Common Ground Suffolk

Membership Share Offer

Founding Membership, One share per member

Growing food. Building community. Cultivating resilience.

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commongroundsuffolk.org | general@commongroundsuffolk.org

Important: Please read this document in full before applying for membership. Withdrawable shares in a community benefit society are not the same as shares in a company. They cannot be traded and their value is not guaranteed. Please see Section 7 (Risks) before proceeding.

1. About Common Ground Suffolk

Common Ground Suffolk is a community benefit society registered in England and Wales under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Our registration number is 9800.

We exist to advance food security and climate resilience in Suffolk. We do this by connecting people who want to grow food with the practical support, skills, and infrastructure to do so. Our work includes sending trained volunteers to help anyone in Suffolk who wants support with their growing space, installing raised beds, water storage, and other growing infrastructure, and running education and outreach to build food growing skills and confidence across the community.

Our support is open to everyone in Suffolk. We place particular emphasis on helping those who would find it difficult to manage a growing space without assistance, including older residents and people with disabilities, but our doors are open to any individual or household who wants to grow their own food.

We are volunteer-led and governed by an elected board of directors. All surpluses are reinvested into the Society's activities. We have a full asset lock, meaning our assets can never be distributed to members for private benefit and are permanently dedicated to community benefit.

2. Why Become a Member

Membership of Common Ground Suffolk is open to anyone aged 16 or over who lives in Suffolk or has a meaningful connection to Suffolk and who supports the Society's objectives.

As a member you will have a genuine stake in the Society and a real voice in how it is run. Membership is not passive. Members elect the board of directors, vote on significant decisions at general meetings, and help shape the direction of the Society as it grows.

In practical terms, membership also means you are part of a growing community of people in Suffolk who believe that food security, community resilience, and connection to the land matter. You will receive updates on the Society's activities, be invited to community events and growing sessions, and have access to the Society's growing resources and educational content.

- One member, one vote at general meetings regardless of the number of shares held.
- Eligibility to stand for election to the board of directors.
- Right to receive the Society's annual report and accounts.
- Invitation to annual and special general meetings.
- Access to community growing sessions, events, and educational resources.
- Updates on the Society's activities and impact.

3. The Share Offer

Common Ground Suffolk is offering one withdrawable share per member as the basis for founding membership. This offer is open until further notice.

Key facts	
Share price	£10 per share
Shares per member	One share per member
Minimum investment	£10
Maximum investment	£10 (one share per member at this stage, later share offers will allow for multiple shares to be purchased)
Interest on shares	None at this time. The board may consider introducing interest in future.
Withdrawals	Shares may be withdrawn subject to board approval and the Society's rules. The board may restrict withdrawals if doing so is in the best interests of the Society.
Offer open to	Individuals aged 16 or over who live in or have a meaningful connection to Suffolk.
How to apply	Complete the Membership Application Form available at commongroundsuffolk.org or on request by email at general@commongroundsuffolk.org
Offer closes	open until further notice

The share price of £10 has been set by the board for this founding membership offer. It reflects the Society's commitment to making membership as accessible as possible while ensuring that the act of taking a share represents a genuine commitment to the Society's mission. The board reviews the share price at least annually.

This is a founding membership offer. It is not a fundraising exercise. The purpose of this offer is to establish the Society's membership base, give members a formal stake in the Society, and lay the foundation for future community share raises when the Society is ready to invite larger investment from the community.

4. What We Will Do

The funds raised through this membership offer, totalling £10 per member, will be held in the Society's accounts as part of its general reserves. As a founding membership offer rather than a capital raise, the primary purpose of this offer is membership and governance rather than project funding.

The Society's year one activities, funded through grant income and in-kind contributions, will focus on the following.

- Volunteer growing support visits to households across Suffolk, helping people plan, plant, maintain, and harvest their growing spaces.
- Installation of raised beds, water butts, and composting systems in private gardens and community settings.
- Community growing sessions open to all members of the public.
- Education and outreach activities including workshops, growing guides, and online resources available free of charge at commongroundsuffolk.org.
- Building partnerships with local organisations including GP surgeries, care homes, schools, and food banks to extend the Society's reach to those who need support most.

Full details of the Society's planned activities and budget are set out in the Year One Operational Plan and First Year Budget, both of which are available on request from general@commongroundsuffolk.org.

5. Governance and Structure

Common Ground Suffolk is a community benefit society governed by its members. The Society's rules, which set out how it is governed, are available on the website and on request.

5.1 The board of directors

The Society is managed by a board of directors elected by the membership. The founding board consists of three directors who are also the founding members of the Society. As the membership grows, additional directors will be elected at general meetings. Any member aged 16 or over is eligible to stand for election.

5.2 General meetings

The Society holds an Annual General Meeting each year at which members receive a report on the Society's activities and finances, elect directors, and vote on any resolutions put to the meeting. Special general meetings may also be called when required. Every member has one vote regardless of the number of shares they hold.

5.3 Asset lock

Common Ground Suffolk has a full asset lock. This means that all assets of the Society, including any reserves and any property, are permanently dedicated to community benefit and cannot be distributed to members for private gain. If the Society were ever wound up, its assets would be transferred to another organisation with a similar community purpose, not returned to members.

5.4 Financial reporting

The Society prepares annual accounts which are made available to all members. As a registered society, the Society is also required to submit annual returns to the Financial Conduct Authority.

6. Your Rights as a Member

As a member of Common Ground Suffolk you have the following rights under the Society's rules and the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

- The right to attend and vote at general meetings, with one vote per member regardless of shareholding.
- The right to stand for election to the board of directors if you are aged 16 or over.
- The right to receive the Society's annual report and accounts.
- The right to apply to withdraw your share, subject to board approval and the provisions of the Society's rules.
- The right to inspect certain Society documents as set out in the rules.

Membership may be terminated in accordance with the Society's rules, including if a member acts in a way that is contrary to the Code of Conduct or the Society's objects. The rules set out the procedure for any such decision, which includes the right to be heard before a decision is made.

7. Risks

Please read this section carefully before applying for membership. Community benefit society shares carry risks that are different from bank savings accounts or company shares.

7.1 Your shares are not guaranteed

Withdrawable shares in a community benefit society are not protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. If the Society were to fail and its assets were insufficient to repay members, you could lose some or all of the money you paid for your share.

7.2 Withdrawal is not guaranteed

Although members have the right to apply to withdraw their shares, the board may restrict or suspend withdrawals if it considers this to be in the best interests of the Society. Withdrawal is therefore not available on demand in all circumstances.

7.3 No return on investment

Shares in this offer do not earn interest and do not increase in value. The purpose of the share is membership, not financial return. If you are looking for a financial return on your money, this is not the right investment for you.

7.4 This is a new organisation

Common Ground Suffolk is a newly registered society with no trading history. While the founding team is committed and the Society has strong governance foundations, there is an inherent risk in any new organisation. Potential members should be aware of this before applying.

7.5 Regulatory status

Community benefit society share offers are exempt from regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority under the Financial Promotions Regulations. This means you do not have the right to complain to the Financial Ombudsman or access the Financial Services Compensation Scheme in relation to this offer. The Community Shares Standard Mark, which provides independent assurance of best practice in community share offers, may be sought in future once the Society is ready for a larger share raise.

8. How to Apply

To become a member of Common Ground Suffolk, please complete the Membership Application Form. The form is linked below and is also available at commongroundsuffolk.org or on request by email at general@commongroundsuffolk.org.

Once you have completed the application form, please return it by email to general@commongroundsuffolk.org, together with payment of £10 by bank transfer.

Your membership application will be considered by the board at its next meeting. You will receive written confirmation of your membership, including your member number, once your application has been approved and your payment has been received. The board reserves the right to decline an application without giving reasons, in accordance with the Society's rules.

> *Please do not send cash payments by post. Bank transfer is the preferred method of payment. If you have difficulty with bank transfer, please contact us at general@commongroundsuffolk.org to discuss alternatives.*

9. Contact Us

If you have any questions about this offer or about membership of Common Ground Suffolk, please get in touch.

Contact details	
Email	general@commongroundsuffolk.org
Website	commongroundsuffolk.org
Postal address	4 Field View, The Street, Nacton, IP10 0GA
FCA registration number	9800

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This document does not constitute financial advice. If you are unsure whether membership is right for you, please seek independent advice.