

SUSTAINABLE FASHION WEEK



IMPACT REPORT

2023



INTRODUCTION

Our third year...



2023 was a year of growth for A Single Thread CIC and our annual Sustainable Fashion Week (SFW) event. We expanded our activities - both in what we delivered directly and through our collaborative partnerships - and reached 1000s more people than we anticipated across the UK and in three international locations. We've trialled new projects and learnt many lessons along the way - helping us to take stock of what value we offer to the sustainable fashion movement and how we can continue to adapt and respond to increase our impact, whilst building a properly resourced non-profit organisation that we can sustain.

In this report we share the feedback from our 2023 activities and evaluate how we feel we've made impact and what we'll be focusing on in 2024.

2023 KEY SUCCESSES

- We beat our key 2023 target with a 170.9% increase in audiences from 2022
- We ran a pilot for our high street Sustainable Clothing Hub
- 65.3% increase in geographical reach in the UK
- 63.8% increase in Community Programme participation
- First grant funding received in three years
- We survived another year with very little resource!



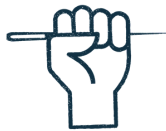
Thank you to all those who supported us in 2023. Amelia Twine, SFW Founder



A SINGLE THREAD CIC

Who are we?

Sustainable Fashion Week activities are delivered by the non-profit organisation: A Single Thread CIC. We are network builders - believing in the power of mycelium-like connections and the power of collective, community action.



WHAT WE WANT

We want to reimagine our collective relationship with fashion and grow a powerful movement for change.

As industry and policymakers take their time to regulate and overhaul the fashion business model, and as we push for degrowth - we focus on consumer behaviour change and the power of collective action... exploring how we can **drive change** at a grassroots level.

We want consumers to feel inspired and equipped to move away from fast fashion, in favour of new (or old) low-impact habits.

WHAT WE DO

We run clothes swaps and repair cafes. We speak to students in schools. We advocate for entrepreneurs, championing the regeneration of the British high street through micro fashion businesses. We run sustainable fashion hubs, combining fashion retail and fashion services.

We are behind Sustainable Fashion Week.

We work with a variety of collaborative partners to deliver engaging activity across the UK and offer consultancy for a range of projects.

Our 2023 team



Carly Kelleher



Udoka Dumebi



Lauren Reed

We run primarily on volunteer hours - a tiny team trying to do big work.
Thank you to our voluntary Advisory Board who provide us with guidance and support.



2023 ACTIVITY

In our hometown Bristol and beyond...

Our four sustainability pillars underpin all our activities

REGENERATE // REWEAR // REPURPOSE // RECONNECT



SPARKS FASHION

Our Sustainable Clothing Hub combining fashion retail and fashion services



Sparks is a meanwhile-use project in Bristol's vacant M&S building, creating an alternative department store, led by multiple community partners.

SFW piloted a 'sustainable clothing hub' for the Sparks fashion department. Flipping the idea of what a fashion department should look like, our focus was primarily on preloved and reworked clothing, with vintage and secondhand sellers taking centre stage. We had our clothes swap, repair cafe, rental, a range of 10 traders and a pop up pitch for micro brands and makers...

Combining fashion retail with fashion services, for new ways to consume fashion on the high street.



WORKSHOPS, TALKS & MORE

Small scale activities throughout the year to support our bigger activity



Throughout the year we delivered small-scale engagement activities (talks, workshops, clothes swaps) working with businesses, brands, local authorities, climate action groups, education providers and NGOs. Examples of those we've worked with are:

- The Fashion Museum
- Monkton Coombe School
- The Eden Project
- Fashion Declares
 - Fibrequest
 - Beyond Retro

In addition, we've been running a repair cafe in association with funding from Accenture.





2023 ACTIVITY

Sustainable Fashion Week

Sustainable Fashion Week (SFW 2023) is the only fashion week of its kind, uniting consumers across the UK and internationally too.

Our annual flagship event ran 25 Sep - 8 Oct and was an explosion of activity, where people connected, shared and learned in a variety of ways to explore alternatives to fast fashion.

Theme for 2023: "The Rewear Revolution"

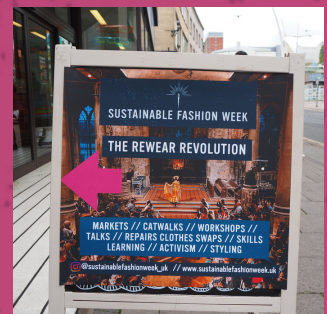
Our theme celebrated everything secondhand, handed-down, reworked and reworn. We sought to deliver a program of activity that demonstrated the value of pre-loved clothing as part of a new fashion system.

AIMS:

- Participants will have a better understanding of the value of preloved clothing and feel inspired to opt for preloved over new
- Participants will have a better sense of how to swap, rent and find preloved clothing
- Participants learn basic mending skills to facilitate the reweaving of damaged clothing

Longer term...

- Participants reduce their purchases of new clothing
- Fashion waste in landfill is reduced





IMPACT

Engagement & Reach // SFW 2023 In Numbers



We surveyed our Hub and Community Programme activity hosts post-event and have calculated averages based on the responses.



"It was a wonderful initiative to be involved in and we had a huge number of swaps happening. It was great to do something so sustainable that staff could really see and benefit from. Staff were so positive about the event and one person said they were proud to work for an employer that did this."

Pamela Parkes // BBC Studios Bristol & London on being part of the Community Programme





GEOGRAPHICAL REACH

Where were the people that participated?

SFW 2023 COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

Our Community Programme was delivered across the UK by individuals, organisations, brands and community groups.

With 136 activities including events, workshops, talks, runway shows and more to equip consumers in changing their fashion habits.

SFW 2023 REGIONAL HUBS

New for 2023, we worked in partnership with other organisations to produce regional 'Hubs' of activity in 8 locations across the UK and 3 locations internationally.

Each of our Regional Hubs curated a programme of activity that championed our four pillars of reconnecting, reweaving, repurposing & regenerating.

 indicates Community Programme event locations, PLUS Charity Retail Association activity

 indicates a Regional Hub UK location



REGIONAL HUBS

Working in partnership to expand the programme

Expanding beyond Bristol was an important step in increasing the accessibility of our activities across more communities and in providing a diverse programme of events suitable for a range of ages, backgrounds, incomes and skill sets. Our network of Hub partners united across the final weekend of September to deliver activities which sought to inspire, upskill and empower their local networks to take action against fast fashion.

The project leads for each location gave significant amounts of time and energy to the sustainable fashion movement to create a brilliantly regional explosion of activity. Without their efforts, SFW 2023 wouldn't have reached such a high number of consumers.



BRIGHTON

Hosted by Brighton Peace and Environment Centre with Sew Fabulous CiC



BRADFORD

Hosted by The Stitch Society



BRISTOL

Hosted by us!



MANCHESTER

Hosted by Future Fashion Fair



PLYMOUTH

Hosted by Abigail Eaton



CARDIFF

Hosted by Make Love Not Landfill



FROME

Hosted by Everyone Needs Pockets



LONDON

Hosted by Re Store W3

8

UK towns & cities

8

film screenings

7

markets

28

workshops

6

runway shows



REGIONAL HUBS

Highlights

Our flagship Bristol Hub took place in the Sparks project. The store received its highest footfall since opening in May, with over 4800 people visiting across the Hub weekend and their highest sales to date.

Here are some additional highlights from our Hubs...



Brighton Hub

"I teach fashion and textiles at Brighton Met and some of our students made and modelled their clothes, so a great opportunity for them."

5000
visitors

1000+
items swapped,
bought,
repaired

20000
social media
reach



Frome Hub

"Looking at items in Frome Museum's collection which were damaged and repaired in a group of six was fascinating. We quickly became comfortable expressing ourselves, sharing thoughts, ideas and knowledge. A workshop that I was so pleased that I went to."

524%
Increase in
online reach

40+
mending kits
handed out

1000+
people
engaged



Plymouth Hub

"Absolutely loved getting Involved. Abigail (Hub lead) has been a great help and done an amazing job at organising the event"

20+
partners

17000
reach

54,634
impressions



GOING GLOBAL

Is this the future for SFW?

We were approached by partners in Bangalore, India and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, seeking to take part in SFW. Everyone is welcome to participate and so we signed up our first international Hubs, and approached Sustainable Fashion Week US soon after... we'll explore more international partnerships in 2024 to continue to amplify a unified message globally.



Hosted by Dr. Priyanka Abishek and Dr. Laghna Gowda

SFW Hub: India



Hosted by Sustainable Fashion Week US

SFW Hub: USA



Hosted by Denani Designs

SFW Hub: Papua New Guinea

"It was challenging trying to introduce sustainable fashion in my country but we were able to get the message across and I believe we have created impact... Now designers, organizers, corporates, private and communities are talking about sustainable fashion... one of the biggest highlight is getting an invitation from British High Commissioner to PNG to host a sustainable fashion show at her residence."

Elizabeth Omeri, Denani Designs, Papua New Guinea



COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

The heart and soul of the grassroots action

Our Community Programme is hosted by people in the community for people in the community. Across the two weeks (and even either side!) of the SFW 2023 event, people took action to connect with their peers, colleagues, friends and family and faith groups.

136 events in 43 locations, including...

52
workshops

16
markets

14
catwalks

6
clothes
swaps

7
talks &
panels

and so
much more



Workshop by Justine Dumotier Khripounoff



National Trust Workshop at Killerton House



Sustainable Fashion Show by Salisbury Museum



Shibori Workshop by Oxidate Design



Market by Rummage in the Range



Resale Therapy by Shelter



COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

Charity Retail Association // Case Study

This year, the Charity Retail Association participated in our Community Programme by hosting the 'Charity Shop Fashion Week' promoting preloved style right across the country.

They saw fantastic uptake in the activity across the UK's four countries, with at least 50 charities that run shops taking part and sharing outfit inspiration with their audiences.

"The CRA were absolutely thrilled to be taking part in Sustainable Fashion Week as our members pull together and demonstrate that second-hand and preloved style is a no brainer in a world that cannot take the production of garments at the current rate. Not only do charity shops deliver sustainable style, but they also help good causes and communities. We, and our participating members really enjoyed it too!"

Susan Meredith // Charity Retail Association



CRA
Engagement

29,000
webpage
visitors

92,000
social media
accounts reached
at least once

50
charities
took part



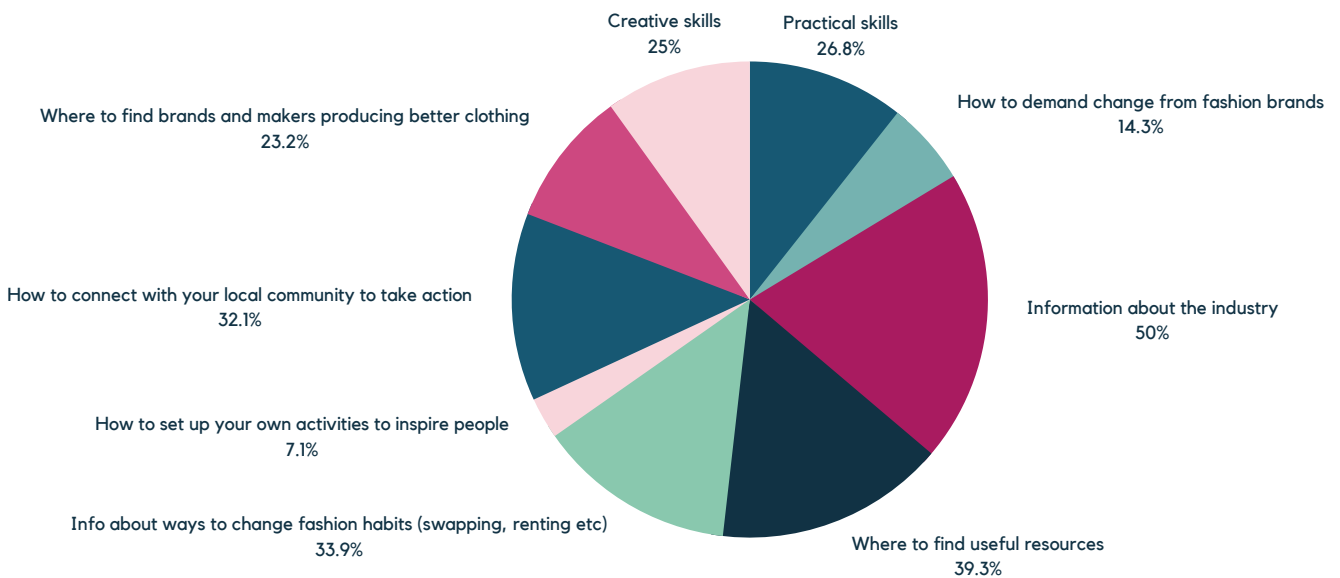


IMPACT

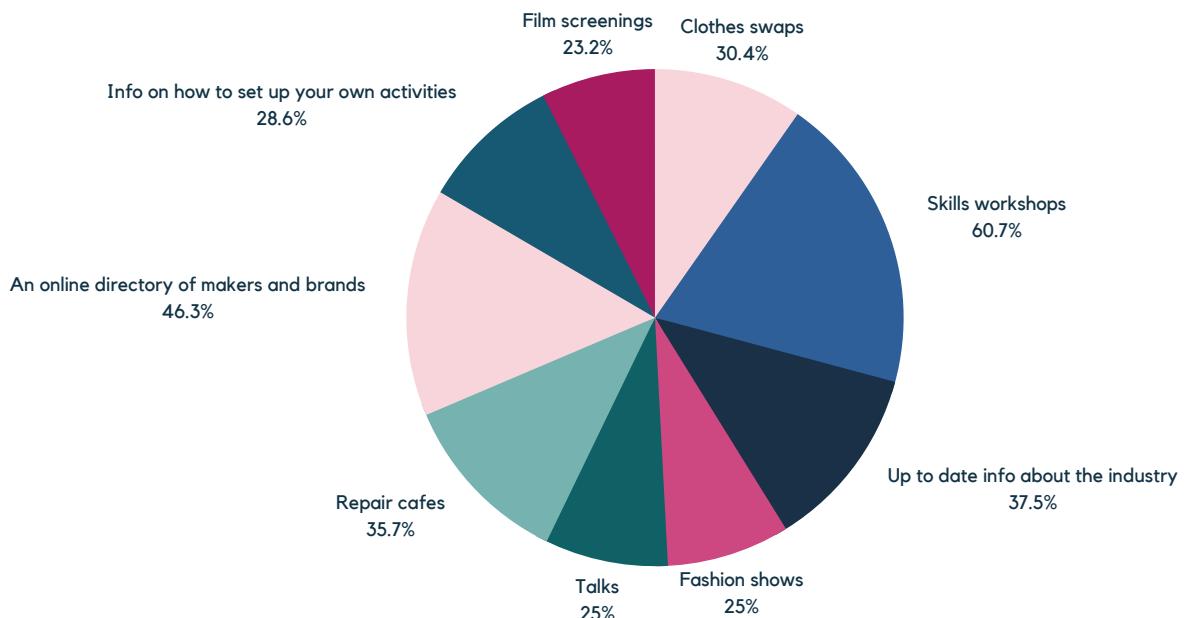
Hubs & Community Programme

We always ask our community to feed back what they have learned through interaction with SFW and areas they feel they need more support in. We'll keep reviewing what we do to ensure we are delivering against demonstrated needs and maintaining value.

What did attendees learn during SFW activities? (multiple choice)



What do attendees need more of? (multiple choice)

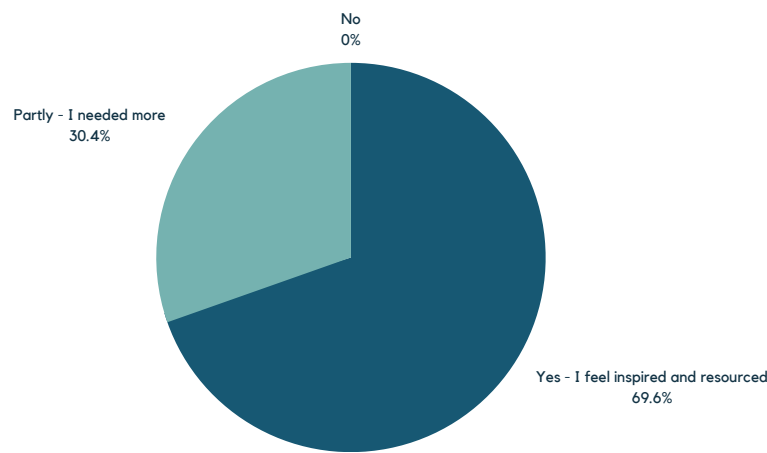




IMPACT

Hubs & Community Programme

Do you feel more resourced, more inspired or more able to make practical changes as a result of attending SFW 2023 activities?



Some nice feedback from the attendees...

"Great weekend. Felt really inspired and left me wondering how to make an impact without putting more garments into the market."

"Really worthwhile, highlighting the industry and what we can do to become greener."

"Absolutely loved it. Felt so connected and inspired. Couldn't have been better! Only wish more people knew about it"

"The whole thing went very well and I think the greatest success was educating and bringing others onboard"

"It was utterly fab. I didn't have long there but I took 3 visitors from outside Brighton and I felt pleased and proud."

"Loved the event, learning about how to make outfits work for different occasions. Learning about what to buy and not to buy and feeling more confident in buying and loving preloved and vintage clothing. Plus loving my current wardrobe so I don't buy new unnecessarily!"

"The mend your clothes event rescued a fab jumper that was unwearable due to a fraying seam and stored at the back of my wardrobe. The event could not have been better, but I would like some more practical sessions if possible."



2023 PRESS

A snapshot of press coverage for this year

Brighton and Hove News

Home > Brighton

Brighton Dome to host city's first Sustainable Fashion Week

A showcase will feature flash mob catwalks of re-worn styles

by Felice Southwell
Friday 22 Sep, 2023 at 2:39PM

bnp

SUSTAINABILITY

Bristol's Sustainable Fashion Week: A Global Catalyst for Eco-Conscious Couture

By Ravichandran Devendran • 1 month ago

BBC NEWS

Home UK World Business Pol

Bristol's Sustainable Fashion Week makes global impact

By Harriet Robinson
BBC News
8 October 2023

SUSTAINABLE FASHION WEEK INDIA

Dr Abhishek (I) said social media had increased fast-fashion in India

A green initiative born in a UK city has proven so successful it has expanded globally.

INDEPENDENT

NEWS SPORT VOICES CULTURE

Climate > News

Sustainable Fashion Week 'a massive success' with events across the country

From panel talks to sewing workshops, events are taking place across the UK and internationally on how to make fashion more sustainable.

itvX

itv NEWS Your Area Categories

'Repair, re-wear and share' - time to revolutionise fashion for sustainable future

MERIDIAN | FASHION | BUSINESS
ENVIRONMENT | Sunday 1 October 2023 at 4:45pm

Andy Dickenson
Reporter, ITV News Meridian

YORKSHIRE BYLINES

Home > Society > Culture

The Stitch Society leads Yorkshire's events for Sustainable Fashion Week

Press Release: Award-winning workwear business The Stitch Society takes centre stage at Sustainable Fashion Week 2023

B24/7 MORE

NEWS / FASHION

SUSTAINABLE FASHION WEEK RETURNS FOR 2023

FROME TIMES

September 13, 2023 • No Comments

Join The ReWear Revolution With Everyone Needs Pockets Frome As Sustainable Fashion Week Struts Into Town

Share Tweet Pin Mail SMS

THE UK's original Sustainable Fashion Week (SFW) is hitting the runway for its third year from Monday 25th September to Sunday 8th October and Frome is part of it!



SPONSORS & PARTNERS

Who backed us in 2023

SFW is almost entirely fuelled by brand sponsorship and small grant funding. Only with this support are we able to deliver our activities and reach so many people.



SPONSORSHIP

We were thrilled to be supported for a second year by **Yeo Vally Organic**, **Broadmead Bristol BID** and the **Forest Stewardship Council UK**... and to welcome **Discarded Spirits** for 2023.

SUPPORTERS

We're equally touched by the pro bono support of **Plaster Communications**, **Fashion United** and our Community Partner - **Eden Project Communities**.

FUNDING

And for the **first time**, this year we received small amounts of funding from **LUSH**, **The National Lottery** and **Accenture** to deliver aspects of our community engagement. This has meant we were able to create two short-term, part-time paid roles which will run until February 2024.

"It was a joy to support the Sustainable Fashion Week hub event in Sparks, Bristol this year. The organisers had put such a lot of effort into making sure it was a fantastic, buzzing event. My gathering of a Meet, Make and Mend session within the event was well attended and a wonderful way to connect with those who want to make positive change happen in the Bristol area."

Molly Newberry // Eden Project Communities





LESSONS LEARNT

This year for us vs. where we want to be

What did we learn in 2023?



The trials of collaborative working //

The hardest lesson of 2023 was how collaborations would suffer when partners weren't clear on SFW's limited finance and staff/volunteer hours available to support them.

The struggle for financial support //

We only raised **£208** in donations across the 136 community events we listed and promoted and only covered **11%** of the time it took to manage the regional Hubs through the fee they were charged to help cover costs.

More // Top level consultancy & large collaborative projects

More // Programme curation of community-led events

More // Financial stability and self sufficiency

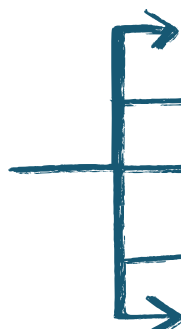
More // Exciting business development

Less // Event delivery that we offer ourselves - unless we can pay staff costs or it feeds into wider collaborations



Where do we want to be in 2024?

What's holding us back?



Limited staff hours to manage a **very high workload**

Lack of **consistent or adequate funding**

Volume of need for comms, marketing and campaigning

Access to expertise, eg. legal & business development

Lack of certainty meaning we can't confidently move forward with new opportunities

We have to resource SFW so it can be sustained.

Our lack of core funding impacts every aspect of what we do and everyone who works with us.



EVOLVING...

Ok, things look good so what's not working?

Delivering SFW is a year-round, full time job... and more. It is run primarily on time given for free and goodwill. These resources could quickly run out! We need to adapt to make SFW more sustainable long term.

Where we struggle



SFW 2023 //

We didn't have resource to deliver and promote a Hub our flagship in Bristol as well as manage the curation and promotion of the wider programme

ALL PROJECTS //

Managing expectations is very challenging. We find that information we share with partners and contributors about the extent of our resource and collaborative terms doesn't land.

ALL PROJECTS //

Finance. We struggle to 'sell' our activities as the expectation is that they should be provided for free, yet equally contributors (eg. repairers) must be paid and paid fairly. And so should core staff. We cannot continue to rely on volunteers or deliver activities without being invested in.

SFW 2023 //

Communications. Messaging on our social channels was potentially confusing as we switched between what we delivered ourselves and what was happening regionally.

SFW 2023 //

Ensuring all participants feel that have had adequate promotion of their regional activity so they feel supported. Promoting regional activity on a national channel will never serve all adequately. We are limited in what we can do to ensure regional uptake in activities - but want to support their success as much as we can.

What we'll change



SFW 2024 //

We will **no longer deliver a Bristol Hub** unless it is in partnership format as with other Hubs. We'll focus instead on the programme curation.

ALL PROJECTS //

We'll develop **stronger, more direct terms of agreement for all collaborations**. We will seek more strategic partnerships with organisations who share our collaborative values.

ALL PROJECTS //

We will hold fast to the value of what we are delivering and **look to work in a way that ensures fair pay for time given** and seek proper funding. We will push 'pay-it-forward' structures for participants to maintain cost-accessibility whilst paying staff and contributors fairly.

SFW 2024 //

We'll put our focus into **targeted promotion of our Hub partners and other collaborations** - as we won't deliver our own activity we won't need to 'sell'/promote ourselves which frees up social media curation.

SFW 2024 //

We will reduce our own event delivery and **focus on curation and promotion of community activity**. We will be clearer about the purpose of taking part. We will be clearer about what participants can expect from the SFW team based on our size. We will work on **updating our website to become more of a resource** with higher traffic.

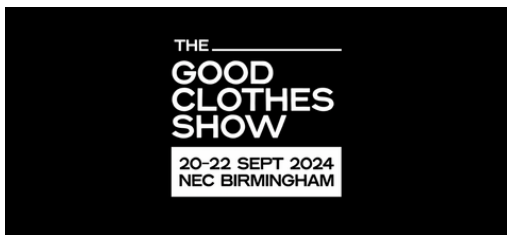


WHAT'S NEXT

Currently in the pipeline...



SFW is pleased to be a strategic partner on the newly launched Sustainable Fashion Streets mission, led by Hive Community Business School. Helping to regenerate the British high street by offering business support to circular fashion entrepreneurs.



Launching in September 2024, The Clothes Show returns to the NEC as the The Good Clothes Show, showcasing the best in sustainable fashion. SFW will be their 'Official Community Partner' and is consulting for the event design and development.



We'll aim to develop our recently launched associates scheme, where organisations can support SFW through paying a small annual membership and receive various benefits. We have opportunities for companies/brands as well as small scale makers.

Work with SFW

Whether you're an organisation, community group, education provider, museum, brand or individual... we would love to collaborate with you and connect with your audiences. We offer consultancy for a variety of different projects, events, exhibitions and more.





UNTIL NEXT YEAR...

SFW's successes and global reach in its third year is living proof of a thriving and diverse sustainable fashion network we're building across the UK and beyond. While securing our first-ever formal funding was a milestone, financial self-sufficiency is still sorely needed. Tireless event delivery and space curation reliant solely on volunteer hours is unsustainable and doesn't align with our core values, or indeed those of sustainable fashion.

We will aim to raise our ambition for wider financial stability in 2024 through what we do best – top level consultancy and large collaborative projects, and stronger business development through existing and new funding partners.

– **Helle Abelvik-Lawson, SFW Non-Executive Director**

FOLLOW US & GET IN TOUCH

Email Us: hello@sustainablefashionweek.uk

Website: sustainablefashionweek.uk

Instagram: [@sustainablefashionweek_uk](https://www.instagram.com/sustainablefashionweek_uk)

LinkedIn: [sustainable-fashion-week](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sustainable-fashion-week)

Twitter: [@SusFashWeek](https://twitter.com/SusFashWeek)

TikTok: [@sustainablefashionweek](https://www.tiktok.com/@sustainablefashionweek)

IMAGE CREDITS

SFW Artwork - Emotional Waterfall Art

[@mary_cullen](https://www.instagram.com/mary_cullen)

[@chloeimbach](https://www.instagram.com/chloeimbach)

[@ameligrace.shaw](https://www.instagram.com/ameligrace.shaw)

[@sustainablefashionweekus](https://www.instagram.com/sustainablefashionweekus)

[@denanidesigns](https://www.instagram.com/denanidesigns)

[@sfwhub.brighton](https://www.instagram.com/sfwhub.brighton)

Everyone Needs Pockets

The Stitch Society

Future Fashion Fair

ReStore W3

Studio Re-Aline

This report was drafted in November 2023 using data and feedback available at the point of writing. It will be updated at the end of 2023 so the numbers may change.