooking in a community cafe with a commercial kitchen.

With funding from Power to Change and the Big Lottery, and through its own resources, the team at Flo's has provided or funded intensive practical and business development, including access to the newly refurbished incubation kitchen.

Over the last year Damascus Rose Kitchen has created a secure foundation from which to grow and flourish in coming years.

So far we have:

- Concept tested BBQ business, events catering from - high end to family occasions
- Delivered 2 successful pop up restaurants (both with 50+ guests)
- Provided community meal catering - free food and play schemes catering
- Tested and developed recipes
- Turned over £14,000 in sales in 4 months



Additional Social benefits

- Developed proposals for concessions
- Provided £6000 in earned income for 4 refugee women
- Provided training in marketing and design
- Secured counselling for one team member

"We was a group of women who are here as refugees. We all have the skills of cooking and were looking for an opportunity to make income from this skill, and we could never find the right opportunity for this. We really appreciate Flo's support to help us, not only as a business, but also they have a very friendly environment they support us in. I honestly want to thank Annie and Makena because they especially give us their own time to support us and to see how we are doing, supporting us with advertising our job, introducing us to other people in the area, they never hesitate to advise or support us and we've got a very good friendship with them.

Setting up any business is hard but we are very proud of our start up refugee run business and we feel we did a great job with our partnership with Flo's. Our aim with the project was to support our local people here and also in the future to help other immigration groups and refugee organisations.

Thank you very much for making us part of your organisation - we are looking for family and we are finding it. They help us to build our dream." - Nuha Abdo, one of the founding members of Damascus Rose Kitchen CIC.

For more information on Damascus Rose Kitchen please visit their website: www.damascurosekitchen1.com

No Vice Ice



Chief ice-maker, Ella Green, preparing for a sunny weekend



'Market testing' an early lolly in Flo's garden

No Vice Ice is a social enterprise that aims to tackle the stress and isolation caused by long term and invisible health conditions through ice lollies... as well as supplying a delicious natural and sustainable product!

Founded and led by people with lived experience of these challenges, No Vice Ice intends to run participatory workshops to connect people to meet up with peers and engage in fun and non-didactic activity around nutrition, health, environment and affordability.

Since October 2020 Flo's has supported No Vice Ice to:

- Secure local suppliers of surplus strawberries and award-winning apple juice.
- Secure equipment - lolly freezer, kitchen equipment and packaging.
- Equip and arranged kitchen.
- Complete HACCP and food safety management system.
- Test and documented recipe and process systems.
- Develop an embryonic website and social media.
- Sell 1700 lollies through Flo's over the summer. No Vice Ice lollies were the highest selling product at Flo's Cafe for many days since launch!
- Supply lollies to community occasions, nursery and parties.

- Apply for funding for community workshops to develop their social impact workshops.
- Gain interest from other future stockists.

All this has been achieved with no employees and the inevitable additional challenges of lived experience of long term health issues in starting a new business.



No Vice Ice next steps are:

To reach out to the community and offer fun 'lolly labs' around diet, health and social inclusion. Expand the lolly production (to meet demand!)

"Setting up No Vice Ice over the last year has been brilliant, challenging and a mind-bending learning curve. If you had told me a year ago that we would have already achieved this much, I would have laughed a lot.

I can honestly say that setting up this project would have been impossible without the amazing support given to us by the whole team (and community!) at Flo's. Thank you for believing in the project, for everything you've put in to helping us and for never laughing too much at our silly hair nets"

- Ella Green, founder of No Vice Ice

Financial Review

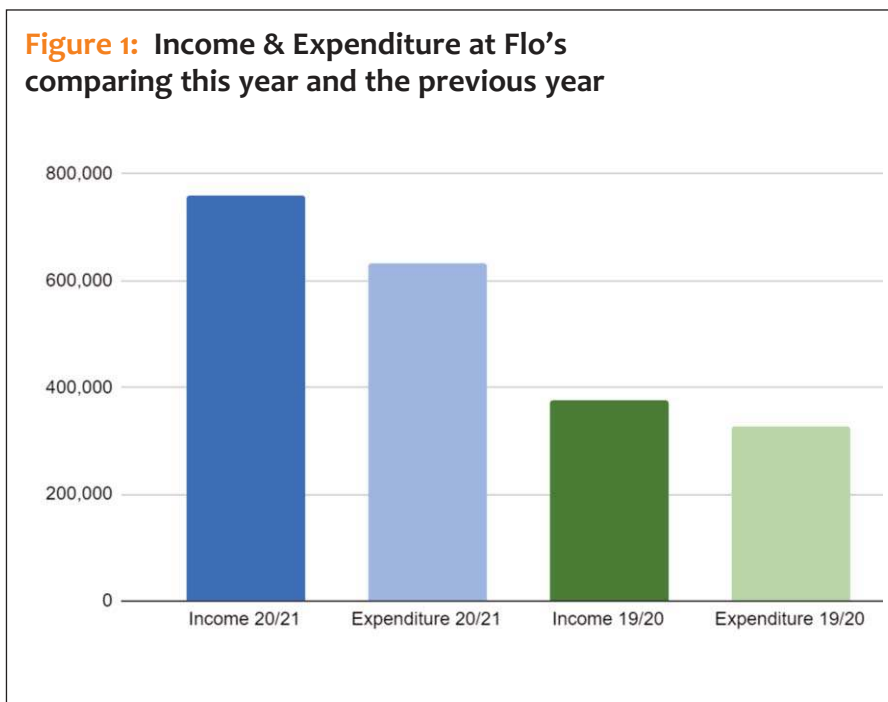
Flo's - The Place in the Park is run by People Place and Participation (PPP). We generated an income in 2020/21 (April-March) of £759,303 (£376,846 in previous year). The expenditure was £633,265 (£327,996 in previous year). Figure 1 shows this data.

As can be seen from the pie graph (figure 2), the total funds carried forward are significant: £274,495.

This is made up of:

- Restricted income funds from community/social projects of £83,467
- £50,000 of share capital.
- Unrestricted income of £141,029 which includes £44,000 of designated funds and £60,000 designated as a loan to Flo's Trading.
- Free reserves (undesignated and unrestricted reserves) are £37,029 (which is £141,029 less £60,00 loan capital), and £44,000 of designated funds,

Figure 1: Income & Expenditure at Flo's comparing this year and the previous year



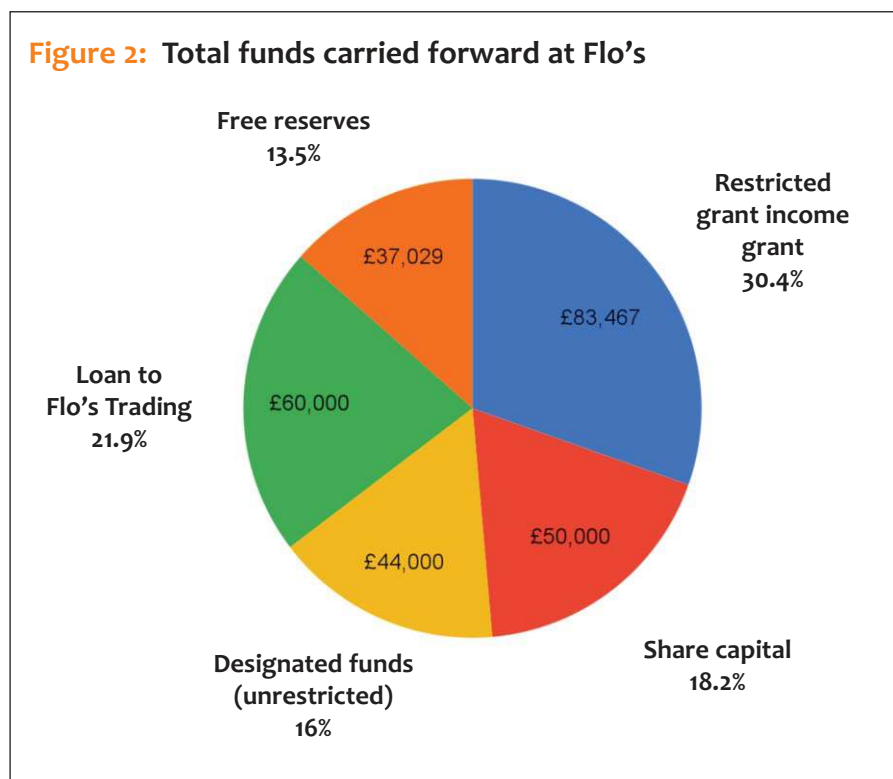
Due to the impact of Covid-19 there was significant reliance on grant funding for the period, with a total restricted grant income of £210,597.

The trustees will review the above criteria with reference to PPP's strategy and Annual Plan and determine the target level of free reserves to meet in each year. As a relatively new organisation our aim is that these should be increased up to a minimum of 3 months of operating costs, as at March 2023.

Unrestricted free reserves, including share capital, but excluding fixed assets and designated funds were £61,433 at the year-end; this represents approximately 2 month operating costs, at current levels of expenditure.

The Trustees have no concerns about the organisation's ability to continue as a going concern.

Figure 2: Total funds carried forward at Flo's



Thanks to all our supporters and partners

Flo's is run by and for the community

- we are one team with many voices, and this includes a lot of people from different walks of life in and around Oxford.

We would like to thank everyone involved.

In particular:

- The Oxfordshire Community Foundation
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Power to Change
- Doris Field Trust
- Trust for Oxfordshire Environment
- Arnold Clark Community Fund
- Good Food Oxford
- Oxford Food Hub
- SOFEA
- Co-Ops UK
- OSEP
- Aspire Oxford
- Oxford Garden Partners
- Dan Jessops from Jessops and Cook architects
- Brendan Rolle Rowan from Plainlaw Solicitors
- The Oxfordshire County Council
- The Oxford City Council
- The Oxford Green Spaces and Parks team
- The OX4 Food Crew: Ark-T, Waste2Taste, Oxford Community Action

- The Nature Effect
- Barracks Lane Community Garden
- The Community Action Groups (CAG)
- Cllrs Marie Tidball, David Henwood, John Sanders
- Stig
- Pippa Hamwee
- Jane Gallagher and Jane Fisher
- Sam Skinner and Nor Greenhalgh



And of course the extended team at Flo's:

- All the volunteers who run the refill shop, tend the garden, read to the nursery children, deliver meals every week
- The nursery parents council and community sub group
- The Trustees of PPP Ltd. and Directors of Flo's Trading
- The wonderful staff to whom we said goodbye this year including Helen MT, Frances-Rose, Lea, Lenoa, Alice, Wesal, Maddy, Michaela, Sadie, Lucy, Tania, Sam, Sarah and Jean.

For a list of staff, trustees see our website:
www.flosoxford.org.uk/meet-the-team

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