



Kirkstall Valley Farm

A social focus for the community

Raised £25,748 from 302 supporters

+£6,000 +Extra funding from Community Business Crowdmatch

After the previous tenant of a farm in Leeds passed away, the [Kirkstall Valley Development Trust \(KVDT\)](#) expressed an interest in taking over the site which had been farmed commercially since the 1950s. They developed a business plan with an aim to turn the farm into a social focus for the whole of Kirkstall Valley and were granted a five year lease by [Leeds City Council](#).

Through this new community farm, they hoped to supply fresh vegetables to local residents, host community and education projects, and encourage organic growers to use a set of allotments. To get the farm into full production by the end of 2020, the KVDT needed to organise volunteers, prepare the land, and build vital structures.

To do this, they needed £20,000 which they [decided to raise through crowdfunding](#). Every pound donated by their crowd would also be matched by a local benefactor.



The KVDT's Development Director, Chris Hill, explained, "To set up our community farm, we needed money to buy tools and seed and to build structures - to grow (polytunnels), store (containers), and provide community social facilities and toilets. Our ideas of surviving through veg box sales, meant we'd never be able to generate the surplus to take on a loan and we didn't want to be grant dependent. Self reliance is very important to us, so crowdfunding was the only way forward."

He continued, "We needed the money, but were also keen to use the campaign to expand our supporter base. On both levels, results exceeded expectations."

After 65 days, their crowdfunding campaign raised £25,748 from 302 supporters. This included an extra-funding grant of £6,000 through [Power to Change's Community Business Crowdmatch](#). This initiative aims to support new or existing community businesses through funding of up to £6,000.

Chris said, "With that money and a number of activists, we're able to do all the preparation work this year and still put aside some money to appoint a grower at the start of 2021."

A supportive crowd

Since crowdfunding, Chris told us that a hundred of the campaign's supporters went on to register to do voluntary work on the farm.

Chris said, "The Crowdfunder took us from a set of individuals with a good idea to a very credible organisation. Leeds City Council are now keen to give us the lease and many individuals and organisations want to work with us. The allotment plots on the site have gone from being very underused to full."

With the lease of the farm starting in April 2020, it's safe to say that the KVDT and their crowd of supporters are excited to see what the future holds for the development of the project.



When asked if he had any advice for future crowdfunders, Chris said, "To build the crowd, using social media to back up real time events really makes a difference. Social media was used to promote a farm speaker meeting and farm walk and talk on different occasions (we would have liked to do a social event as well). Both were attended by over 50 people (who then spread the word) and each media bleep would boost donations. Use everything - website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Eventbrite, Crowdfunder updates, journalists etc. Be sure to gather the contact details of supporters and encourage their fundraising efforts through mail out."

Find out if you **could be eligible to unlock extra funding** for your business or great idea. What are you waiting for? **Start crowdfunding today!**