



NOTICE OF MEETING

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 3PM

**THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL,
PORTSMOUTH**

Telephone enquiries to Jane Di Dino 023 9283 4060

Email: jane.didino@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

Membership

Councillor Judith Smyth (Chair)

Councillor Charlotte Gerada (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Simon Boshier

Councillor Chris Dike

Councillor Jason Fazackarley

Councillor Mark Jeffery

Standing Deputies

Councillor George Fielding

Councillor Graham Heaney

Councillor Leo Madden

(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: www.portsmouth.gov.uk

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 Declarations of Members' Interests**
- 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (Pages 5 - 10)**

RECOMMENDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as correct record.

Matters arising.

4 Reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (Pages 11 - 218)

1. Questions for Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City.
2. Discussion paper on Pesticide Changes - Charlotte Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Services.
Report attached.
3. Other local authorities' use of pesticides - Arian Rozier, Parks Development Manager.
Report attached.
4. Glyphosate use in the Parks Service. - Arian Rozier, Parks Development Manager.
Report attached.
5. Draft Weed control in the Parks Service trial report - Arian Rozier, Parks Development Manager.
Report attached.
6. To note and consider the Growing in the Community report by the Local Government Association.
Report attached.
7. Glyphosate use by Highways - Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical). This report that will follow will include any suggested amendments to the contract that may be required.
8. Glyphosate usage in the Parks, Housing & Highways Services - Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services.
Report attached.
9. Pesticide use in the Clean & Green Service - Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services.
Report attached.
10. To discuss and note the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Panel report - A review into biodiversity improvements in urban Portsmouth 22 March 2022.
Report attached.
11. To discuss and agree the guiding principles for the drafting of the recommendations - Councillor Judith Smyth
Report attached.

The panel is aiming to complete this review at its meeting in October if possible, and submit it to Cabinet during November to allow any new expenditure to be considered as part of the 2024/ 25 budget-setting process.

Members of the public are now permitted to use both audio visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting or records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

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Agenda Item 3

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 25 July 2023 at 5pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)
Charlotte Gerada
Simon Boshier
Jason Fazackarley
Mark Jeffery

14. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Chris Dike and Kimberley Barrett. Councillor Smyth also gave her apologies for being late to the meeting.

15. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising.

Councillor Jeffery asked the panel to note that he felt the possible future topic he had put forward, community policing was suitable for this panel to review.

17. Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)

Councillor Charlotte Gerada chaired the meeting.

Eric Brangier, Managing Director of Ensign gave an overview of Colas' approach to weed management. They do use products that contain glyphosate to kill weeds. However, over the last two years, usage has reduced as they are using less concentrated products. There are three visits a year and the use is targeted but the amount used depends on weather and climate. Some weeds are resistant and therefore must be removed manually. In response to questions, he explained that:

- Colas is responsible for maintaining the verges.
- Reducing costs is not a factor in weed removal around trees.
- Colas does not carry out weed maintenance anywhere else.
- He is aware that some other local authorities are pesticide-free. However, a full ban seems to be quite difficult. He is not sure whether that would be acceptable to the public.
- The trials of other methods are encouraging.

Action

Information on whether pesticides have been increasingly used around trees will be sent to the panel.

Councillor Steve Pitt gave an overview of the strategy for the Culture, Leisure and Economic Development portfolio with regard to pesticide use.

- Trials are being carried out now to try to reduce pesticide use.
- Pesticide use increased when the parks service was brought in-house and afterwards it reduced. There is scope for further reduction.
- Strimming around the base of trees has proven to kill young trees. Manual weed removal is always better. Parks take care not to hit trees, but it is not always realistic to expect them to take the necessary time to trim around the trees, particularly as they are not very well paid.
- The council has a legal duty to remove all Japanese knotweed on its land. Glyphosate is injected directly into the root base. No viable alternative to this method has been found yet.
- The report that was published with the agenda shows that out of 51 local authorities, 33 are still using glyphosate especially for specific treatment of invasive species. Three went pesticide-free and then decided to reintroduce it. Of the eight that have declared themselves to be pesticide-free: only one of these is a city and the others do not manage their own land and therefore never used it in the first place. He suggested that the validity of this data should be taken with a pinch of salt.
- The parks service only uses pesticides when necessary.
- One resident recently contacted the council to praise the weed management trials taking place in Highland Cemetery. They reported that the numbers of butterflies had increased significantly since this new method was introduced.
- Countryside wardens are in place now and can map the different management techniques happening in various areas.
- The verges on the Common were left unmown for as long as possible. These were mowed last week as the common is now required for large events.
- Most parks have rewilded areas. Wildflowers have come up by themselves and are more drought resilient.
- Grass left to grow pose a significant danger to dogs if the seeds get onto their coats. The darts burrow into the skin and make their way into vital organs, leading to the death of the dog. The council therefore ensures that there are clear paths for people to follow. This also shows that certain areas have been deliberately left unmown rather than just neglected.
- Some authorities pour acids, especially vinegar onto land. There are serious implications to doing that. A balanced approach is required.
- The potential cost of using alternatives need to be understood. If parks do more manual removal, additional staff will be required. Recruitment has been difficult this year, especially for this type of work.

In response to questions, Councillor Pitt explained that:

- Purchasing a new vehicle and recruiting at least two new operatives would cost in the region of six figures.
- There is further work to be done as parks are still carrying out trials.

- Manual weed removal would not be possible on bowling greens or golf courses. These need to be treated as special cases.
- Last year the Isle of Wight removed its ban on using glyphosates and then used beach buggies to speed up and down spraying them.
- Care must be taken in reaching a decision to ensure any ban is feasible. A u-turn would be worse.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson gave an overview of the strategy in the Transport portfolio:

- The PFI contract extends verge to verge not just highways or pavements.
- Insecticides are not used.
- Weedkillers are used when weeds are blocking roads, paths or drains or are causing a slipping hazard.
- The advantage of a weedkiller is that it kills the roots rather than just the green above ground parts of the plant. Alternatives do not kill the roots and therefore repeat treatments are required.
- Alternatives including freezing, burning and hot oil have been looked into. The aim is to minimise pesticide use as the council learns more.
- It would be unrealistic to remove pesticides completely, but it is very useful and the right process to reduce their use to a minimum.
- It is important not to go from one extreme to another. The council can do things that cost money and get us on the journey. It may not be possible yet to go pesticide-free, but that should not stop us from trying to get down that road to improve things.

In response to questions, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

- Westminster council states that it is pesticide-free, but its website says that it is glyphosate free.
- He is unsure how to quantify the amount of product used because its use is targeted.
- One of the council's golf courses is leased out and the other is maintained in-house.
- Burning off Japanese knotweed can be done but the ground needs to be excavated afterwards. A specialist will advise on the appropriate treatment and will carry it out. Of all the local authorities that are pesticide-free that he tried to contact, the vast majority have an exemption particularly for Japanese knotweed. The council may need to accept the need for pesticides in exceptional cases. The specialists were asked about electric shock treatments for Japanese knotweed but advised against using it as there are a number of associated safety issues particularly if it is used in a public place.
- Operatives using pesticides have specific training and wear PPE. Spot treatment is only carried out when appropriate e.g., not in windy conditions.
- He is not aware of any other plants that may need specific treatment of pesticides.
- A London council is using pesticides to eradicate processionary moth caterpillars.

- All local authorities are looking to reduce their use as much as possible. Portsmouth is in line with them and is not expecting a different outcome from the trials. Each local authority is set up differently. Some contract out the maintenance, for some county councils manage their land.
- The way the land is managed has changed, not the number of applications.
- Some local authorities moved too quickly to become pesticide-free and initially had to use staff from other departments to cover the shortfall in order to manage the workload. Now, in addition to having an in-house team, they contract out work at peak times.

In response to a question, Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager explained that:

- Japanese knotweed is a very specific plant and an invasive species. A barrier is erected out it when it's being treated to keep people at a distance.
- Highways has had a significant reduction in its use of pesticides last year: 900 to 560 litres. It will probably have used 400 litres by the end of this year.
- Previous product used 490 chomes per litre. The current one contains 360 per litre. It is not more aggressive. It is a weaker solution.
- The figures show the actual litres used.
- They are always monitoring what else is coming out. As soon as something suitable comes on the market, it will be looked into.

During the discussion, the panel noted that:

- Exemptions may well be necessary, if the city is to go pesticide-free until an effective alternative is found.
- The possible impact on large developments if a non-glyphosate treatment is used on Japanese knotweed must be considered.
- The housing department has done a lot to reduce the volume of pesticides used without increasing costs and has received no complaints. The meadows required herbicide treatment to rebalance them.
- Members are aware of the difficulties in different parts of the Parks portfolio. Farlington Marshes, the golf courses and Southsea Common require tailored approaches.
- The report will include details of expected capital and revenue costs and the impact of any recommendations on the PFI contract which has 7-8 years left to run.
- A golf course in Basingstoke uses a different type of grass that requires a different type of treatment.

The panel noted the completed questionnaires that had been returned.

Actions

- A list of the organisations that had been sent the questionnaire will be resent to the panel.
- The University of Portsmouth be asked again for its views.

18. Future Items for the Panel's Workprogramme. (AI 5)

The panel discussed possible future reviews and noted that:

- As the panel has carried out reviews on the environment and transport, it may be appropriate to do one on community safety.
- Officers could help with choosing a topic, but the panel decides the scope.
- It is important that any review is manageable within the timescale.

The meeting concluded at 6:45pm

Councillor Judith Smyth
Chair

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Agenda Item 4

TECS Scrutiny Panel discussion paper on communicating pesticide changes

Context

At the request of Cllr Smyth, this paper has been written to give members of the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel elements to consider should they choose to include a recommendation relating to communications in the final report on the use of pesticides.

Approach

- The approach for this work will need to be defined once it is decided what steps are being taken, how they will be implemented (where, when etc) and who it will impact. Communication plans would be tailored to reach the appropriate audience depending on the work.
- In general, as well as telling people what we are changing, we should focus on explain the reasons for the change, the benefits it will bring, what will appear different and reassure any likely concerns.

Resources

- The marketing communications team will need some informal direction from Cabinet on where this sits in relation to other campaigns in order to gauge how to prioritise it.
- The more budget available the more can be achieved, but as no source of funding has been identified for this work it would be assumed that no additional budget is available and activity will focus on free council channels including:
 - Email bulletins
 - Social media posts
 - Media activity
 - Flagship and HouseTalk magazines
- To ensure as wide a reach as possible opportunities should be looked at to include messages in campaigns on related projects such as tree planting / greening, or if Colas is writing letters to residents it could include an update on managing wild flowers and the council's marketing communications team would be happy to provide advice on this.

Garnering support

- A stakeholder analysis would be beneficial to establish who has an interest in the project. This should include everyone from cllrs to residents.
- It should not be taken for granted that any particular group will support specific plans introduced, for example cllrs may have voted for the notice of motion to reduce use of pesticides but they may not agree with a specific way of implementing it.
- Where there is opportunity, stakeholders should be given appropriate opportunity to engage with or even influence plans that might impact them

Information or consultation?

- As a general rule we should only ask residents for an opinion on something they can influence. If a decision is going to be made regardless of resident opinion, as potentially one on pesticides could be for health or environmental reasons, we would not advise consulting residents on it.

- Even if stakeholders cannot influence an overall decision on use of pesticides they may be able to have a say in how it is delivered such as what settings we take action in first, how methods are trialled etc.
- Allowing residents input on the elements they can influence may help increase public understanding and support for the work, but this needs to be balanced with the practicalities of delivering a service.

In May, the Scrutiny Panel Chair, Councillor Smyth, asked that we look into the approach adopted by three councils: Bristol, Southampton and Oxford City Councils.

Bristol City Council - policy is to reduce Glyphosate use where it can and to use the minimum amount possible.

Trialled alternative weed control methods in 2017 and point of reference: [Weeds, treatment of unwanted vegetation \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

Conclusion in relation to Parks - will soon be testing newly licenced pelargonic acid along with other naturally occurring herbicides. The choices at the moment are acetic acid and pelargonic acid. This will require re-educating the spraying operators.

Conclusion in relation to street scene - for BWC to find a progressive contractor and find out technologies of spraying with sensors etc. for best reductions. This would require longer-term contracts to allow the contractors to invest in appropriate machinery and be able to follow latest developments in the industry.

Current reference policy is [Ecological Emergency Action Plan 2021-25](#) and Strategy Goal for pesticides is to **reduce the use of pesticides in Bristol by at least 50 per cent by 2030.**

Southampton City Council - no response to email questionnaire to date.

Online information available: [Appendix 2 - Green City Plan Final Draft Cabinet Feb 2020.pdf \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#) - references introducing a sustainable pesticides and herbicides policy in the future.

Oxford City Council - no response to email questionnaire to date.

Online information available: Council Minutes ([Public Pack](#))[Minutes Supplement for item 82 - written responses to supplementary questions \(Questions on Notice\) Minutes Supplement for Council, 30/01/2023 17:00 \(oxford.gov.uk\)](#)

Has the Council trialled the use of any alternatives to glyphosate?

ODS has carried out extensive research on this issue, and concluded, that at present, there are no practicable/financial viable alternatives. The current approach is therefore to use as little as possible and only where strictly necessary.

Could you provide details of the extensive research that ODS has carried out into alternatives and about what alternatives are dismissed as unviable? Other cities similar to Oxford have made alternatives work, so it would be interesting to know why we can't do that here.

ODS' last detailed assessment of glyphosate against comparable alternatives to managing weeds on hard surfaces was pre-2020, and it would be appropriate to review this again, not least in the light of the fact that important EU regulators are due to come to a view about its continued licensing by the end of the year. The UK, as you know, has given weedkillers with glyphosate licence to be used till 2025 but may reconsider if the EU does come to a different view. In March we will be bringing a paper to Cabinet setting out the scope for developing a Biodiversity Strategy for

Oxford. Consideration of the use and impacts of herbicides and pesticides will naturally be part of the work proposed. ODS will in parallel undertake a further assessment of alternative processes for weed management. Taken together the information should provide new guidance for decisions on future use of glyphosate – balancing environmental impacts and costs.

The Scrutiny Panel also asked what information was available on the **Local Government Association** website:

- Climate implications toolkit published by Hammersmith and Fulham Council - [Climate implications toolkit.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#) - a self-assessment to help officers think about how their projects, procurements, commissioning, and services can align with H&F's net zero carbon target.
- Growing in the Community document - [growing-community-second--8f5.pdf \(local.gov.uk\)](#) - funded by the LGA in Sep 2006, the objective of the guide is to assist those who are responsible for managing allotments, either within local authorities or under schemes for devolved management, to work efficiently and effectively by emulating examples of good practice. Contents include section on herbicides and pesticides.

Separately, the Parks Team has tried to make contact with **51 Council Bodies** (inc. those above) through email and telephone contact, including those shown on the PAN UK website as making a commitment to reduce or ban pesticides and/or glyphosates, to establish their current approach to managing unwanted vegetation. These councils are a split of Borough and District Councils, City Councils, and Town and Parish Councils.

Based on individual responses or documentation published on the council's websites or readily available, we understand:

- 33 councils are still using glyphosate and this is a mix of those working towards reduced usage and those who still wish to use for specific treatments (such as invasive species).
- 2 councils have re-introduced the use of glyphosate as part of their treatment programme.
- 8 councils stated as pesticide free, of which 1 is a city council and the others town and parish councils and one suburb (some of which do not actively manage some or all the green space)
- the remainder either have no information readily available or we are still carrying out research.

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This is an ongoing piece of work, but to date, we have received 16 responses. Overall, the alternative methods and change of approach (where adopted) are reflective of those we are currently trialling or have already implemented as part of our approach to reducing pesticide use to a minimum.

We've also had conversations with Fareham Borough Council, Brighton and Hove Council and Lewes and Eastbourne Council. I will be able to give verbal response to any questions arising at the next Scrutiny Panel meeting.

Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager, Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services.

Parks Service response to TECS Scrutiny Panel request for information (10 August 2023)

The steps the council is currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides

Table showing reduction in glyphosate use since 2017, whilst the service has transitioned to a fully in-house service. Table data needs to be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes:

Year	Glyphosate used by in-house team, in litres	Estimated total used - in-house and contracted service, in litres
2017	70	100-110 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided)
2018	80	100-110 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided)
2019	60	90-100 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided)
2020	80	80 (golf externally provided)
2021	75	75 (all services transferred to in-house)
2022	55	55 (all services transferred to in-house)
2023	50*	50* (all services transferred to in-house)

Parks usage figures for 2017-2019 represent the grounds maintenance operations carried out by the newly established in-house team that covered the north, east and south areas of the city. These figures did not include any usage by the external contractors for the west, cemeteries, schools (under Traded Services) and golf course. We do not have a benchmark figure for these, but based on current applications, an estimate has been provided of the total used across all sites by both in-house and externally contracted services).

In 2020, the west, cemetery and schools maintenance also transferred in-house and in 2021 the golf course maintenance transferred in-house. Therefore the in-house usage figures shown for 2020 and 2021, although higher than 2019, actually represented a continued reduction in overall use for all maintained areas and estimated to be a 25-30% reduction overall in those years.

Since 2021, usage has continued to reduce through the adoption of alternative measures and maintenance practices.

It is estimated that total usage in 2017 was between 100-110 litres of glyphosate and the usage for 2023 is estimated to be 50 litres (* as this report is in-year) and therefore there has been a 50-55% reduction in use of glyphosate by the Parks Team in the last 6 years.

Other pesticides used:

- approx. 20 litres of a selective herbicide is used annually at Great Salterns golf course and on fine turf sports areas (bowls and cricket)
- approx. 1.5 litres of fungicide is used annually at Great Salterns golf course

The draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy sets out the current provision as follows:

Typology	Area in Hectares	Area in m2
Amenity greenspace	81.89	818,900
Public parks and gardens	137.64	1,376,400
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	344.94	3,449,400
Play areas + provision for young people	4.15	41,500
Allotments	27.86	278,600
Cemeteries and church grounds	41.09	410,900
Outdoor sports grounds	141.79	1,417,900

There are a range of maintenance approaches adopted to each of the land types, with the Parks Team ground maintenance function carried out by 55 permanent staff supported by seasonal and casual staff. In addition, there are 4 Countryside Officers overseeing dedicated management of the city's more natural areas.

It is not possible to breakdown the amount of glyphosate used within each typology, although natural greenspace can be excluded since herbicide is not applied to this type of area (except for treating invasive species). Parks records show the following areas are identified for weed control:

Hard Surface Areas	53,541 m ² (with additional 19,387 m ² in schools)
Hard Surface Linear	14,037 lin m (with additional 9,426 lin. m in schools)
Shrub Bed Weed Control	89,336 m ²
Grave Top Maintenance	4,596 graves

These represent the total area and linear measurements in amenity greenspace, public parks and gardens, play areas and allotments that are identified as needing some form of weed control, albeit these will be targeted treatments and where weeds exist, not preventative treatments across the whole area.

How has the reduction been achieved?

The following measures have been implemented to achieve the 50-55% reduction in use since 2017:

- restricting use to a minimum - reduction in treatments carried out annually (most areas only treated once per year) and targeted treatments only
- selective herbicides are now only used on maintaining quality of selected sports facilities (golf course, mini-golf, bowling greens and cricket)
- increased use of woodchip derived from council tree works as a weed suppressant
- overplanting / gapping up in beds to reduce areas for weed growth to establish
- reduced mowing regimes to create or increase environmental areas in parks and around tree bases
- manual weed removal where small areas are being treated

What is the target reduction by 2025?

If operating within current staffing and financial resources, the Parks Team expect to achieve a further 20% reduction in the use of glyphosate by 2025.

Glyphosate product is typically supplied with concentration rates of 360g/l and 490g/l. The team will trial more diluted application rates where the product is still used, towards achieving the projected reduction and establish whether a greater reduction is feasible.

What are the exceptions?

The council has a responsibility to control the spread of any Japanese Knotweed identified on its land and the Parks Team currently use an external specialist to treat identified sites using glyphosate.

A selective herbicide is required to maintain the tees, fairways and greens at Great Salterns golf course, greens at Southsea mini-golf, the bowling greens at Milton Park and cricket tables at Langstone, Rugby Camp, Drayton and Farlington. A fungicide is required to maintain the fine turf on golf greens and bowling greens in order to maintain a surface to the required standard.

Trials of alternative methods of weed removal

The Parks Team undertook a trial of some alternative methods of weed control between March and August this year within Kingston Cemetery and the draft report is appended.

The trial evaluated the hot foam thermal treatment, glyphosate, pelargonic acid, acetic acid, wire weed brush and hand weeding, recording observations of the resource required (staff and equipment), time taken for treatment and any issues associated to the method. The results of the effectiveness of the treatment are photographically recorded.

The trial unsurprisingly concludes that glyphosate remains the most economic and effective form of weed control. However, it has confirmed the teams understanding of the practicality and effectiveness of the alternatives and this is summarised within the report conclusions.

What more can be done and by when?

The purpose of the trial was to give the team a greater understanding of the preferred approach for weed management if to stop, or significantly reduce, the use of glyphosate beyond that already being achieved.

If additional financial resource were made available to support this transition, the team's recommended approach is the addition of dedicated operatives and vehicles adopting an integrated approach, using a combination of manual tools, wire brush / sweeper and trimmers as the alternative treatment to applying herbicide. If this approach were adopted, it is suggested the following be monitored in the subsequent 12 - 24 month period:

- the weed management method employed per site / area treated
- record any site where herbicide is still required and the reasons why (inc. invasive species)
- public / school feedback from a change to this approach and the standards attained
- record of condition of a selection of public spaces

Since the trial has established none of the alternative treatments are as effective as applying herbicide (glyphosate), requiring more treatments per year if to be maintained to the same standard, it is almost inevitable there will be some visual impact and public response to a change in approach.

There are two levels of resource that, with best-estimate at this time, are predicted to deliver two-levels of service and the perceived change in standard of maintenance:

2-operative team, van hire and tools - £72,124¹

Anticipated outcome: minimum 1 visit to each site for weed management per annum
re-growth will not be treated
substantial reduction in the effectiveness of weed management
visible reduction in standards / evidence of weeds in public areas

4-operative team, van hire and tools - £144,248¹

Anticipated outcome: 1-2 visits to each site for weed management per annum
repeat treatments prioritised to selected sites
reduction in the effectiveness of weed management
some reduction in standards / evidence of weeds in some areas

¹ Figures based on labour being Band 3, spinal point 4 operatives, current van hire rates, the uniform, tools and machinery required and based on each operative covering an area of approx. 50m² per hour. All subject to the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff. Staff deployment based on current site task schedule and at discretion of grounds maintenance supervisor.

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Testing and Evaluation of Weed Control Methods
in Portsmouth City Council Parks, Gardens
and Cemeteries

March 2023 to August 2023

Draft version: 25 August 2023

Introduction

Weeds are opportunistic plants that take advantage of disturbed environments, favourable conditions, and lack of competition to grow and reproduce rapidly. Effective weed management involves understanding these factors and implementing strategies to prevent or control their growth.

Unchecked weed growth damages infrastructure, leading to costly repairs. Uneven surfaces caused by weeds pose trip hazards, endangering visitors.

This report evaluates diverse weed control strategies versus current practices, assesses their environmental implications. Proactive weed management is essential for safeguarding the appeal, safety, and vitality of communal spaces.



Photo showing weed growth in paving blocks at a base of the statue.

1) Evaluation of Hot Foam Thermal Treatment as a weed control

How Hot Foam kills weeds

Water is heated to near boiling point and then mixed with the foam agent concentrate to produce foam before being applied. The foam blanket ensures that the heat is held on the plant so that the weeds experience hot, killing temperatures for a few seconds. The lance can apply large volumes of water and foam and can be used to kill larger weeds. Foam cover, and hence heat retention on weeds, is easier to achieve plants that are near the ground. Tall plants are trodden down either by foot or by using the lance outlet, to aid foam cover and heat retention. Immediately after treatment, weeds will go dark green and limp. This indicates that the machine is operating properly. The weeds will die, this becomes more obvious within the next one to seven days (depending on species and weather). If weeds fail to go limp, temperatures may be too low or treatment speed too high.

Kingston cemetery was selected to trial the Hot Foam thermal treatment and the following areas identified:

Grave tops - all grass and weeds treated to reduce strimming.

Gravel Path - whole path treated to kerb edges to remove weeds and grass.

Tarmac moss path - whole path treated for moss and algae.

Headstone bases - edges around headstone bases to reduce strimming and damage to grave memorials.

Two Grounds Operatives are required to operate safely.

Machinery loading time: 45 mins

Due to the weight of the Hot Foam machine and 780 litre water tank - a forklift was required to lift the machine onto the transport vehicle. The machine and tank were secured to the vehicle. Petrol and diesel were collected for the machine, and the foam agent loaded and secured.

Machine setup:

Filling water tank from Cemetery tap - 57 mins.

Machinery pre-start checks inc. top ups - petrol, diesel, oils -15 mins.

Machinery bleeding - removal of air from the system - 4 mins.

Notes - Water flow from the tap was slow, wait times could be reduced by the connection to main fire hydrants, there would be a cost implication to do so. Driving to another water location was not deemed feasible due to the time to travel there and back. Pre-start checks were undertaken during the filling of the water; however, this task was only undertaken by one operative.

Total setup time 1hr 46 mins

Grave top treatment: Grounds Operatives required - x 2

Machine warm up - Setting machine temperature before treatment - 2.5 mins, which results in a large amount of residual foam.

Treatment - 4 grave rows were treated, due to the length of the lance hose several vehicle movements were required with warmup and cool down times included.

Machine Cool down - 40 second cool down is required prior to moving locations or switching off the machine, resulting in large amounts of foam.

Total treatment time 29m 27s



Grave top treatment showing hose hooked over graves.

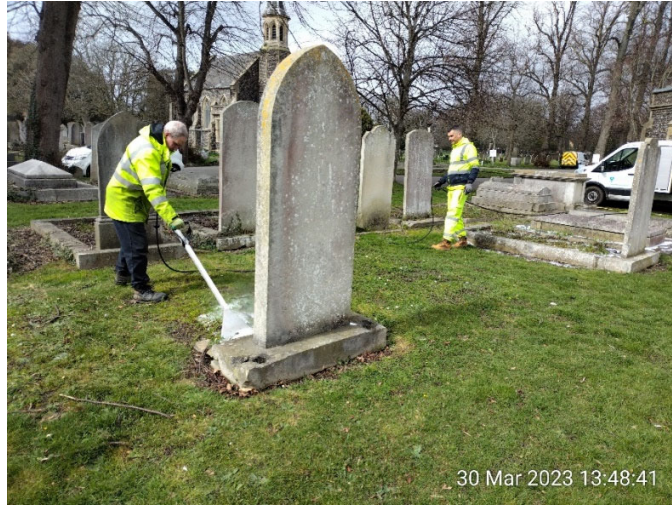


Invertebrates harmed during treatment.

Notes - Two operatives are required, one to assist with hose movement around obstacles. Operators noticed hand strain from holding the trigger in one position. Worms were noted coming to the surface after treatment. Investigation concluded that all invertebrates, micro-organisms which come into contact with the treatment are harmed due to the high treatment temperatures. Scorching of grass from hot hose was also noted.



Hose scorch marks on turf.



Operative required to move hose during treatment to access around kerb sets.

Gravel Path Treatment:

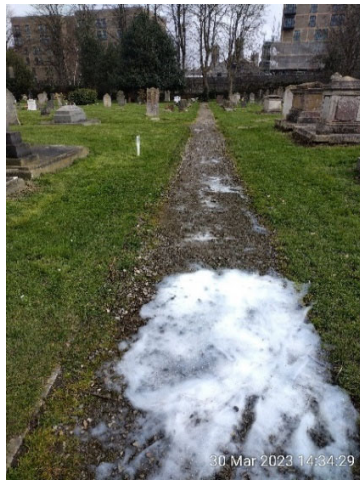
Machine warm up - Setting the machine up to temperature before treatment - 2m 30s, which results in a large amount of residual foam.

Treatment - 1.7m x 20m Type 1 subbase path was treated (34 m²)

Machine Cool down - 50 second cool down is required prior to moving locations or switching off the machine, resulting in large amounts of foam.

Water used 100L

Total treatment time 8m 30s



Operative showing trip hazard of hose and residual foam 10 mins after operation.

Notes - Operators observed that hose gets very hot after sustained use, and when dragged through the foam and puddles, the risk of scalding, from operators handling the hose, is increased as gloves get wet. Operators must hold the hose when it reels back onto the hose reel as there is no brake system on the reel system.

Tarmac moss path

Machine warm up - Setting machine temperature before treatment- 2m 30s, which results in a large amount of residual foam.

Treatment - Whole tarmac path was treated for moss and weeds 6m 40s.

Machine Cool down - 50 second cool down is required prior to moving locations or switching off the machine, resulting in large amounts of foam.



Path treatment avoiding hose getting wet.

Total treatment time 10m 20s



Figure 1 Foam remaining 2 hours after cooling down.

Headstone bases

Machine warm up - Setting machine temperature before treatment - 2m 30s, which results in a large amount of residual foam.

Treatment - A section of headstones bases in an open lawn area were treated. An extension hose was added to increase treatment distance. Two operatives were required to move hose around and over headstones. It was noted that the hose could not be held for long periods as it gets very hot. Thicker insulated gloves are required for operatives. Extension hose was awkward to use and required disconnection from main unit when van was required to move. Extra care was taken not to remove pipes while the pipes were hot.

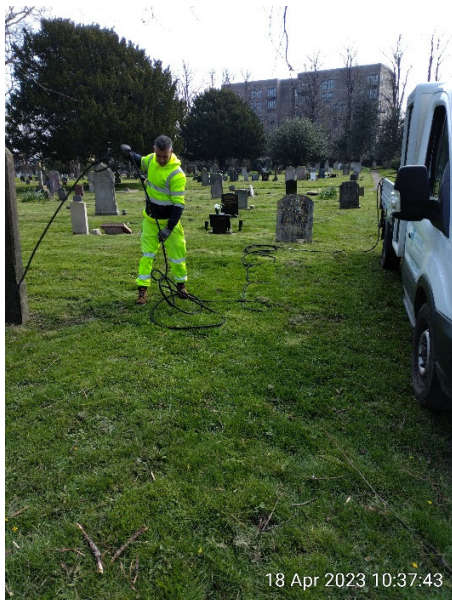
50m 15s



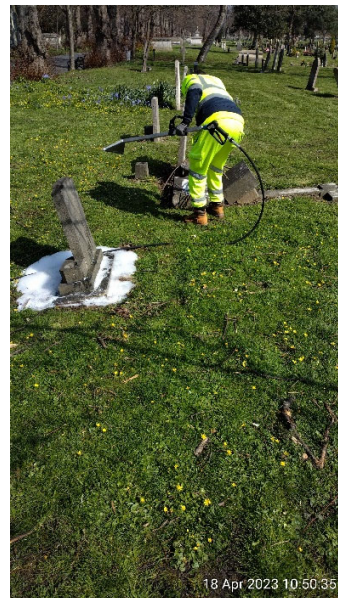
Treatment around headstone bases to reduce strimming.

Machine Cool down - 50 second cool down is required prior to moving locations or switching off the machine, resulting in large amounts of foam.

Total treatment time 53m 55s



Operative untangling hoses.



Operative moving twigs to gain access to weeds below.

Treatment day observation notes:

Benefits Noted:

Hot Foam has a few alternative lance attachments, which enable hot water pressure washing and hot foam brush cleaning.

Can be used in most weathers.

It kills moss on hard surfaces / play area surfacing.

Operator certification (spraying qualification) is not required, however full protective clothing, and specialist training is required.

Foam agent is a blend of biodegradable natural plant oils and sugars, so it is safe to use around people, animals, and waterways.

Initial effects of treatment on ivy are positive.

Issues Noted

The Hot Foam has 1hr 10 Minutes on trigger time and takes 57min to refill water tank.

Would need fire hydrant license to refill or alternate locations to source water.

Two operatives are required to operate Hot Foam.

Operation is slow moving and noisy.

Petrol engine & diesel boiler. Diesel smoke from the boiler is clearly visible.

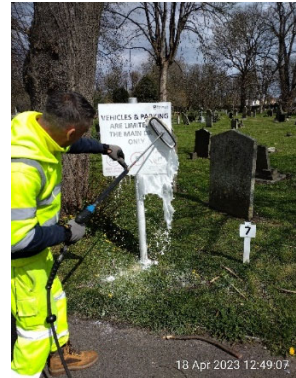
Needs to be mounted on a flatbed truck/ utility vehicle.

A number of machines, vehicles, and dedicated operators will be required to maintain current standards of weed control level.

Hose trip hazard – potential need to close working area. Hoses easily get tangled, and operatives spend a lot of time setting up to enable works to take place. The automatic reel drum winds back very fast, and operatives must hold the hose to stop it whipping about, this is hazardous as the hose can be hot. The reel only holds 20m and the extension hose needs winding up by hand. 60m reels are available as an option.

Exposed metal fittings below lance gets very hot and scalding can occur.

Two water tank fills were required during the trial day - 1h 55 mins.



Operative cleaning with brush attachment.



Pressure hotwash test on paving slabs.



Diesel Particulates from boiler.



Hose cooling prior to packing away.



Exposed metal fittings.



Effects of Hot Foam treatment on ivy.

2) Evaluation of Glyphosate as a weed control method

How Glyphosate works

Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide and has been a commercial success since its introduction in 1970. Glyphosate is a translocated, systemic weed killer which on contact moves throughout the plant, killing roots and shoots. After application, the herbicide can take a few weeks to take effect. Weeds will eventually 'die-back'. It is effective on perennial weeds and is one of the few products left available to successfully control invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed due to its approval for use on or near water.

Weather conditions are an important factor in the use of glyphosate. As with many herbicides, any amount of rainfall soon after applications the potential to reduce absorption, translocation, and subsequent weed control. If glyphosate is applied and it rains before it is rain fast, performance will be reduced. It can therefore be very difficult to stay on top of weed control when scheduled spraying times coincide with periods of wet weather. Glyphosate usually performs well under a wide range of temperatures. Best performance usually occurs when the temperature is 15-25°C at application and remains there for a few hours afterward. This is the reason that spraying generally takes place in spring and summer. When the temperature is lower than 15°C, weed growth slows, resulting in slower herbicide uptake and translocation. This increases the required rain fast period and slows the onset of symptoms and herbicide efficacy. If the temperature is below 5°C, glyphosate application should be avoided. Wind speed is also a factor in the success of using glyphosate. Due to dangers of drift, it is not advisable to spray during periods of wind.

Areas selected for trial:

Grave tops - all grass and weeds treated to reduce strimming.

Gravel path - whole path treated to kerb edges to remove weeds and grass.

Tarmac moss path - whole path treated for moss and algae.

Headstone bases - edges around headstone bases to reduce strimming and damage to grave memorials.

Grounds Operatives required - x 1.

Equipment loading time: 10 mins.

Operative collects chemicals and equipment from a secure store, which is loaded by hand into a secure store in the vehicle. PPE is selected and loaded for the task.

Spraying setup:

Knapsack sprayer was calibrated, and nozzle selected and was matched with the product label.

Application area (m²) was estimated, and a mixture was prepared for the whole trial. 30 mins

Grave Tops:

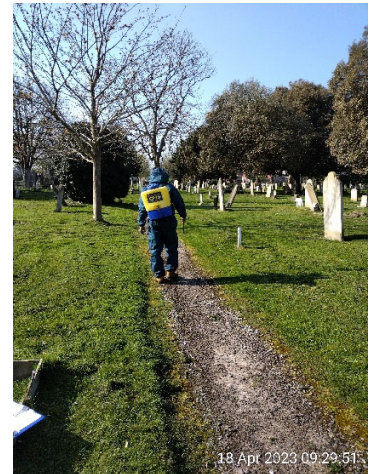
Treatment: 4 grave rows were sprayed
Treatment time 10m 04s



Operative spraying grave tops.

Gravel Path Treatment:

Treatment: A 1.7m x 20m Type 1 subbase path was sprayed (34 m2)
Treatment time 1m 2s



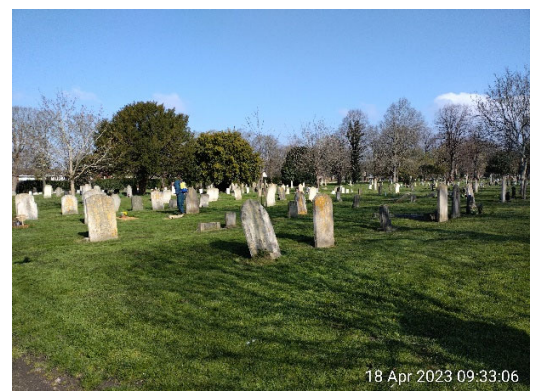
Operative spraying 20m pathway.

Headstone bases:

Treatment: A section of headstones bases in an open lawn area were sprayed.
Treatment time 13 mins



Operative accurately spraying around headstones.



Operative free to move around all headstones.

Treatment day observation notes:

Only qualified operatives are allowed to apply chemicals. Operatives were free to move around the site.

The spraying process involved the operative carefully walking along the grave rows, systematically applying the glyphosate spray to the base and immediate vicinity of each headstone base and along pathways in the selected locations. The operative demonstrated caution and precision to avoid overspray or direct contact with the headstones themselves.

The operative displayed a commendable commitment to safety throughout the observation. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) was in line with industry standards, ensuring minimal exposure to glyphosate and potential harm. The operative consistently maintained a safe distance from the headstones and exercised care to prevent accidental contact with the sprayed areas.

Signage was strategically placed at entrances and along pathways, warning individuals about the application of herbicides and advising them to avoid the treated areas temporarily.

3) Evaluation of Pelargonic Acid as a weed control method

How pelargonic acid works

Pelargonic acid is present in many plants. It is used as an herbicide to prevent growth of weeds both indoors and outdoors, and as a blossom thinner for apple and pear trees. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved this substance for use in food. No risks to humans or the environment are expected when pesticide products containing pelargonic acid are used according to the label directions.

Pelargonic acid is a chemical substance that is found in almost all species of animals and plants. Because it contains nine carbon atoms, it is also called nonanoic acid. It is found at low levels in many of the common foods we eat. It is readily broken down in the environment.

Pelargonic acid causes extremely rapid and non-selective burn-down of green tissues of the treated plants and flowering weeds.

Areas selected for trial:

Grave top - all grass and weeds treated to reduce strimming.
Gravel path - left hand side treated to kerb edges to remove weeds and grass.

Grounds Operatives required - x 1.

Equipment loading time: 10 mins.

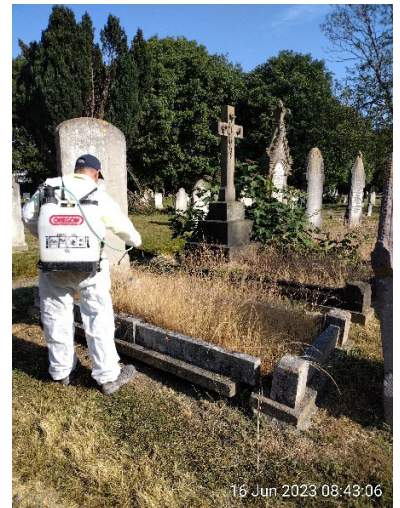
Operative collects chemicals and equipment from a secure store, which is loaded by hand into a secure store in the vehicle. PPE is selected and loaded for the task.

Spraying setup:

Knapsack sprayer was calibrated, and nozzle selected and was matched with the product label. Application area (m²) was estimated, and a mixture was prepared for the whole trial. 30 mins

Grave Tops:

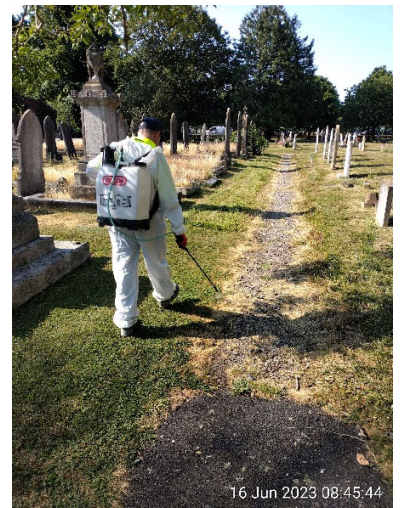
Treatment: 1 grave row was sprayed
Treatment time 10min 31s



Grounds Operative spraying grave tops with Pelargonic acid.

Gravel Path Treatment:

Treatment: A 850mm x 20m Type 1 subbase path was sprayed (17m²)
Treatment time 35s



Grounds Operative spraying Pelargonic acid on path edges.

Treatment day observation notes:

Only qualified operatives are allowed to apply chemicals. Operatives were free to move around the site.

The spraying process involved the operative carefully walking along the grave rows, systematically applying the Pelargonic acid spray to the grave tops and along the left-hand side of the pathway in the selected location. The operative demonstrated caution and precision to avoid overspray or direct contact with the headstones themselves.

The operative displayed a commendable commitment to safety throughout the observation. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) was in line with industry standards, ensuring minimal exposure to the Pelargonic acid and potential harm. The operative consistently maintained a safe distance from the headstones and exercised care to prevent accidental contact with the sprayed areas.

Signage was strategically placed at entrances and along pathways, warning individuals about the application of herbicides and advising them to avoid the treated areas temporarily. A distinct odour was detected after spraying and lingered until the spray had dried on the plant.

4) Evaluation of Acetic acid as a weed control method

How Acetic acid works

A fast-acting, non-selective herbicide which is active against most soft tissue it comes into contact with. The product controls grasses, broad-leaved weeds, and mosses. It produces discolouration and browning of the foliage within a few hours of treatment. Perennial weeds generally require more than one application, but annual weeds are normally controlled with one treatment. It is a weedkiller for all weeds and moss suitable for hard surfaces, natural surfaces without vegetation and permeable surfaces overlying soil derived from natural ingredients it offers an alternative to glyphosate.

Areas selected for trial:

Grave top - all grass and weeds treated to reduce strimming.

Gravel path - right hand side treated to kerb edges to remove weeds and grass.

Grounds Operatives required - x 1.

Equipment loading time: 10 mins.

Operative collects chemicals and equipment from a secure store, which is loaded by hand into a secure store in the vehicle. PPE is selected and loaded for the task.

Spraying setup:

Knapsack sprayer was calibrated, and nozzle selected and was matched with the product label. Application area (m²) was estimated, and a mixture was prepared for the whole trial. 30 mins

Grave Tops:

Treatment: 1 grave row was sprayed

Treatment time 10 min 05s

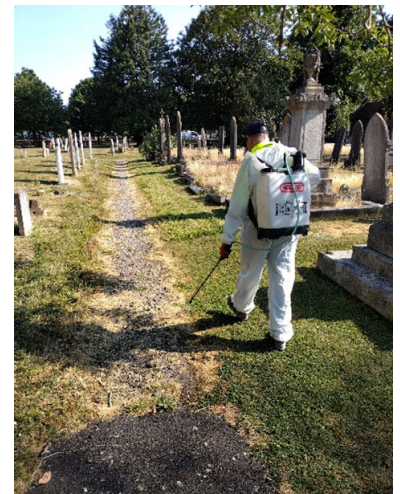


Grounds Operative spraying grave tops with Acetic acid.

Gravel Path Treatment:

Treatment: A 850mm x 20m Type 1 subbase path was sprayed 17m²)

Treatment time 40s



Grounds Operative spraying Acetic acid on path edges.

Treatment day observation notes:

Only qualified operatives are allowed to apply chemicals. Operatives were free to move around the site.

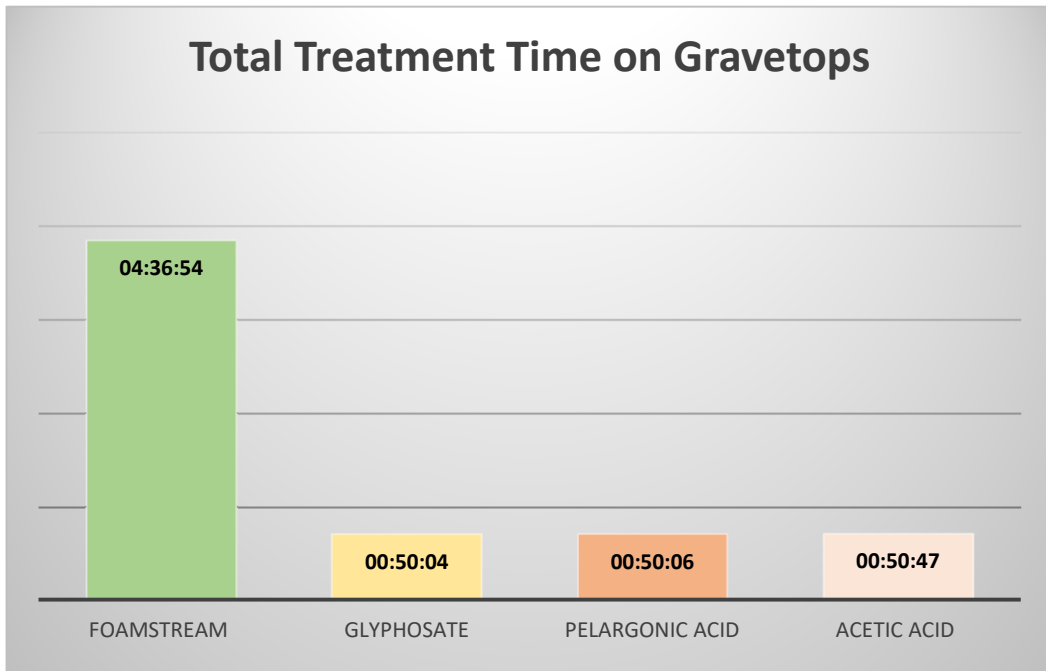
The spraying process involved the operative carefully walking along the grave rows, systematically applying the Acetic acid spray to the grave tops and along the right-hand side of the pathway in the selected location.

The operative displayed a commendable commitment to safety throughout the observation. The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) was in line with industry standards, ensuring minimal exposure to the acetic acid and potential harm. The operative consistently maintained a safe distance from the headstones and exercised care to prevent accidental contact with the sprayed areas.

Signage was strategically placed at entrances and along pathways, warning individuals about the application of herbicides and advising them to avoid the treated areas temporarily. A distinct "strong vinegar" odour was detected after spraying and lingered until the spray had dried on the plant.

Time trial comparison of the evaluated treatments

The grave top trial area was selected to give a like for like timed trial for the selected alternative treatments versus the current methods. The table below shows a timed comparison for each of the methods. There was a 450% increase time required to treat the same area using the Hot Foam compared to conventional knapsack spraying.



5) Evaluation of Wire Weed Brush

How the Wire weed brush works

The Wire Weed Brush is a versatile and widely used tool in alternative weed management. Designed to mechanise the process of weed removal, this equipment employs rotating wire brush attachment to dislodge and uproot unwanted vegetation. The kerb edges around the fountain were selected for the trial of the weed brush and hand weeding. The purpose of this observation was to assess the effectiveness of using a Wire Weed Brush for the removal of kerb weeds. The focus was on evaluating the equipment's performance, the efficiency of weed removal, and any limitations encountered during the process.

Fountain Kerb path

Machine set up -	Loading machinery, pre-start checks, and setup of brushes 30 mins.
Treatment -	Whole tarmac and kerb edges was swept for weeds 16m 20s.
Sweep and tidy -	Kersten sweeper was used to collect debris created from the weeding process. 4m 20s
Total treatment time	50m 40s



Operative using Wire weed brush.



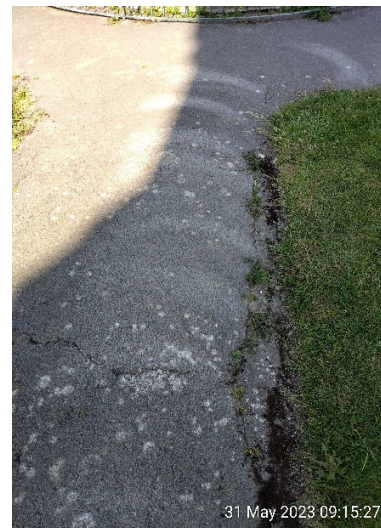
Operative using Kersten debris sweeper.

Description of the Activity:

During the trial, the operative used the Wire Weed Brush to remove kerb weeds along the fountain kerb edges. The Wire Weed Brush is a machine designed to mechanically remove weeds by rotating wire brush attachment, which is meant to dislodge and uproot the unwanted vegetation.

The operative manually directed the machine along the kerb, moving it back and forth to cover the weed-infested areas. The rotating brushes appeared to make contact with the weeds, causing them to be dislodged from the surface. However, upon closer examination, it became apparent that the Weed Brush's effectiveness in completely removing the weeds was limited.

Assessment of Equipment Performance: The performance of the Wire Weed Brush during the trail was found to be insufficient for effective removal of kerb weeds. Despite the rotating brush attachments making contact with the weeds, the machine struggled to uproot them entirely. As a result, many weeds remained partially intact or were merely pushed aside rather than being completely eradicated. The brushes' design and rotation speed seemed inadequate for tackling well-established and deeply rooted kerb weeds. Moreover, the Weed brush's lack of precision made it challenging to target specific weeds without causing damage to tarmac pavement or other surrounding features.



After brushing, showing remaining weeds.

Limitations and Considerations:

Weed Type and Root Depth: The Wire Weed brush may be better suited for shallower rooted or younger weeds. Kerb weeds, often mature and deeply rooted which proved to be challenging for the brush to handle effectively.

Precision and Targeting: The lack of precise control over the brushes' movement made it difficult to selectively target individual weeds, resulting in potential damage to nearby pavement or other desired vegetation.

Efficiency and Time: Due to the equipment's limited effectiveness, the Weed brush required multiple passes over the same areas to achieve partial weed



Grasses remaining after brushing.

removal. This resulted in increased time and effort expended by the operator, reducing overall efficiency. It was noted that the repetitive pushing and pulling motions required to manoeuvre the Weed brush can put strain on the operator's muscles and joints, particularly in the arms, shoulders, and back. Without proper body mechanics and technique, the operator may be at risk of developing muscle fatigue, discomfort, or even musculoskeletal injuries over time.

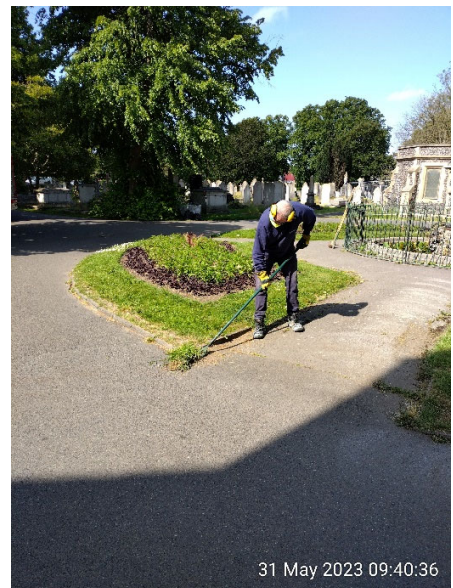
Overall Conclusion: Based on the observation, the use of a Wire Weed brush proved to be ineffective for the complete removal of kerb weeds. The equipment's limitations, including inadequate uprooting capabilities and imprecise targeting, hindered its overall performance.

6) Evaluation of hand weeding as a weed control method

The process of kerb edge hand weeding, carried out manually using specialized tools, is a labour intensive grounds maintenance method.

Fountain Kerbs

Loading tools -	Selecting and loading tools for the workday, namely long handle hoe, half-moon edger, shovel, broom, and wheelbarrow. 10 mins.
Treatment -	Whole tarmac and kerb edges was edged using the half-moon, and then weeds were removed by using the hoe 15m 20s.
Sweep and tidy -	A hand broom was used to sweep up debris created from the weeding process and load into the wheelbarrow. 8m 40s
Total treatment time	34mins



Operative removing weed with hoe.

While manual tools provide a targeted and precise approach to weed removal, it is crucial to recognize the physical strains and challenges placed on the operative. The repetitive nature of this task, combined with the need for bending, kneeling, and exerting force, can lead to physical discomfort and potential strain. Therefore, understanding the demands placed on the operative and implementing proper ergonomic practices becomes essential to ensure their well-being and optimise the efficiency of hand weeding operations.

By substituting the handheld half-moon edger for a petrol edger treatment time was reduced by 16 mins, however, noise and vibration management will be required.

Treatment time was 18m 51s.



Neat edge created by half-moon edging.



Operative sweeping by hand.



Operative using a petrol edger.

Monitoring the weed regrowth from the Hot Foam, Glyphosate, Pelargonic, and Acetic weed control methods

1) Pictorial evaluation photos and descriptions for Hot Foam



Hot Foam Treatment Day



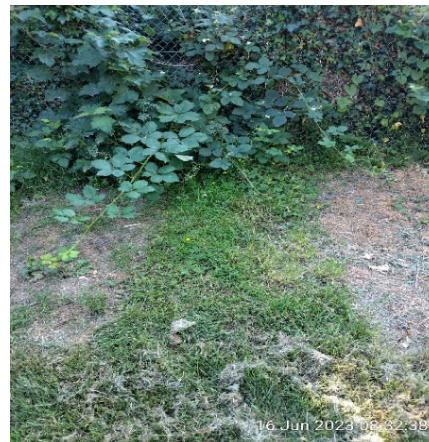
Hot Foam 1 day after treatment



Hot Foam 14 days after treatment



Hot Foam Day 62 (1st treatment) day 27 (second treatment) showing weeds growing back.



Hot Foam Day 78 (1st treatment) (centre) all grown back.



Hot Foam Second treatment



Hot Foam (second treatment) day 12 in foreground, 1st treatment day 48 between foreground and Glyphosate treatment



Day 43 Hot Foam (second treatment) showing weeds growing back.



Hot Foam Day 108 (1st treatment), Day 68 (2nd treatment) showing grass and weeds almost grown back.



Hot Foam Day 141 (1st treatment), Day 106 (2nd treatment) showing grass and weeds grown back.

Hot Foam Evaluation Conclusion

While Hot Foam has been considered as an alternative to traditional herbicides in weed control, there are several significant factors to consider. First, the cost of implementing Hot Foam as a weed management method can be relatively high, requiring initial investment in specialised equipment and ongoing maintenance expenses.

Additionally, the effectiveness of Hot Foam in long-term weed suppression has shown limitations, as weed growth tends to resurface after 4 weeks. This would necessitate frequent and repeated applications, thus adding to the overall expense and time and resource commitment.

The use of diesel-powered equipment to generate the necessary hot foam can contribute to the emissions of harmful nitrogen oxide (NO_x) gases, which have environmental implications. The use of Hot Foam can also introduce noise pollution, especially when large-scale applications are carried out. The noise generated during the process may cause disturbances in residential or sensitive areas, impacting the overall quality of the environment.

There were several safety concerns associated with Hot Foam application, as the high temperatures involved in the application process can pose risks to both operators and members of the public. There are risks of tripping hazards associated with the hoses used for application. The hoses, which are necessary to transport the hot foam mixture, can create obstacles on the ground that operators and members of the public may inadvertently trip over.

2) Pictorial Evaluation photos and descriptions for Glyphosate application



Glyphosate Day 17 showing signs of translocation of herbicide.



Glyphosate Day showing total translocation of herbicide on targeted area.



Glyphosate Day 68 showing some germination of new weeds, ivy, and bindweed growth.

Glyphosate Evaluation Conclusion

The use of glyphosate in the trial area of virgin ground was found to be an effective method for weed control, particularly when considering the benefits of limited labour required and targeted application.

Glyphosate, a non-selective herbicide, is known for its ability to control a wide range of weeds with relatively low labour input. Compared to manual weeding or other methods, glyphosate allows for more efficient and timesaving weed control. This is especially advantageous when dealing with large areas of weedy ground, where manual labour may be impractical or cost prohibitive.

While glyphosate is considered effective and efficient, it is crucial to acknowledge potential environmental concerns. Glyphosate is a chemical herbicide, and its use should be accompanied by responsible application practices to minimize any negative impacts on non-target organisms and water sources. Following proper safety guidelines and avoiding overspray or runoff into sensitive areas can mitigate potential environmental risks.



Glyphosate Day 125 showing further germination of new weeds, ivy, and bindweed growth.

3) Pelargonic Acid and Acetic Acid evaluation photos and descriptions



Day 25 Pelargonic acid showing some effect on grass species.



Day 25 Acetic Acid showing some effect on grass species.



Day 63 Pelargonic Acid - showing need for further treatments.



Day 63 Acetic Acid - showing further treatment required.

Pelargonic and Acetic Acid evaluation conclusion

The utilization of pelargonic acid and acetic acid presents an initial avenue for weed suppression, showcasing notable short-term efficacy. These organic compounds, known for their herbicidal properties, exhibit a capacity to swiftly curtail weed growth and impede their proliferation. Their rapid mode of action and environmentally friendly nature contribute to their appeal as potential tools in the arsenal of weed management strategies.

It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitations that emerge upon closer scrutiny. Despite their immediate impact, both pelargonic acid and acetic acid reveal a deficiency in conferring a sustained, long-term effect on weed suppression.

4) Weed brush and Hand weeding evaluation photos and descriptions



Day 16 Wire weed brush showing weed growth returning.



Day 16 Hand weeding on left and weed brush on right showing weed growth returning.



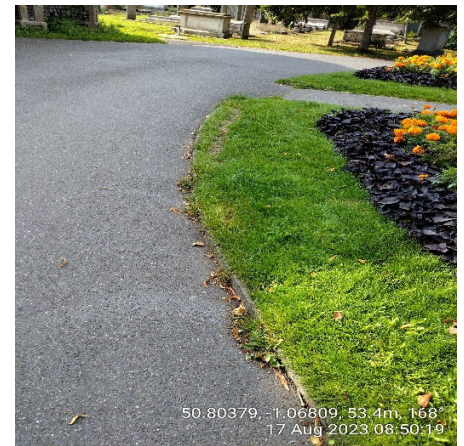
Day 16 Pedestrian edger and hand weeding showing weed growth returning, area still looks tidy after edging.



Wire weed brush showing full weed growth on path edge.



Hand weeding on left and weed brush on right showing weed growth.



Pedestrian edger and hand weeding showing weed growth returning.

Weed brushing and hand weeding evaluation conclusion

Both weed brushing and hand weeding have proven to be ineffective methods for long-term weed control, as the weeds tend to grow back quickly after the initial removal. While weed brushing utilises mechanical means to dislodge weeds, and hand weeding involves targeted manual removal, neither approach addresses the underlying issues that contribute to weed growth, such as root regrowth or seed dispersal.

The inability of these methods to provide lasting weed suppression can result in recurring weed infestations, leading to a continuous and labour-intensive cycle of weed management. Additionally, the repeated application of weed brushing or hand weeding can be time-consuming costly and damage to infrastructure, making them less viable options for large-scale weed control projects.

Trial Conclusion

In evaluating the selected weed control methods, it becomes evident that each approach possesses its own set of advantages and limitations. Foamstream, glyphosate, pelargonic acid, acetic acid, and manual weeding all offer unique mechanisms to address the persistent challenge of weed management.

While Hot Foam is promoted as an eco-friendly weed control method using heat and bio-chemicals, its effectiveness hinges on weather conditions and the necessity for multiple applications. It's worth considering that the use of diesel-powered equipment for hot foam generation can emit harmful nitrogen oxides (NOx) and lead to noise pollution, especially in extensive applications.

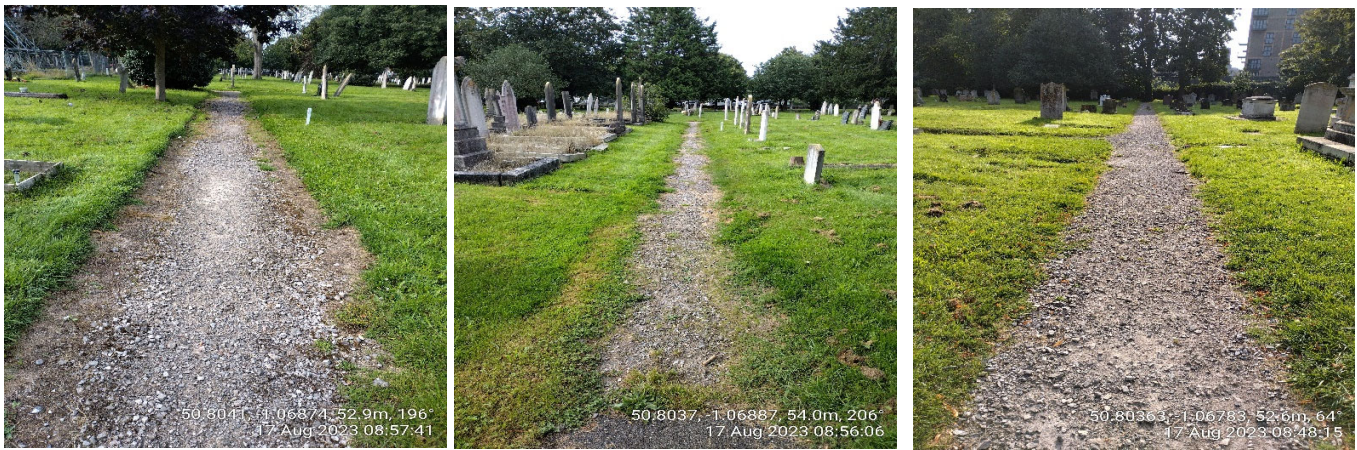
Similarly, the use of pelargonic acid and acetic acid reflects a more sustainable choice, yet their short-term impact prompts questions about long-term efficacy.

In contrast, glyphosate continues to stand out as the most economical method for weed control. Its broad-spectrum nature and reliable outcomes make it a widely adopted choice, despite concerns about environmental impacts. However, the growing emphasis on ecological considerations necessitates exploring alternatives.

Weed control Methods evaluated	How quick was the method	Effectiveness of weed control method	Labour inputs	Cost	Number of treatments per annum
Hot Foam	Slow	Partial	High	High	4
Glyphosate	Quick	Very good	Low	Low	2
Pelargonic Acid	Quick	Partial	Low	Medium	3
Acetic Acid	Quick	Partial	Low	Medium	4
Manual	Slow	Partial	High	High	1 per month
Wire brush	Slow	Partial	High	High	1 per month

Transitioning to alternatives such as Foamstream, pelargonic acid, and acetic acid necessitates a significant investment in machinery, technology, and staffing levels. While these alternatives may align better with sustainable practices, their successful implementation requires a commitment to training, equipment procurement, and operational adjustments.

In light of these considerations, it's evident that the decision to shift from glyphosate to alternative methods requires a delicate balance between environmental stewardship and economic feasibility.



Pathway showing effectiveness of Glyphosate.

Pelargonic and Acetic acid showing grass growing back over the verge.

Hot Foam showing grass growing back over verge.

Photos comparing one Glyphosate application versus Hot Foam, Pelargonic an Acetic acids on path edges.



growing in the community

second edition

ministerial foreword by Communities and Local Government (CLG)

Baroness Kay Andrews OBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Allotments play a unique role in our community and have done so for many years. Indeed, they are so important that they have enjoyed special protection in law for a century. The first Allotments Act, which created a duty on local authorities to provide allotments, was passed in 1908. A century later, although there are fewer allotments for many different reasons, they are no less important to the people and the whole community who get so much pleasure and benefit from them.

In recent years, the government has strengthened the protections around allotments within the wider planning framework, and within a wider policy of enhancing and protecting urban green spaces. So far, fewer plots are now lost annually than a decade ago. That reflects our belief that allotments not only promote good health through exercise, hard work and healthy eating, but they bring the community together across the generations and cultures, to share advice, experience, and a passion for gardening and growing good things.

Everyone benefits from allotments and we are conscious that there is rising demand, as well as many different pressures on space in our communities.

That is why we are committed to working ever more closely with allotment organisations and local authorities to support allotments, and to make sure that everyone understands what they must do to maintain and enhance them, ensuring that they will be there for future generations to enjoy.

I very much welcome the revision of this very comprehensive and inspiring good practice guide, which will help allotment officers and allotment holders alike to get the best out of their allotments.

foreword by the Local Government Association (LGA)

Cllr Paul Bettison, chairman, LGA environment board

Allotments have a vital role in connecting people to the process of food production, enabling them to grow fresh, cheap food, whilst reducing food miles. They help to improve the environment, support new plant development and preserve rare and unique varieties. At the same time they provide opportunities to be active, meet other people, and share knowledge, information and food.

The many benefits of allotments are now widely recognised and this revised guide coincides with a resurgence of interest in and enthusiasm and policy support for allotment provision at a local and central government level.

There are challenges facing allotment officers and societies, which are explored in this guide. However, public and political recognition, support and recent innovative practice all point to a more positive situation for allotments.

The LGA recognises the good work done by officers and societies and is very pleased to commend this guide as a valuable resource and inspiration for all those involved with allotments.

acknowledgements

This project was funded by the LGA, and project-managed by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens.

The authors wish to thank the voluntary mentors of the Allotments Regeneration Initiative and the many local government and allotment association officers who so kindly shared the experiences and examples of good practice which have been included in this guide. We are also grateful for the additional input from central and local government advisors.



executive summary

- 1 The second edition of this guide was commissioned by the LGA in September 2006, and substantially updates the original which was published in June 2001. The preparation of the guide has been managed by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens.
- 2 The objective of the guide is to assist those who are responsible for managing allotments, either within local authorities or under schemes for devolved management, to work efficiently and effectively by emulating examples of good practice.
- 3 The guide will also help other stakeholders in allotments, including local authority officers in other departments, support organisations, allotment associations and individual ploholders, to understand the opportunities which allotments present for achieving multiple and inter-related benefits, and the advantages of working together to attain common goals.
- 4 The guide acknowledges the widespread renaissance in allotment gardening that has taken place since the first edition was published, including demands for new sites in some areas and growing waiting lists in others.
- 5 The guide is based upon extensive research into current good practice in the management of allotments in England and Wales. This has drawn in particular on documentary evidence, information from the internet, correspondence with allotment officers in leading-edge authorities and allotment associations, and the shared experience of the Allotment Regeneration Initiative's Mentor Network.
- 6 While the guide makes no claim to document every example of good practice in allotment management in England and Wales, it does uncover a wealth of innovative and successful ideas, which can be widely imitated.
- 7 The guide is organised in three parts: the plot, the tools, and the seeds, dealing with objectives, strategies, and practical methods respectively. Each part is illustrated with examples and case studies of good practice.
- 8 The 'plot' sets out the exciting opportunities and challenges that allotments now provide to councils and local communities, and maps out a course for getting the most out of allotments.
- 9 The 'tools' identifies allotments as a key resource in achieving a wide range of local authority agendas, including wellbeing, health promotion, cohesive communities and quality green space. It also identifies some of the key partners with whom allotment managers should be working, for mutual benefit.
- 10 A model is presented for an allotments strategy that links in with other areas of local authority work and offers a fully reasoned and resourced path to achieving good practice. Key elements of the allotments strategy include: promotion; resourcing; devolved management; effective administration; monitoring performance; and the achievement of best value.
- 11 The 'seeds' is a compendium of practical means to achieve good practice in allotments management, including: ideas for promoting allotments to convert latent demand into real users; setting rents and raising capital resources; supporting devolved management; communicating effectively with other stakeholders; provision of facilities; management of tenancies; and measures to cope with hazards and nuisances before they arise.
- 12 The guide concludes with a practical summary of key aspects of allotments law and signposts to further information.

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preface to the second edition

fresh shoots

The first edition of this guide, published in 2001, fulfilled the recommendation of the 1998 Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into The Future for Allotments, that good practice guidance be prepared for the management of allotments. Since 2001 there have been some significant developments in the allotments movement and in world of allotment management, and these have been reflected in the updated guide.

The last few years have seen a real revival in 'growing your own', in line with current thinking on healthy eating, organic food and exercise. This has been reflected in the demand for allotments in many localities, with reports of lower vacancy rates and lengthening waiting lists. The impact is most obvious in London and the south east, where pressure on gardening space is greatest. The growth in public interest in allotments has been picked up by the media, highlighting the many positive messages about the value of allotments to local communities.

The allotments revival is not confined to London or the south east, but can be observed in cities, towns and villages around the UK. Public pressure is leading to the creation of new sites in areas of under-provision, a turn of events that commands a new section in this guide. It is also reflected in the sale of vegetable seeds – up 31 per cent over the past five years, according to the Horticultural Trades Association (Amateur Gardening, 5 May 2007), and in the fast expanding bookshelf on everything to do with allotments. Over 30 titles have been published on allotments since 2001 (with more on the way), more than had been produced over the preceding five decades and consuming some 5,400 pages between them. Allotments have their own glossy commercial magazine Kitchen Garden, and now a film has been produced on allotments based in Liverpool called, inevitably, Grow Your Own.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) is responsible for national policy on allotments, and recognises the unique role of allotments as places which bring all sections of the community together and provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce and promote health and wellbeing. The government's aim is to ensure that allotments are well managed, and are only disposed of where there is no demand for them and established criteria are met.

The central message of Growing in the community, that allotment managers should take a strategic approach to the management of their allotments through formal allotment strategies, has been taken up by many local authorities. In 2001 there were only a few examples of leading-edge local authorities. By the time of the CLG's Survey of Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms in 2006, some 30 per cent of local authorities had an

allotments strategy or policy in place. Many of these have drawn heavily both on the guide and earlier good practice exemplars, but also introducing innovative ideas of their own. Further progress in the development of allotment strategies is being driven by planning policy guidance that requires a strategic approach to all types of public green space. It is to be hoped that the revisions incorporated into the second edition of this guide will help speed this process along.

Allotments have acquired a new champion, the Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI), formed in 2002 as a partnership between the voluntary and community sector, government and a leading charitable foundation. ARI is dedicated to promoting good practice in allotment management (as captured in the first edition of this guide), and embedding it on the ground amongst allotment associations and local authority allotment officers. ARI has attracted over £1m in grants to support good practice, most of it through the generosity of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. ARI has proactively promoted a positive view of allotments, and its network of ARI mentors have provided many of the examples described in this guide. Its detailed factsheets expand further on many of the key issues in allotment management, and we welcome ARI's network co-ordinator as co-author of this second edition of the guide.

There is an increasing amount of wider institutional support for allotments. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, the representative body for ploholders and associations, has created a charity, the National Allotment Gardens Trust, dedicated to the promotion of the benefits of allotment gardening. Other charitable bodies with a stake in gardening issues have published advice that is cited extensively in this edition, and Natural England is also keen to advance the cause of allotments, both for their benefits to people's health and wellbeing and for the very diverse wildlife they can support.

We welcome these developments, and hope that this second edition of the guide will help to underpin continuing progress towards a better future for allotments – and for the communities that derive so much benefit and enjoyment from them.

part 1 the plot: creating a new future for allotments

This guide has been written to help allotment managers achieve better things for and through allotment gardens. The primary audience is the local authority allotments officer, but sometimes this function is devolved to volunteers in allotments associations. This guide is for all of you. We place the allotments manager at centre stage: ambitions for the service; colleagues and customers to get along with; constraints on time and finances to overcome; and important duties to perform on a day-to-day basis.

We advocate ambition, without which good practice cannot be achieved, an ambition that encompasses allotment sites which are fully tenanted, well appointed and well managed, open to all, valued in many ways by the local authority and the communities it serves, and with a secure future.

For some the achievement of this ambition will be a challenge, but the examples in this guide show that it can be done, even from the least promising of starts. For others, good practice is an established fact, with ambition tempered by lack of space to accommodate new gardeners. This guide aims to share the lessons of success, and to build on success to ensure that it is sustained in an ever-changing environment.

As an allotments manager you work with many colleagues, including planners, finance officers, environment inspectors, social workers, leisure managers, and many more. This guide will also help them to understand the allotments service better and promote partnership working.

Allotment gardens provide multiple benefits, both to gardeners and to the wider community. But promoting these benefits isn't just your job: others wish to see healthy, active and cohesive communities and quality service delivery. Your colleagues are an important resource at your disposal, and you can work with them to help achieve their agendas, as well as your own, more effectively.

Your customers are the public, ploholders – present and future, and they all deserve a quality service. For current ploholders this means efficient day-to-day management, including a rapid and effective response to inquiries and competent management of files and accounts. Get these things right, and the ploholders will look after the land as they have always done. But the ploholders are a resource too: their handiwork is the best advertisement there could be for allotment gardening. Working in partnership with their representatives and associations (perhaps sharing responsibilities through devolved management) can help

you to deliver the wider benefits of allotments. Existing ploholders have an important stake in the future for allotments, and this guide has been written with their interests in mind, to demonstrate the benefits on offer to them through constructive engagement with other stakeholders.

A secure future also depends on the cultivation of an interest in allotment gardening beyond the current generation of ploholders: this guide looks for innovative ways to promote allotments to all sections of every community. Allotments face an uncertain future if there is no demand for them, but demand will remain latent and unrealised without effective promotion.

Allotments face a very challenging funding situation. Rents are often too low to cover even administrative costs, but raising them substantially can provoke resistance and undermine the aim of working together with ploholders towards a common goal. Capital for repairs and improvements is always scarce, and sources of funding limited. This guide faces up to the problem of resources by addressing the issue of a sustainable financial base for an allotment service. It identifies arguments for a higher priority in the allocation of capital resources (particularly through joint working to achieve multiple benefits), and points to sources of external funding which innovative authorities and associations have tapped into. It advocates a greater role for devolved management, as a route to cost reduction and the achievement of 'best value' in service delivery.

In the next section of the guide, we focus on a central pillar of good practice, the 'allotments strategy', which explains to others what you want to achieve for the allotments you manage and how you plan to secure the resources to make this possible. But we first place your work in its broader context, and explain some of the other agendas with which you need to engage, often presented as strategy documents by colleagues in other departments, and through which you can more easily achieve your own goals. We then explore in detail the components of a good allotments strategy by showing you where you need to go for guidance. These include a variety of organisations dedicated to supporting allotments (such as the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners and the Allotments Regeneration Initiative) or promoting the benefits which allotments can help to achieve (eg Thrive, Garden Organic and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens).

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We have liberally illustrated the guide with examples drawn from the many leading-edge local authorities, successful allotment associations and proud allotment holders, without whose assistance the preparation and revision of this guide would not have been possible. It is a pleasure to share their knowledge and experiences with you, for the common purpose of securing a new future for allotments.

What is good practice?

- A clear commitment to a high-quality allotment service.
- A vision encompassing the provision of allotment sites with good facilities and plots in sufficient numbers to satisfy all newcomers.
- Effective and inclusive policies to promote the use of allotment gardens to the whole community.
- A financial strategy to enable the achievement of other aspects of good practice.
- Commitment to working with other stakeholders in the allotment service to achieve wider objectives for the community.
- A spirit of innovation.
- Efficient procedures for managing the allotment service on a day-to-day basis.

What is an allotment?

The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term 'allotment garden' as:

"an allotment not exceeding forty poles¹ in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family".

This description remains important because it defines the permitted use of an allotment plot. Provided it is used mainly for growing vegetables or fruit part of the plot can be used for growing flowers, as a leisure area or for keeping small livestock, and surplus produce can be shared with others.

Section 8 of the Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so-called statutory allotment sites, by the requirement for consent of the secretary of state in the event of sale or disposal. However, land which was originally acquired for other purposes and which has been used for allotments in the interim (temporary allotments) is not protected in this way.

Some temporary sites have been used as allotments for many years and the Future for Allotments inquiry report recommended that land which has been in continuous use as allotments for over 30 years should be designated as 'statutory' if possible. Although the law has not been changed there is no legal obstacle to the voluntary redesignation of temporary allotment sites as statutory.

Private allotment sites have the same legal status as temporary allotments: plots originally provided for employees of the railways are a well-known example.

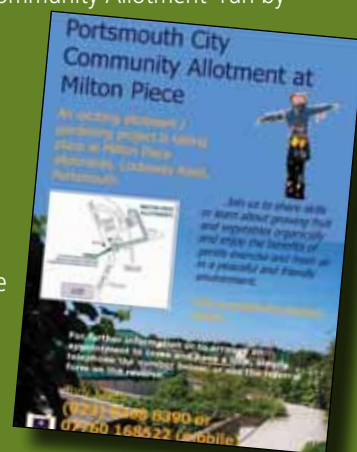
'Leisure gardens' and 'community gardens' are not recognised in allotments law but both make important contributions to urban green space, and some allotment sites function as leisure gardens or community gardens as well. The term 'community allotment' is sometimes applied to conventional allotment sites to broaden their appeal, but also to individual plots that are worked in common. These require administrative arrangements that ensure compliance with allotments law, while offering support (through infrastructure and/or tutoring) to persons who are not (or not yet) in a position to take on a plot of their own, such as people with a wide range of disabilities, people from socially excluded groups, participants in 'green gyms' and novice gardeners.

¹ 40 poles is equivalent to 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres (1 pole = 30.25 square yards; the terms 'rod', 'pole' and 'perch' are interchangeable)

Allotments and community allotments

The 'Portsmouth City Community Allotment' run by the city council's health improvement and development service is an example of a well organised project occupying 4½ plots within a conventional allotment site, and catering to a wide range of client groups who would not otherwise have ready access to gardening on allotments. The project has good wheelchair access, storage facilities and two polytunnels. Participation in the project has enabled some clients to take on allotment garden plots of their own.

(www.hids.org.uk/community/allotment.htm)



part 2 the tools: strategic thinking and exemplars of good practice

2.1 allotments in the bigger picture: working with others to improve the plot

To secure a better future for the allotments, your task as an allotments manager is to think strategically, and plan to reach that goal. We recommend items to include in that strategy in the next section, and develop each in detail in part 3 of this guide. First, however, you should consider how the promotion of allotments interacts with what others are trying to achieve, within the local authority and beyond, and how working in partnership with them could be the best way forward. You are encouraged to see allotments as part of a bigger picture. Realising this wider context is important, because working in partnerships may prove more effective in promoting allotments than working in isolation. In the next few sections we explore how allotments relate to some of today's more significant agendas in local government.

allotments and wellbeing

The Local Government Act (2000) placed a duty on local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas, through the creation of 'community strategies'. These reflect local circumstances and locally-expressed needs and aspirations, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely across the UK. These strategies establish a long-term vision for an area, whilst action plans identify shorter-term priorities and activities that will secure the long-term goals.

Central to community strategies is the principle of forming partnerships and of involving the wider community in the consultation and decision-making processes.

The inclusion of environmental wellbeing and the notion of sustainability provides a natural link with 'Local Agenda 21', and in many areas the non-statutory Local Agenda 21 (LA21) process has effectively been subsumed within the community strategy. The first edition of this guide highlighted the potential of LA21 as a means to encourage partnerships between allotment associations and local authorities to achieve a range of social and environmental gains, based on a number of successful experiences at a very local level. The development of community strategies, however, has involved the formation of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and their delivery arm, Local Area Agreements (LAAs), constituted on a broader scale. These link local authorities with other key organisations in their areas, and prioritise the major concerns expressed through comprehensive local surveys. In this bigger picture, allotments have sometimes been undervalued as strategic assets.

Allotments can and do improve the wellbeing of communities, and close inspection of community strategies reveals many opportunities for the achievement of strategic priorities through allotment gardening, and in ways that engage with communities at a very local level. Allotments provide a source of fresh food, healthy outdoor exercise and social interaction, and can benefit all groups in society. By providing a link to nature, allotment gardening addresses all three aspects of wellbeing – social, economic and environmental.

The local government act does not authorise local authorities to raise revenue specifically for the promotion of wellbeing, so projects that do not involve great cost have an inherent attraction. Much can be achieved through allotment gardening without great expenditure. The wealth and diversity of skills associated with allotments can be harnessed for the wellbeing for the whole community. This is particularly important in areas of neighbourhood renewal and regeneration, where projects centred on the local allotments can promote the revitalisation of social activity and a rekindling of an inclusive community spirit.

food, health and exercise

The significance of food (and dietary choices) for the health of individuals and families has been a growing concern, particularly in the context of increasing child and adult obesity. The Department of Health's Choosing Health (2005) (www.dh.gov.uk/en/Policyandguidance/Organisationpolicy/Modernisation/Choosinghealth/index.htm) has provided the context for co-operation between government and the voluntary sectors in supporting improvements to diet, within which the importance of allotments as a source of healthy local food is recognised. The LGA's Greening communities campaign also recognises the importance of locally-produced fresh food for improving access to a better diet and better health. (www.lga.gov.uk/ProjectHome.asp?lsection=59&ccat=1132).

Support for healthy eating, along with the environmental benefits of locally-produced food, is also an important component of a growing number of food strategies produced through co-operation between the NHS, local government and other interested parties. The mayor of London's London Food Strategy, Healthy and Sustainable Food for London (2006) (www.lga.gov.uk/upload/pdf/LDA_Food_strategy.pdf), is one example which identifies a specific role for local food production on allotments. Other good examples include Brighton and Hove's Spade

to Spoon (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/sustainability/food_strategy/SpadeToSpoon-WEB_FINAL_SEPT06.pdf), which makes a strong cross-reference to other aspects of wellbeing, and the London Borough of Ealing's Food Matters (www.ealing.gov.uk/services/council/strategies_and_policies/food_matters_strategy/).

The Food for Life Partnership (www.foodforlife.org.uk/) led by the Soil Association has attracted £16.9m in lottery funding to promote healthy food in schools, with an explicit role for Garden Organic to develop growing projects with schools in local spaces, including allotments. When combined with the growing interest in organic food and healthy eating amongst consumers, these agendas (and resources) represent an open invitation for allotment managers to work with health authorities and others to incorporate the benefits of allotments into health action planning. The Food Vision portal (www.foodvision.gov.uk), developed in partnership between the Local Government Association, LACORS and the Food Standards Agency, provides a convenient point of entry to policy developments and exemplars of good practice in this field – and includes a specific section on allotments.

Allotment gardening has always been recognised as a productive means for achieving healthy exercise in the open air, and for getting and staying physically fit: allotments have an important role to play in promoting preventative health. The LGAs Greening Communities campaign, for example, recognises allotments and 'green gyms' as a way of encouraging a more active population. Allotments are also achieving growing recognition as a resource for people with disabilities. Infrastructure improvements such as raised beds have proved popular in helping access to allotment gardening for people with physical disabilities, and there is also a significant role for allotments in a range of agendas relating to mental health. The more general therapeutic effects that allotment gardeners have always valued are now embedded in the broader health agenda for treating the most common mental health issue depression. They are specifically recognised, for example in Mind's Ecotherapy: The Green Agenda for Mental Health (2007) (www.mind.org.uk/mindweek/report/). Again, the door is open to the allotment manager to work more closely with local NHS primary care trusts to promote healthy living, and with a range of specialist support and advocacy organisations around the agenda for physical and mental health.

Allotments when wellbeing is hard to find

"The Comfrey Project is an allotment-based scheme to promote mental and physical wellbeing amongst refugees and asylum seekers in the west end and east of Newcastle. The project is also suitable for those with anxiety or mild depression or those feeling isolated, lonely or bored. Experience in horticulture is not required. Referrals can be made through GP's, social and support workers: a referral form can be provided by the Comfrey Project."

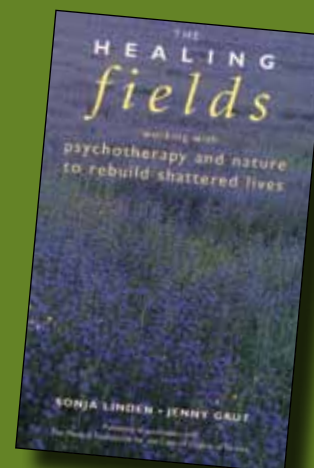


(www.nnt.nhs.uk/ethnic/catagory_detail.asp?EM_ID=8)

The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture's 'Natural Growth Project' brings together "psychotherapists, an organic gardener and clients on 30 allotment plots on two sites in London. The role of the ... allotments is not only to provide a place of peace but to offer a space where the client is able to re-enact his or her trauma and start to lay it to rest. The therapist's role is not to co-ordinate activities but rather to reflect on experiences of the client through the contact with nature."

(www.torturecare.org.uk/about_us/20)

In recent years Britain has seen the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers from war zones all around the world. The value of allotment gardening as a therapy for refugees who have been traumatised by past experiences, and in helping them get back onto a secure footing, is recognised in the mayor of London's draft strategy for refugee integration, London Enriched (2007: www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/immigration/docs/ref-int-strategy.pdf). The role of the allotment officer is one of facilitation, working in partnership with other departments in the local authority to help projects get started and secure funding where possible.



leisure, culture and cohesive communities

Related to, and increasingly integrated with, community strategies are the cultural plans prepared by local authorities on the basis of guidance provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (www.culture.gov.uk). Cultural strategies aim to address the full range of cultural needs and to promote fair access to all. Allotments bring together people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds whose knowledge of gardening can be shared. They are of particular significance to the elderly, who do not otherwise derive much benefit from subsidised sports provision, and value the gentle congeniality of everyday allotment life. The allotment manager should work closely with colleagues in the leisure field, to ensure that the benefits of allotments in promoting community cohesion are recognised and promoted as an integral part of cultural strategies.

Allotment culture can also be celebrated with the public at large, through events such as open days and the activities of artists and photographers in residence. (see box on Slough) Authorities such as Manchester, Bristol and the London Borough of Brent have all chosen to include allotments in their cultural strategies, in recognition of their contribution to community life.

Allotment culture and the arts

Collaboration between the allotments service, individual site associations and the world of the arts has produced some wonderful celebrations of allotment culture in recent years. This trend was started by the Uplands Allotments Association in Handsworth, Birmingham, which hosted an arts and allotments festival in 1998 featuring food, music and poetry from around the world. In 2003 the Seven Kings and Goodmayes Allotment Society in Redbridge sponsored Creation – a celebration by local composer Ewan Parker, which received its world premiere on site at the hands of the Eastbury Concert Band as the highlight of the Society's 75 anniversary open day. And in Slough the arts development team and the parks & allotments team joined forces to produce a colourful album of images from a photographer in residence, Hidden gems: allotments, Slough's growing community (2007), which highlights the benefits of allotments to people from Slough's diverse communities.

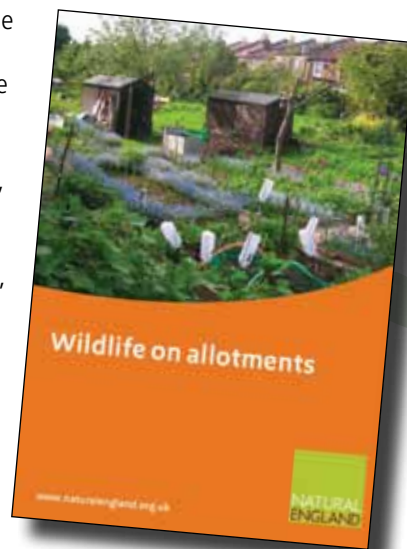
(www.artsinslough.org.uk/default.asp?id=1035&ver=1)



sustaining the environment

The contribution that allotments can make to environmental issues at local to global scales is another important point of linkage to broader policy agendas. In the first edition of this guide the LA21 officer was identified as an important ally of the allotments manager. While the emphasis on non-statutory LA21 strategies has diminished within local government, key areas such as recycling and biodiversity remain of strategic significance, and have been reinforced by the growing international, governmental and popular concern over climate change and its impacts. The opportunities for productive collaboration with council environment departments are therefore as strong as ever.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 imposes a new duty on public authorities to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity. Allotments make a distinctive contribution to local biodiversity, not only where untenanted plots are allowed to revert to nature, but also through being some of the last refuges of spade cultivation in urban areas. They are a natural home for foraging animals and birds, a contribution recognised by Natural England in its recent guidance on Wildlife on Allotments (2007) at www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature_In_The_Garden/. At a higher scale, one of the key factors behind the growing popularity of allotments amongst the young and environmentally conscious is the issue of 'food miles' and the contribution of the world food system to carbon dioxide release and global warming. Growing your own food on an allotment, using wildlife-friendly organic methods and home-made compost, has become a means to take a personal stand on these issues. For example, 'growing your own' on allotments is one of the top ten "easy actions for shopping ethically" in the DEFRA-backed Every Action Counts initiative (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/), while 'getting an allotment' is now listed as one of "ten ways to buy local" in the Soil Association's East Organic Buy Local campaign (www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/Getinvolved/othercampaigns.html).



green space

In planning terms, allotments are a form of open space which, following the recommendations of the Urban Green Space Taskforce and the publication of Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (2002) fill a specific category within the classification of green space, along with city farms

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and community gardens, which should be valued and protected by the planning process. In addition, Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (2006) specifically advises that local authorities should assess the extent to which new housing development provides, or enables access to, community green space, open space and private outdoor areas such as gardens. PPS3 also provides for the retention or re-establishment of the biodiversity within residential environments. The allotments manager and planners should together ensure that allotments are properly recognised as part of their portfolio of open space, alongside parks, playing fields and informal recreation grounds. Ideally, allotments should be covered by specific planning policies: for example, Brighton and Hove City Council (see box) identifies allotments as part of open space provision within its local plan, and there is a specific policy on the protection of allotments.

Urban open space

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals that would result in the loss of areas of public or private open space that are important to people because of their recreational, community, historical, conservation, economic, wildlife, social or amenity value. Enhancements to these areas of open space will be sought and the preservation of character, appearance, layout and features of importance.

The loss of an area of open space important to people will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. For example, where it can be demonstrated that the proposal is of national importance or essential to meet social, environmental and/ or economic needs, which cannot be located elsewhere. Where such exceptional circumstances apply, the planning authority will require alternative appropriate open space provision of a suitable size, type, layout character, appearance and location.

Planning permission for the development of areas of public and private open space that are not considered to be important to people, will only be permitted where the applicant can satisfy the planning authority that:

- there are no alternative open space needs in the area, such as deficiencies in outdoor recreation space, accessible natural greenspace or allotments; or
- the area of open space is not suitable to meet alternative open space needs.

For the purposes of this policy 'open space' does not just relate to parks and gardens: it also includes the beach; areas that provide a valuable feeling of space and/or seating within the urban area; areas of grass important as an informal area of play; recreational areas; allotments; and areas of amenity value that are visible but not necessarily accessible to the public. Indeed they can be large or small, the value of them depends on the individual circumstances and the community.

(from Brighton and Hove Local Plan, 2005, Policy QD20 and Section 3.91)

Vacant or underused allotments may look attractive to planners seeking space for other forms of land use, such as housing, an attraction that may also be shared by the finance department and private developers. This is without doubt the most contentious agenda surrounding allotments, and from the allotment manager's perspective there are a number of pitfalls to avoid, which we will deal with later on under the heading 'disposal of allotments'.

PPG17 requires local authorities to conduct robust local assessments of the need for various forms of open space and to audit current levels of provision against well-defined standards as the basis for new green space strategies which, given the scope of this guidance, have quite naturally subsumed many of the features of leisure strategies as well. Where these processes demonstrate a surplus stock of allotment land they can be problematic for allotment managers and gardeners alike, although the priority afforded to alternative green space uses where these are in deficit, which may actually be complementary to allotment cultivation, is something to be welcomed, since it also preserves the opportunity for allotments to be expanded in times of greater need. Where there are demonstrable shortages of allotments, however, the green space strategy provides the context for those shortages to be addressed.

One other aspect of allotments management is likely to be of interest, both to planners and to leisure services as the department responsible for the management of open spaces. Allotments are inherently cheap to maintain, as much of the maintenance work (the cultivation of plots) is carried out by the plotters themselves. Where there are schemes for devolved management, however, these can also act as models (and proving grounds) for community-based management of other open spaces. This concept is very much in fashion (and explicitly encouraged in government guidance on preparing Green Space Strategies), and is something which the allotments manager may have valuable experience to share. The Community Plan for the London Borough of Bromley (2007-10), for example, specifically mentions "managing allotments" as an example of how communities, clubs and individuals can play an important role in the development of leisure and cultural opportunities within the borough. (www.bromley.gov.uk/council/strategies/long/community_plan_full.htm)

"The intensity of urban living and loss of open spaces strengthens the value of allotment sites as 'being in the country whilst living in a town.' The variety of habitats within an allotment site allows them to develop as vital wildlife habitats, enhancing the biodiversity of an area and adding to 'green corridors'. The fast pace of twenty-first century life leads increasingly to a sense of isolation and loss of community. Allotments allow people to enjoy a sense of being in a strong community, where people get to know each other well, to talk, share ideas and make friends."

(from City of York Allotments Strategy)

the next big thing?

The identification of new issues and revisiting of old ones is an ongoing process that throws up new strategies, initiatives and agendas, some of which impact on allotments in direct or subtle ways. Just as current agendas such as health and wellbeing yield opportunities to work with others to achieve good things through and for allotments so, perhaps, will the next big initiative – for a multifunctional approach to green infrastructure perhaps, or local action on climate change, or support for active retirement. Opportunities like this should not be missed. Be prepared to respond to any approaches from colleagues seeking inputs to their own strategy documents, to ensure that allotments are ‘built in’ to as wide a range of agendas as possible. Be pro-active in seeking opportunities to contribute to the work of others, who may not otherwise have a chance to appreciate the contributions which allotments can make. And keep an eye open for information on new initiatives available from relevant professional bodies and support organisations. Useful sources of information are given in the box below.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure

Gardeners: the NSALG’s quarterly journal regularly features issues of interest to its local authority members — on new initiatives, but also on many other matters that together make this essential reading. (www.nsalg.org.uk)

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative: ARI provides a comprehensive set of fact sheets relating to the key issues in allotments management – from fundraising to risk assessment, and its free newsletter regularly picks up cases where local associations have taken advantage of new initiatives. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari).

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens: FCFCG is a key source of information on how the latest initiatives can achieve community development through gardening projects, including allotments. (www.farmgarden.org.uk).

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: BTCV is one of several organisations engaged in the development and maintenance of green spaces, and its newsletters carry details of relevant initiatives. (www.btcv.org.uk).

Garden Organic: formerly operating under the name Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA), Garden Organic is the key source on all new practical and policy initiatives relating to organic cultivation on allotments and gardens. (www.gardenorganic.org.uk).

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2.2 the allotment strategy: mapping the way forward

the need for a strategy

In working together with others to achieve a better future for allotments it is important to maintain strategic direction, a continuing (and evolving) sense of what it is that you wish to achieve, and to be ready to explain exactly what your agenda is to others. This is where the allotments strategy comes in, a clear map of the way forward for the allotments service. Without an effective strategy the process of managing allotments becomes one of merely reacting to events.

the importance of consultation

Preparing an allotments strategy will involve consulting as widely as possible as you put the strategy together, and being prepared both to explain and to listen. You may find some deeply engrained stereotypes about allotments that long predate the current revival of interest in growing your own, and encounter well-reasoned arguments for prioritising other services and uses of land. These need to be understood if they are to be addressed effectively.

In consulting with ploholders and their representatives, also bear in mind that any rationalisation of the allotments portfolio that might follow on from the strategy may create losers as well as winners. Tenants with a strong sense of ownership of individual plots may confront the upheaval associated with relocation. Failure to take into the account from the outset the interests of those who will bear some of the costs of implementing the strategy makes it much more difficult to achieve strategic aims which are otherwise in the public good.

what should the strategy contain?

There will be aspects of the strategy that will be unique to your area. Nevertheless, it makes good sense to take advantage of the achievement of others; leading authorities like Bristol, North East Lincolnshire, Sandwell and York are models to follow:

Bristol: www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Environment-Planning/Parks-and-open-spaces/allotments/allotment-strategy.en

York: www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

North East Lincolnshire: www.nelincs.gov.uk/Leisure/Allotments

Sandwell: www.laws.sandwell.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure-and-culture/parks-countryside-and-allotments/allotments

A good allotments strategy will include:

- an opening statement of commitment to allotment gardening;
- a vision of what the service aspires to achieve, including standards and targets for provision, and an acknowledgement of wider agendas;
- clear plans for achieving the vision, with a particular emphasis on promotion and resourcing, as well as the means to address the problems that may arise during implementation;
- a specified role for devolved management;
- a strategy for enhancing the quality of day-to-day administration of the allotments;
- a timetable for achieving the strategy and procedures for monitoring and reviewing progress;
- a concise summary of the contents, which can be used to promote the strategy to other stakeholders.

a commitment to allotment gardening

The statement of commitment (or 'mission statement') at the beginning of the strategy document is an undertaking by the local authority to deliver a specified standard of service in respect of allotments. It is a very important part of the document because it sets the foundations for what is to follow, and it encourages other parties (including existing allotment holders) to buy into the strategy. It is a point of reference against which the performance of the authority can be tested.

Mission statement, Bristol Allotments Strategy (2007-2012):

"To work towards the vision of a sustainable Bristol through maximising the participation of its citizens in allotment gardening by the improvement of allotment sites and their management, and through the promotion of the benefits and enjoyment of allotments and food growing".

It is intended to continue to work towards providing a service in which people can expect:

- good access, good security, well maintained haulage ways and paths, adequate water provision and freedom from neglected plots;
- opportunities and encouragement to individuals and communities wishing to be involved in the cultivation of allotments;
- efficient and effective allotment administration;
- effective and appropriate allocation of resources;
- fair, open and equitable treatment, and safe tenure;
- opportunities for developing gardening skills;
- encouragement to sites and associations to develop self-management;
- fair charges and rents.

a vision of the future

The vision is where you outline the level of provision of allotment plots and standard of facilities that the local authority hopes to achieve. This is also the place where the links to the wider agendas described in early sections of this guide should be acknowledged. In defining the vision, care should be taken to consider what is achievable within realistic resource constraints and the limits of the law.

Local authorities are duty-bound by the law to provide allotments for their residents if they consider there is a demand², and they should also provide a sufficient number of plots. There are no formal national standards for provision; the level and standard of provision should reflect local demands, which will vary from place to place. Nevertheless, it is important that a target level of provision is set in the allotment strategy, as well as in relevant planning documents, and that the allotment manager and others work towards achieving that target. Provision refers not just to the number of plots, which may vary in size, but also to aspects of quality: the quality of the land (simply making derelict land available to prospective tenants does not amount to the provision of allotments), and the quality of infrastructure. (see part 3 for detailed discussion of good practice in providing facilities on allotment sites).

Standards of provision have usually been specified in terms either of land per 1000 population or plots per 1000 households (see box), and standards adopted by leading edge authorities could until recently be taken as a guide to current good practice. With the publication in 2002 of revised planning policy guidance on open space (PPG17 - see part 2.3), however, and the supply audit and demand assessment requirements embedded in the formulation of green space strategies, local authorities have been obliged to define more robust, defensible standards for allotment provision. These must be robust enough to allow comparison with the provision of other forms of open space, and defensible to enable the planning department to fend off unjustifiable claims on allotment land by developers and others.

The appropriate level of provision depends on demand, but demand is difficult to measure in the absence of adequate promotion of allotments. Simply adding the current supply of plots to the waiting list is not enough, without proper consideration of whether some demand remains 'latent'. In the short term, therefore, it would be wise to specify a level of provision somewhat higher than the current level of use (plus waiting list) in a particular locality. A more accurate picture will emerge after the promotional activities that good practice requires and the development of more sophisticated and inclusive measures of demand.

The issue of standards of provision also arises in the context of the relocation of existing plotters from a site scheduled for closure, for which see the section 'disposal of allotments' later in this guide.

- In 1969 the Thorpe Report¹ recommended a minimum standard of 0.5 acres per 1000 population.
- In its Unitary Development Plan the London Borough of Waltham Forest states its intention to 'seek to retain an area of land at least equivalent to 0.2 hectares per 1000 population in allotment use' [Waltham Forest, 2006, policy ENV18].
- In its Local Plan [second deposit draft, 2002 policy LT12] the Borough of Dartford adopts a standard of 0.25 hectares per 800 households.
- The National Allotment Survey in 1996 showed an average provision in England by county of 15 plots per 1000 households.

'Plots per household' is a more useful index as plots are often cultivated by more than one person from the same household.

¹ The Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments, Cmnd. 4166, October 1969

clear plans for achieving the vision

The issues of promotion and resourcing are central to effective planning, and will be addressed next. In both cases emulation of good practice established elsewhere can be effective, and allotment managers will find benefit from background research on plans developed by other authorities. Many examples of good practice are readily accessible on the internet, and through direct networking with colleagues in neighbouring councils in allotments officers' forums, several of which have been established with assistance from ARI mentors in recent years (see part 3.5).

active promotion of allotments

Promotion involves a range of activities designed to convert latent demand into realised demand for allotments. These activities, ranging from improvements to advertising and the infrastructure of sites to the inclusion of allotments in community plans and sustainable development initiatives, are covered in detail in part 3 of this guide. Information will clearly play a central part in any promotional strategy, and attention should be paid not only to content (availability, location, quality, rent, facilities) but also to effective delivery of information to the full range of potential users, to overcome risks of exclusion. Good practice requires that the promotional strategy be inclusive of all groups in society, irrespective of economic background and personal characteristics, a condition which should apply to the delivery of any local government service. Allotments, however, also have a distinctive contribution to make to the achievement of 'social inclusion' at local levels, as communities of interest bringing a wide range of people, including people from different gardening traditions and cultures, together for a common purpose. This is yet another way in which allotments can be promoted more successfully in the future through engagement with wider agendas. Social inclusion is also the primary reason why allotments should be promoted – and attempts to accommodate fresh demand accommodated – even in areas with long waiting lists, to ensure that both newcomers and long-standing tenants have the opportunity to benefit from these public green spaces.

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² Section 23 of the 1908 Allotments Act (as amended)

“I would rent a plot if I knew something about them”

— this is latent demand.

Attention should also be given to the quality of the product – the allotment garden and associated facilities such as lavatories and security fencing – to ensure that there are no qualitative barriers that deter potential ploholders from exercising their right to garden. It is particularly important that a range of plot sizes be made available, so that people who lack the time, the ability, the desire or the need to cultivate the traditional ‘ten pole plot’ can still be accommodated.

Effective promotion is clearly a defining characteristic of good practice in allotment management, and where it leads to full usage of allotment sites, it will help to ensure that allotments are available for future generations. It is also the case that under current guidelines for the disposal of allotments under Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 (see below), claims that allotments are ripe for disposal because of lack of demand will not be recognised unless adequate steps have already been taken to promote their use.

“I might rent a plot if they weren’t all overgrown and full of rubbish”. “The plots are far too big for us”

this is also latent demand.

What constitutes active promotion?

- creation of awareness in the wider community
- sustained level of promotion and support
- method of measuring success
- ability to respond to lack of success

resourcing allotments

The allotments strategy should also address the issue of how the acquisition, upgrading and management of sites is to be financed on a sustainable basis.

The only regular source of revenue obtained from most allotment sites is rental income. We address the detailed issues surrounding rent-setting in part 3 of this guide. In strategic terms, however, the key issue that the allotments strategy needs to address is whether current expenditures on outlays such as water supply, day-to-day maintenance and administration should be covered from rental income, or whether the running costs of the service should be subsidised. The argument in favour of the self-financing model is that it is more sustainable, provided that the level of rent does not in itself become a deterrent to the use of allotments. The argument in favour of the subsidised model is that allotments are a leisure service like any other, but of particular significance to the retired and to low income groups. One means of reconciling these two models is to target subsidies through rent concessions, which are permitted under allotments law.

As we noted in part 1, allotments can face serious funding problems, partly because they rank low on the agenda within many local authorities, and partly because ploholders often resist even modest increases in rents. Funds for capital improvements can be difficult to obtain, but may be essential if the promotion of allotments is to be effective. This is where engagement with other people’s priorities can be particularly important, to reinforce the case for greater resource allocations from the local authority, and also to access grant funding from outside bodies. The latter may be obtained to enhance the services provided on allotment sites for particular groups such as people with a disability, or to enhance the quality of the allotment site as an open space (examples of external funding sources are given in part 3 of this guide). There is an alternative (or indeed complementary) route to better quality provision and lower running costs however, and that is through schemes for devolved management, an issue taken up in the next section.

One other means of raising capital for allotments is through the reinvestment of funds generated from the rationalisation and disposal of sites. In fact, two exemplary promotion campaigns (in Bristol and Birmingham) have been partly financed in this way. It is clear, however, that this strategy can only work where the inheritance of allotment provision exceeds any conceivable expansion in demand (through changed economic conditions or realisation of latent demand), and where conversion to uses which might generate capital receipts is not prevented by covenants or planning restrictions. The latter are particularly significant in the context of PPG17, which prioritises conversion to other green-space uses where there are local deficits. Statutory allotments cannot be sold off simply because the remaining ploholders want better facilities and a developer hopes to get planning permission for building on redundant land: disposal depends on a demonstrable absence of demand, despite adequate promotion of the facilities on offer.

managing change

We have already noted that rationalisation, disposal and the associated relocation of ploholders can be a painful prospect for those involved, and it is essential to make clear in the strategy what the process of relocation and compensation will involve, including entitlements under the allotment acts. Where rationalisation involves investment in existing or new facilities to accommodate relocated ploholders, it will be helpful to include the views of those affected in the planning of these facilities, as well as those of representative organisations. Particular attention should be paid to the improvements that individuals and associations have made to sites affected by rationalisation beyond the maintenance of individual plots. These may be physical improvements, or aspects of service delivery that exceed the authority’s own standards. It is essential to ensure that as much as possible of the community spirit inherent in allotment gardening is protected and enhanced during the relocation process.

a specified role for devolved management

Devolved management schemes can benefit both local authorities and their allotment gardeners. A reduced burden of administration and maintenance responsibilities not only means savings for the authority, but also a route to engaging with local communities in the management and regeneration of important environmental assets, as part of community strategies and LA21 action plans. This can initiate the process of turning under-utilised sites around, and provide Best Value to service users. It can also redefine the role (and skills required) of the local authority allotments officer.

For ploholders, devolution can bring more responsive management on a day-to-day basis, a sense of pride in any improvements to the site, and opportunities for volunteers to bring their skills and expertise to a new challenge, particularly when they are beyond retirement.

The involvement of allotment ploholders in the management of their site can be broadly categorised as follows:

- **dependence** – neither ploholders nor associations play any practical part in site management, beyond exchange of information, perhaps through a site representative;
- **participation** – ploholders informally accept responsibility for minor maintenance works, and some mechanism may exist (such as an allotments forum) for the views of ploholders or site representatives to be canvassed on capital expenditure and repairs;
- **delegation** – a properly constituted allotment association accepts formal responsibility for a range of duties under licence from the local authority, under financial arrangements that release a proportion of rental income for this purpose. For example, the association may arrange tenancies, collect rents and carry out regular maintenance duties, but leave the local authority to carry out repairs, pay for overheads such as water, and undertake all legal formalities;
- **semi-autonomy** – the allotment association leases the site from the council, arranges tenancy agreements and reinvests revenue (which it manages) on maintenance, repair and capital items. The council retains the right to review the lease at periodic intervals and has defined oversight and strategic functions. Associations which have implemented fully accountable schemes for devolved management straddle the boundary between the allotment and community gardening movements.

The greater the degree of self-management, the greater the saving to the council and the greater the degree of responsibility assumed by the allotment ploholders. The appropriate level of devolution, therefore, will depend on the ability and willingness of ploholders and their associations to manage their sites.

The generation of enthusiasm for self-management and of the willingness to carry it out is an important part of an allotments strategy. Many ploholders are more than happy to be dependent on the council and to receive the benefits that this brings. Many also desire better facilities, however, which often cannot be provided without a substantial increase in rent - or an alleviation of part of the financial burden of management through devolution. The process of consultation over devolved management can itself serve as a 'reality check' for ploholders and associations, by revealing the limits to resources of money, time and manpower that the allotment manager can otherwise command.

The report *The Future for Allotments* stated:

"There is little doubt that, when successfully implemented, self management schemes ensure greater control of a site by allotment holders and tend to work to the benefit of the site".

(www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56002.htm)

If ploholders are not prepared to take on some of the responsibilities they may eventually see the decline of their site.

"Those sites of low occupancy, where the users are not prepared to look outwards, to help in recruitment and to share their enthusiasm for gardening, must be prepared for the site's demise".

(Memorandum by Kent House Leisure Gardens (AL 67). *The Future for Allotments: Fifth Report of the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee*. Vol II, Hc560-ii, 1998, pp 39)

As part of the allotments strategy and its implementation you may wish to:

- address the issues of devolved management and ensure that the strategy document reaches ploholders and their associations;
- ensure that each site has a contact (nominated) or representative (elected);
- promote and support the formation of site associations;
- provide information:
 - the Allotment Regeneration Initiative's free, downloadable factsheet *Gardeners in Charge* provides detailed coverage of the key issues from an allotment association's perspective. The National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners has also published a number of leaflets on the formation of site associations and self-management;
 - past research for the LGA also explores many of the issues involved, with a checklist of matters to be included in any devolved management agreement (see: www.btinternet.com/~richard.wiltshire/lga4.htm);
- investigate the level of interest in devolved management and the skills and expertise available to allotment associations amongst their membership;

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- provide support for sites which are considering or have accepted devolved management, building capacity wherever possible by offering training, advice and consultation. There is an important opportunity for the representative and support bodies for allotment holders to assist in providing these services;
- put in place a 'rescue strategy', to manage the risks to both the council and the association should devolved management arrangements break down;
- review devolved management agreements on a regular basis, to ensure that they are delivering good value to the service users.

Many ploholders or associations may be wary of devolved management because of the risks involved – real or perceived – but as mentioned above, devolved management exists in a variety of forms. Ploholders should be encouraged to accept a level of devolved management commensurate with their abilities and enthusiasm, both of which should be actively nurtured by the local authority. And where sites are small, or the portfolio is particularly large, it may also be worthwhile to consider promoting and supporting the activities of allotment federations as a unified voice for allotments in the locality, and a key player in the formulation of the strategy and its execution through devolved management.

Prior to 1975 all 52 allotment sites in the London Borough of Bromley were managed directly by the council. However, by 1990 all had taken up self-management either through licences from the council or by leases. The process of transformation was aided by the formation of a federation – the Bromley Allotments and Leisure Gardens Federation – which encouraged former council-controlled sites to consider self-management.

In Newcastle, where allotment sites have traditionally been managed on behalf of the council by allotment associations, the forthcoming allotment strategy for 2007-12 has been jointly formulated by the local authority and the allotments working group, composed of representatives of the local allotment gardening community.

enhancing the quality of day-to-day management

Allotment managers are responsible for a range of day-to-day duties including the issuing and termination of tenancy agreements, collection of rents, monitoring of cultivation quality, management of waiting lists, applications and queries, and administration of contracts and orders for repairs and services. Some will also have experience of the friction that can arise with ploholders when these things go wrong.

An essential part of the allotments strategy, therefore, is to ensure that efficient systems are put in place for budgeting and record keeping, with regular reports issued to satisfy (amongst other things) Best Value requirements. Help is at hand from proprietary 'Allotment Management Systems' which can store all the records required by the allotments manager and issue invoices, ploholders and

other standard letters. Further details of two such systems are given in part 3, both of which have user groups within which you can share information and experiences from managers working for other local authorities, a useful resource in itself.

You can also consider accrediting the allotments service to ISO 9002 standard, a route pioneered by Bristol City Council, or to seek Chartermark status, to which Bristol now aspires. For smaller authorities with very few plots to manage, or associations with devolved management responsibilities, a more traditional record-keeping system may be appropriate, but it is still worthwhile to review the standard of record-keeping and to set targets for responses to enquiries and issuing of paperwork. The Best Value review process provides an opportunity for all local authorities to keep up to date with good practice in this area.

There are opportunities also for sites under devolved management to receive external recognition for the quality of the service they provide (to tenants and also more broadly to the environment and the local community). The most prestigious of these is the Civic Trust's Green Pennant Award for green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups (www.greenflagaward.org.uk/). In 2007 Dorset Road Allotments in Bromley received this award for a fifth consecutive year (www.dorsetroadallotments.org.uk/Awards.htm).

timetables, monitoring and review

By its nature a strategy requires a timetable for action which lists both long-term and short-term objectives: good practice exemplars like Bristol, North East Lincolnshire, Sandwell and York include objectives and target dates for completion. However, allotments do not exist in a static environment and objectives, targets and achievements need to be examined and reviewed on a regular basis so that the strategy remains effective.

"Part of the success of the allotment strategy has come from the strategy being a working document that is at the heart of everything the allotment section does, and from the feeling of achievement that this can bring. The allotment strategy has set targets, which are considered to be challenging yet achievable.

It also intends to be flexible and 'grasp the moment' when an opportunity arises, and ensure that the allotments section constantly strives to introduce new ideas, whether they come from staff, site representatives, community organisations, other local authorities or elsewhere ..."

(from Bristol Allotment Strategy 2007-12)

Best Value

It would be sensible to co-ordinate such a review with the timetable for the Best Value review of the department that houses the service. The overall framework for the Best Value review may well be set for the department as a whole and this will help to ensure that the quality of the service provided for allotment gardeners is at least as good as that offered to the users of other leisure facilities. Best Value also provides an opportunity for direct consultation with plotheholders and associations about the quality of service provision and to identify problems that may require a strategic solution. Viewed from a broader perspective however, and from a cross-cutting rather than subject-specific approach to Best Value, the review process presents the allotments manager with yet another opportunity to make progress by engaging with other departments and other agendas. The possibilities of delivering targets in long-term health promotion and community development at low-cost, through minimal additional investments in the allotments service, should be actively pursued with colleagues with direct responsibilities in these areas.

Comparison of Best Value performance indicators during the benchmarking process presents an opportunity to learn from those authorities that appear to be doing a better job, and to consider whether strategic objectives should be changed as a result. Carefully chosen performance indicators can also provide a useful means of demonstrating progress towards strategic targets. (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136106)

The allotment strategy by its very nature is a working document and to maintain its relevance on a year-to-year basis there is a need for the strategy to be incremental in its development. This can be achieved by an annual review to assess the success of short-term targets and their relevance in an ever-changing environment.

Care should also be taken to ensure that the performance indicators used are neither ambiguous nor misleading. Indicators in common use include variants of the following:

- total hectares of allotments administered per 1000 population;
- percentage of allotment plots let;
- length of waiting list/average wait for a plot;
- amount of subsidy per tenant/per resident;
- percentage satisfaction amongst tenants with the service provided;
- percentage of allotment sites under devolved management;
- percentage of allotment sites with designated facilities.

the summary of contents

The allotment strategy needs to be accessible to all stakeholders and whilst the strategy document itself may be detailed and comprehensive it will not be possible for all to read and digest it. A concise summary of the strategy is therefore needed so that the information can be distributed as widely as possible. An exemplar of good practice is provided by Nottingham City Council, which publishes a one page charter summarising the council's policy for allotments. This is a very effective way of communicating policy in a succinct and simple manner, and provides an opportunity for the council to state its commitment to the allotment service. A more detailed example incorporating both strategic thinking and performance standards, is the allotments charter for Solihull (www.solihull.gov.uk/section.asp?catid=2752&docid=325).

2.3 planning policy and allotments law

introduction

Before turning to the finer details of good practice in allotments management presented in part 3 of this guide, it may be helpful to address the provision, protection and disposal of allotment land, in the context of planning policy and allotments law. The allotments manager has an important role to play in influencing the planning process, and should seek to be consulted whenever planning strategies, issues or applications that may impact on allotments are under discussion. The allotment manager is unlikely to have ultimate responsibility for formulating policy or implementing the law in these areas. And yet, the capacity to deliver an effective and high-quality service is critically dependent upon others within the local authority, making decisions that are supportive of the allotment manager's work. Unlike the earlier sections of this guide therefore, this section is provided primarily for the benefit of planners and estate managers within local authorities, and for allotment managers. Since the guide is not in itself aimed at these other parties, it would also be advisable for the allotments manager to bring this section to their attention, along with any information regarding the implications of changes to the planning system or any modernisation of allotments law.

allotments and planning policy

Planning policy presents opportunities (in itself and in combination with other policies) to ensure an adequate supply of land for allotments and to protect those sites that already exist. To what extent those opportunities should be exploited however, depends ultimately on a realistic appraisal of current and future demand for allotment gardens. Where disposal of allotment sites appears to be justified, planning policy can also be used to regulate the subsequent use of the land. On the negative side, the planning system can be exploited by developers to undermine the health of an allotment site, through sequential planning applications that can cause a demoralising planning blight.

planning policy guidance and strategies

Allotments are primarily affected by two pieces of planning guidance, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3 (housing), which was revised in 2006, and Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17 (sport, open space and recreation), published in 2002, both of which incorporate recommendations from the 1998 parliamentary select committee inquiry into The Future for Allotments.

Annex B to PPS 3 explicitly excludes allotments and associated buildings from the definition of 'previously-developed land', onto which the ongoing search for suitable new sites for housing is concentrated.

Explicit coverage of allotments in PPG 17 is somewhat less than the parliamentary select committee had advocated, but annex 3 does include allotments (along with city farms and community gardens) as a specific category in the typology of open space.

PPG 17 places an obligation on local authorities to undertake robust assessments of need for open spaces of different kinds, combined with audits of existing provision, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative attributes such as access. According to the CLG's Survey of Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms, by 2006 almost two thirds of responding local authorities had already or were about to complete their open space audits. The audits and assessments of need then feed into the establishment of local standards for provision of open space, and the preparation of strategies that prioritise adjustments between different categories of open space, to ensure that local standards are met before surplus land is released for development.

PPG 17 has in turn facilitated the preparation of green space strategies, as required within the CLG's Cleaner Safer Greener Communities agenda (www.cleanersafergreener.gov.uk), which are in turn components of the community strategy (see part 2.1). Open space or green space strategies are thus key documents for locating allotments within the local planning system.

assessment of need

PPG 17 is underpinned by extensive guidance to local authorities on how to assess the need for open space, including allotments, in the document *Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG 17 (2002)* (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144068). While the reference to allotments in this guidance is helpful (see box), it should be noted that waiting lists should not be treated as the only indicator of unmet demand, as they only capture unmet demand that has been expressed. In some areas the closure of waiting lists as a response to heavy demand may lead to systematic underassessment of local need. Expressed demand will also be conditional on the extent to which allotments have been actively promoted to all sections of the community, and will remain latent if they are not. There is at present no generally accepted procedure for assessing the gap between current use levels and waiting lists and the potential additional need for allotments if actively promoted.

The demand for allotments may also be spatially localised within the local authority area, and may be out of step with the pattern of provision – an imbalance that may not be apparent from aggregate figures. Access to allotments should therefore also be taken into account in defining standards: the ANGSt standard developed by Natural England for access to natural green space is a useful guideline (www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/publication/PDF/526.pdf).

“The need for allotments, community gardens and urban farms is likely to rise with the growth of interest in organic farming and as a result of rising housing densities and the consequential reduction in the size of many gardens. The number of allotments required in any area is a function of demand and therefore it will be appropriate to use a demand-led methodology, based on local authority records. It is obviously desirable for local authorities not only to provide and rent allotments, but also to keep a waiting list as this helps to identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. Accordingly there is likely to be a need for a population-based provision standard, coupled with an accessibility standard or distance threshold.”

(from DTLR (now CLG): Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17 (2002) annex A - open space typology]

new developments

Higher baselines for allotment provision may be needed for new housing developments than local authority records might suggest. Given rising residential densities, which preclude provision of much private garden space, it is important to ensure provision of land for allotments or community gardens as an alternative. Standards adopted in major areas of strategic development provide a guide. The Dartford local plan (second deposit draft, 2002, policy LT12) for example adopts a standard of 0.25 ha per 800 households for major new developments in the Thames Gateway. Planning permission can be made conditional upon the provision of space for allotments under Section 106 agreements, provided there is no alternative provision in the locality.

new allotments

In addition to sites in new developments, and replacement sites for ploholders displaced by closures, the increasing popularity of allotment gardening in recent years has led to growing pressures for the provision of new sites. This is happening in rural areas, where some parishes and towns have no provision at all, as well as in major urban areas such as Sheffield and in designated growth points for future urban expansion. The Allotments Acts (see appendix 2) make provision both for local demand to be properly expressed and taken account of, and for land to be acquired for the purpose of providing allotments. The design criteria for new sites are the same as those for replacement sites (discussed below), and in addition to the detailed advice given in part 3, the National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners should be contacted, as the main provider of good advice.

New allotments for Leominster

New allotments were officially opened in Leominster in 2006 by Monty Don. In the 1980s land previously set aside for allotments in the town had been sold off due to lack of demand. In recent years demand has grown again and the six statutory electors came forward to request that the town council provided them with allotments within walking distance of the centre of the town. The waiting list grew to over 50 interested residents in 2004. After a long and difficult search, the town council acquired 2.5 acres of grazing land on a 21 year lease. The site was prepared by a local contractor and a water connection established. A portaloo and six refillable water troughs were installed and the site was divided into plots – some full size (about 250 square metres) and some half size (about 120 square metres).

(taken from the Allotments Regeneration Initiative Newsletter, Winter 2006).

Where new allotments are proposed, it can also be prudent to bear in mind the potential for future conversion of use in specifying the location of such provision. Paragraph 9.6.14 of the Dartford local plan (2002), for example, specifies that new sites “should normally be provided on the edges of local parks, open space or playing fields to provide informal public surveillance and flexibility in case demand should change in the future”. Where such a policy is adopted, however, there is also a need for adequate policies (outside the planning machinery if necessary) to protect plots from theft and vandalism.

New Mills: new plots!

There had been no allotments in New Mills, Derbyshire for over 40 years. An advert placed by New Mills Town Council in 2000 enabled local people who were interested in setting up an allotment site to meet, form an allotment association and, in partnership with the council, identify suitable land that could be developed. A lengthy process of local consultation followed. By the end of 2004, planning permission had been granted on a piece of wasteland owned by the council, and work began on the new site. In just one year the New Mills Allotment and Gardening Society had transformed 4000 square metres of land into a new allotment site with over 30 plots. The site was fenced and cleared by April 2005 and mains water was connected just in time for a dry July. An access road was constructed and land drains were laid in September on part of the site that would otherwise be waterlogged and unsuitable for cultivation. Funds for this project were raised from the Healthy Living Network and Derbyshire Community Foundation, as well as from the town council. Plans for the site include a pond and wildlife area, improved access, a lavatory and wheelchair accessible raised beds.

(taken from the Allotments Regeneration Initiative Newsletter, Summer 2006).



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safeguarding allotment land

The best safeguard for an existing allotment site is for the plots to be fully tenanted and well looked after, with the site delivering the full range of benefits to the local community. This makes it much easier for planners (and ploholders) to make a case for the retention of the allotments. The active promotion of allotments and the conversion of latent demand into new tenancies, two of the key components of the allotments strategy, are therefore also an essential underpinning to the safeguarding of allotment land within the planning system.

Many existing local planning policies (including unitary development plans) are openly supportive of existing allotment sites, although this support is usually qualified by a presumption in favour of conversion to other uses where adequate demand can be anticipated to fill all the available plots. Policy L7 from The London Borough of Bromley's Unitary Development Plan (2005) is typical:

The council will safeguard existing land used as allotments. Development proposals resulting in the loss of allotments may be considered where:

- 1 there is evidence of long-term insufficient demand for continued use of land as allotments; and
- 2 suitable land is made available, either by retention or relocation, for allotments that are in use.

When allotment land is found to be redundant, planning policy can also have an important impact upon the end use. Policies 3.62 and 3.62A in Birmingham's UDP (2005) are particularly supportive of allotments in this regard:

Allotments provide a much needed facility especially in areas where private gardens are limited, and they will continue to be protected. There is uneven provision of allotments across the city. Redressing this inequality is important, and every effort will be made to encourage the provision of new allotments in areas of deficiency, where the opportunity arises.

Planning permission will not be granted for the redevelopment of allotments simply because the allotments have fallen out of use and become derelict. Where it can be demonstrated that the demand for allotments has fallen, consideration will be given to alternative uses for surplus allotments. Such uses will be alternative recreational, nature conservation or horticultural uses... If in exceptional circumstances planning permission is granted for other forms of development on part of the site this will be subject to the provision of an appropriate, equivalent, long-term recreational community benefit.

Both cultivated and unused allotments make an important contribution to the range of green space in urban areas. Where such space is deemed to be in inadequate supply within the green space strategy, a presumption can be made in favour of alternative open space uses, particularly those which keep open the possibility of reconversion to allotment use should demand subsequently increase.

Section 4.8.1 of the Epsom and Ewell local plan (2000), for example, makes this linkage clear:

Where the council is unable to promote a sufficient level of allotment use to secure proper management of a particular site, alternative uses may be considered under the criteria of policy OSR1 and OSR2, but the council will seek alternative recreational uses which can be reversed in the case of future demand.

While planning policy (combined with the provisions of the allotments acts) are the most significant means for safeguarding allotments, unique attributes of specific sites may provide alternative routes to security. The St Anne's allotments in Nottingham, for example, enjoy Grade Two* heritage status on account of their unusual brick-built sheds, which date from the early nineteenth century and come complete with fireplaces. One site on the Isle of Wight has been made into a Site of Special Scientific Interest on account of the presence of a rare wild plant (the Martins Ramping Fumitory).

other uses for former allotments

If there is a genuine surplus of allotment land and those prospective tenants who desire allotments have access to good quality allotment plots then it is not unreasonable to put that land to other uses. Ideally it should be possible to return the land to use as allotments if demand exists at some time in the future.

Consideration should therefore be given first to alternative green, community-oriented uses, such as community gardens (an option included in allotment leases in Cambridge), community orchards, such as that on the Horfield site in Bristol (www.voscur.org/members/profiles/horfieldorganic) and the Frieze Hill Community Orchard in Taunton, which has also been designated a local nature reserve (www.communityorchard.org.uk/), or community nature reserves such as that at Blondin Park in Ealing (www.london.gov.uk/wildweb/PublicSiteViewFull.do?pictureno=1&siteid=7643). These alternatives can serve a complementary role when integrated into an underused site, assisting in the regeneration of the remaining plots by making the site as a whole more attractive.

A few vacant plots can also be of benefit to an otherwise successful site, when kept mown for use as a picnic area, with tables, a barbecue and maybe play equipment for children. This can make a site more family-friendly and encourage a more co-operative spirit. A shaded spot or a plot that is difficult to rent might be set aside for a small memorial garden, where past ploholders can be remembered and their contribution to life on the allotments quietly celebrated.

Where there is genuine uncertainty about whether additional demand for allotments will materialise in the near future, it may be appropriate simply to apply a low level of maintenance, such as an occasional trim to ensure that scrub does not develop. The land can then be returned to cultivation easily if and when new tenants materialise. Organic methods of weed control should also be considered (see organic allotments in part 3).

The law also allows for up to five acres of allotment land to be cultivated as a garden or farm or partly as a garden, partly as a farm without the secretary of state's consent under Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925. Section 8 consent is not required for uses that come within the wider definition of allotments in the Section 1 Allotments Act 1925, meaning "an allotment garden as defined by the Allotments Act 1922, or any parcel of land not more than five acres in extent cultivated as a garden or farm, or partly as a garden and partly as a farm".

The Bulwell Hall community garden, Nottingham

This was created from a derelict allotment site which was causing problems to local residents through vandalism and fly-tipping.



A piece of waste land was transformed into an amenity for the local community. Although it is no longer an allotment site the garden produces fruit and vegetables using organic methods which are sold on the site and delivered to other residents who are unable to visit the garden. The garden has evolved into an award-winning project managed by NECTA Ltd, a social enterprise providing a range of construction and land-based training and services which have helped local people back into employment. (www.necta.org.uk).

Another common use of former allotment land is for horticultural therapy projects supported by NHS primary care trusts. The Grange Park community garden in Preston, for example, aims to provide a range of activities to improve the wellbeing of people suffering from mental health problems. Activities include horticulture workshops and ICT training sessions, writing CVs and other job search skills.

(www.preston.gov.uk/news/News.asp?id= SX9452-A78072A4)

disposal of allotments

In as much as approval for the disposal of statutory allotment land under Section 8 of the Allotments Act (1925) depends in part upon evidence of adequate promotion of allotments, the explicit recognition of demand in planning policy is good practice. It makes clear

to both gardeners and would-be developers that plots which are maintained in full use are likely to enjoy strong protection under the planning system.

Allotment authorities are already obliged to consult ploholders before applying for Section 8 approvals. While there is no requirement for allotment (or planning) authorities to advise individual ploholders of planning applications which might affect their tenancies and sites, there is a strong case for ensuring adequate publicity for such applications, so that ploholders are not inadvertently excluded from the consultation process.

Disposal criteria for statutory allotments

Statutory allotments are protected via Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 which requires that local authorities seek the secretary of state's consent, via the relevant government office, for disposal or appropriation to another use.

Consent cannot be given unless the secretary of state is satisfied that certain criteria are met. Clarified criteria were issued to local authorities in February 2002. Consent is not given unless the secretary of state is satisfied that:

- the allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirement;
- adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders, or that such provision is not necessary or is impracticable;
- the number of people on the waiting list has been effectively taken into account;
- the authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and has consulted the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners;
- the implications of disposal for other relevant policies, in particular development plan policies, have been taken into account.

sale for development

Sale for development is the last resort for allotment land if there is no actual demand (revealed or latent) and no additional need for open space. It should in this case be a means of consolidating the allotments portfolio and improving it with any revenue that is generated. The existence of a willing developer is not a valid reason for disposal of a statutory allotment under Section 8, and consent for disposal does not create a presumption in favour of development for housing or commercial use.

revenue from the sale of allotment land

Section 32 of the Smallholdings and Allotments Act, 1908 requires that any revenue obtained from the sale or exchange of statutory allotment land be spent on discharging debts associated with the acquisition of allotment land, in acquiring new land for use as allotments or on improving the existing stock of allotments. Only the surplus may be used for other purposes.

In the past, revenue from the sale of allotment land has been seen as a 'windfall' by some authorities and not spent on acquiring or improving allotment sites. Good practice should ensure that revenue from any disposals is put to the use that the legislation originally intended.

replacement sites

If the authority wishes to sell statutory allotment land, and existing plotters would be displaced by that action, then 'adequate provision' must be made for them, a requirement of Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925, and local planning policy should take account of this (as in the example from Bromley given earlier).

A cavalier approach to the identification of alternative sites is ill-advised, not least because of the risk that contaminated land might inadvertently be brought into use. It is good practice from the standpoint of prudence therefore, as well as clarity of governance, to specify the criteria that will be employed to identify relocation sites at local level within local planning policy. The following exemplary model is taken from Kennet's local plan (2004), policy TR20 (protection of allotments):

Development that would result in the loss of allotments or land last used as allotments, as defined on the inset maps, will not be permitted unless replacement allotments are provided. In order to be acceptable to the local planning authority the replacement allotments will:

- be comparable in terms of size, accessibility and convenience;
- have a soil quality and condition comparable or superior to that of the existing allotments; and
- avoid detrimental impact on landscape character and landscape features.

Further clarification might also be provided. For example, a statement that replacement sites should not normally be more than three quarters of a mile from the centre of demand (unless the plotters are willing to travel further) would match the current official requirement (as stated in paragraph 22 of the government's Response to the future for allotments inquiry report).

As already noted in the previous section of this guide, allotment law provides the legal basis for applying part of the proceeds from the disposal of allotment land to the upgrading of replacement sites, a useful aid to realising conditions such as those set out in the Kennet policy (above).

Longbarrow Allotments on the move ...

In 1998 the secretary of state gave consent under Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 for the disposal of Longbarrow Allotments in Bournemouth. The plotters were relocated by the borough council from Jewell Road to Throop Road, with the replacement site opening in 1999. There are 130 plots on the new site, made up of half, three-quarter and full-size plots, as well as a concrete road and an extensive water supply

system running to almost every other plot. There are also communal facilities for the plotters, including a shop, meeting room, lavatory facilities (including disabled) and parking areas. The allotment association manages the site under a devolved management agreement: the committee sets the rents, organises special events, orders stock for the shop and enforces the site rules and regulations. The site has an open day during National Allotments Week with free entry, guided tours, stalls selling plant, books and produce, and a barbeque. In 2007 Longbarrow Allotments won 2nd prize in the nationwide NAGTrust/Kitchen Garden "best allotment site" competition.

(www.longbarrow.co.uk)

Relocation to another site provides an ideal opportunity to start afresh with improved facilities, security and layout. The design of the site should be carried out in consultation with the plotters and their association, and with relevant national and regional organisations, especially the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners. Where practicable the replacement site should be available and prepared before final disposal of the old site.

There is always likely to be opposition to moving site, and consultation should be handled sympathetically and efficiently. It can take many years for a new site to become established and mature and for some of the more elderly plotters whose memories are tied to their old plot the effort may seem too great. Assistance with relocation should be given and the provision of smaller plots should be considered.

Meeting expectations

- It is important that when commitments and promises are made regarding the provision of new allotment sites they are honoured by the authority both in terms of facilities and time scale. News that an authority has reneged on its promises travels fast and lingers long, and such action will only serve to arouse the suspicion and mistrust of plotters in any future dealings.
- Any offers of replacement sites, facilities and compensation should be stated clearly in a document sent to the association and its members.
- Consultations should be carried out with all of the stakeholders affected by the move and this process should not be drawn out, otherwise there is a danger of causing 'blight'.
- Compensation should be fair and should recognise that it can take many years to turn a plot into a desired state of cultivation.
- It is also good practice that any improvements to the facilities on the site to be replaced which plotters and their associations may have made over the years, particularly those made with the encouragement of the local authority, are recognised, and to ensure that equivalent provision is made on the new site.

part 3 the seeds: practical aspects of allotment management



introduction

In part 3 we present detailed advice and exemplars of good practice in allotment management. Each section supports the arguments developed in part 2, but each can also be treated as a practical source of reference, to be dipped into as required. We anticipate that the arguments developed in parts 1 and 2 of this guide will continue to stand the test of time. New ideas for the more effective promotion and use of allotments are always coming to light, however, along with better exemplars of current good practice, and the allotment manager should be prepared to pick and mix ideas to suit local circumstances. To employ a gardening metaphor, part 3 is a mixture: cabbage seeds – ideas that will remain viable for years to come, parsnip seeds – which need to be replaced each season, and weed seeds – ideas applied inappropriately or in the wrong place.

In using part 3 of this guide, therefore, the reader should be prepared to:

- seek advice from the sources of expertise which are signposted;
- ask other allotment managers what their experiences have been;
- follow up examples which have been highlighted more recently in the gardening press, in newsletters issued by allotment support organisations, and on the internet;
- consider how appropriate the advice and examples might be in the light of local circumstances;
- use your own informed judgement to select advice and adapt examples to fit your portfolio's needs.

And to conclude the gardening metaphor, as you plant these seeds and grow your own, look out for the exceptional plant that does well and pass the seed on to others. You have a role to play not just in implementing good practice, but in creating it and spreading it around. If something works, it is good practice to share the secret!

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3.1 allotments, wellbeing and sustainability

allotments for all

Allotment gardening provides an opportunity for people of all backgrounds to participate in a leisure activity that is both healthy and productive.

An increasing number of families have been taking up allotment gardening. Children are fascinated by watching plants and flowers grow and by the wildlife on the allotment which is a place to learn about nature with their parents in an informal setting. Other children participate in allotment gardening through their schools (see Allotments and education). The allotment is a place for families to socialise and for children and adults to make friends. Women, too, are taking up allotment gardening in increasing numbers: in Bristol, 34 per cent of plotholders are women.



The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has published a free downloadable factsheet *Plotting the future* which examines various aspects of involving children and families in allotment gardening. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

Allotments have always been popular with older people, and their significance has been recognised by leading charities for the elderly, which support projects designed to keep older gardeners digging and encourage intergenerational links.

Their promotion has also been specifically recognised by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the LGA as an activity through which Local Area Agreements can support increased independent living for the elderly.

(www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Briefing/Our_Work/Environment/LAA.pdf)

Growing concern in Coventry

Age Concern (www.ageconcern.org.uk) runs a project for older people at Sherbourne Valley Allotments in Coventry. The site was chosen for ease of access (it is close to the city centre and on a bus route). It occupies four plots rescued from dereliction by the probation service, who also do maintenance work at weekends, including keeping grass and wood chip paths in good order so that wheelchair users can continue to enjoy a natural feel around the site. The project has its own lavatories in a cabin donated by the council, and a polytunnel that allows people to garden under shelter in inclement weather. The project has regular open days which attract people who have just retired and are thinking about taking on a

plot but aren't sure if they can manage one. If they can, then they are encouraged to take plots of their own on sites throughout Coventry. Meanwhile, older plotholders who are finding it difficult to keep their gardens in good order are encouraged to visit the project with their site secretaries to explore the possibility of swapping their plots for a place on the project, where they can enjoy a more supportive environment but otherwise carry on gardening. This works well: many ex-plotholders find they prefer the project because they make new friends with whom they have much in common. Participants in the project also have an opportunity to pass on their skills: a local school makes visits every few months, establishing a welcome link between two different generations of gardeners.

(Information supplied by the Allotments Regeneration Initiative)

Allotments also present particular opportunities for ethnic minority groups to share their gardening cultures with other plotholders and (through open days) with the public at large. They have added significantly to the diversity of crops and gardening techniques that can be found on Britain's allotments. In Birmingham the diversity of food cultures has been more broadly celebrated through the Changing Taste of Food project organised by the allotments liaison officer, which traces the impact of people of Caribbean origin on both food and food growing in the city. (There are multiple entries on this project at www.birmingham.gov.uk/). The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has produced a good practice document on multi-ethnic involvement at community gardens and farms, *Chillies and Roses* (2007), that includes many ideas for relevance to allotments as well (www.farmgarden.org.uk).



Allotments have also been used in many other ways to promote social inclusion – for groups ranging from disaffected youths and people with substance misuse issues to estranged fathers:

The Milton Keynes Christian Foundation runs an allotment project working with disengaged 15 to 25 year-olds. Some have been expelled from school and are in need of alternative provision, some are homeless, some have left school with little or no qualifications and are looking for another route into further education or training. Participants get involved in all the necessary jobs related to running a successful market garden, and there are also opportunities for training in literacy and numeracy. The project regularly participates in the local farmers market, and supplies produce to the café and catering project that the same charity runs. (www.mkchristianfoundation.co.uk/)

Making inroads into substance misuse

In 2004 Inroads (an organisation providing services for people with substance misuse issues) took on the tenancy of a plot on the Pontcanna A allotment site in Cardiff. The Inroads Street Drugs Project Go! allotment has been planted with fruit trees which should provide the project with apples for many years to come, as well as vegetables to supply an in-house 'alternative therapy' juice bar and local food co-operatives. The project's supporters include the Salvation Army, Voluntary Action Cardiff, BTCV and MIND. (www.inroads-dp.co.uk/)

Dads Dig is a project on allotments in Blackburn that helps estranged fathers and their children spend time together and share an enjoyable outdoor experience whilst learning about how things grow. Dads Dig was started by the Diocese of Blackburn, but project staff are now incorporated into the Children's Centre run by social services. Participants self-refer and word of mouth has proved to be the most successful form of promotion. Dads Dig is one of the many successful projects covered in the Allotments Regeneration Initiative's Good Sites Guide. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

allotments, education and learning

Allotments have an important role to play in education and learning at all levels. Allotment gardening enables skills to be learned and used — not only horticultural skills but also social and community skills.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative factsheet *Plotting the future* covers working with schools on allotment gardening projects. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

For parents and extended families, cultivating an allotment with their children provides informal opportunities to share a love and knowledge of growing things.

A number of allotment associations have developed gardening projects specifically for pre-school children, in collaboration with organisations such as SureStart or children's services.

A sure start for toddlers at Pilkington allotments

The SureStart Central Link Tots allotment at the Pilkington Allotment Society's site in St Helens was established in 2003. Children are offered an organised programme of learning and play every Tuesday and Saturday, combining planting and growing vegetables in the polytunnel and raised beds with play activities such as Bug Watch, Willy Worm Day, and feeding the ducks in the adjacent brook.

In addition to the local SureStart team, this project involves input from Healthy Eating and 5-A-Day. This is just one of the innovative and successfully-funded schemes which the society has developed in recent years, which are now overseen by a dedicated "partnership committee". Others include use of the new training unit and gardens by the Windle Pilkington House Day Centre and the St Helens Coalition of Disabled People. (Information from Allotments Regeneration Initiative)

Primary schools have also taken plots to show children from all backgrounds where food comes from and how it grows.



Birmingham CC website on Benson Community School and Matthew Boulton Allotments

Allotment managers have an important part to play in enabling schools and educational establishments to share in the benefits of allotment gardening. In the first instance they can provide information and act as a link between the schools and allotment associations, plotholders and voluntary organisations.

There is much information available from organisations such as Garden Organic and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens for the benefit of children and schools. The Growing Schools Project is also a valuable source of information and support for teachers and schools that would like to get involved with gardening on allotments (www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools/).



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Duchy Originals Garden Organic for Schools

The Henry Doubleday Research Association (which now operates under the title Garden Organic) founded its 'Schools Organic Network' in 2000. The project has since been renamed Duchy Originals Garden Organic for Schools, and by mid-2007 the network had engaged with 3,400 schools – or 14 per cent of schools in the country, many of which are involved in growing food on local allotments. The project's website contains a wealth of information to support teachers, and includes a convenient search facility to find out which schools in the area are already "growing their own":

(www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools_organic_network/map/index.php)

YOE and HELP in Birmingham



Youth Organic Environmental (YOE) a gardening project on the Uplands Allotments in Handsworth, Birmingham, aims to encourage children into gardening, help them to relate to the soil, and understand how to grow vegetables and eat healthily. The project has extensive links to local schools and nearly a thousand children have taken part since it was launched in 2003. Uplands has also hosted the Shades of Black HELP project (Help Enables Learning Positively) since 1999. This operates a model plot on site to encourage children to grow their own food, and donates produce to the elderly at harvest festivals, providing an opportunity for positive interaction between generations.

Training in gardening skills can also be an important feature of allotment promotion; in Bristol this is practised in an innovative partnership with the City of Bristol College. Gardening skills acquired on an allotment site can become the springboard to full-time employment in the horticulture industry.

allotments and good health

Cultivating an allotment is a good way to keep fit and stay healthy, through the exercise and the fresh foods that allotments provide to their gardeners. The unique combination of solace and sociability that they provide is also conducive to good mental health. These benefits are open to all, but are particularly beneficial for older people who are ready for more gentle forms of exercise. They are especially appropriate for people with a high body mass index who may need a gradual route back into a healthier lifestyle.

In a number of areas GPs have been encouraged to advise those in need of more exercise to take an allotment. Another approach has been through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteer's "Green Gym" programme. In this, volunteers who need to get just a little bit more exercise are given the opportunity to do so in a structured and supportive environment: many of these projects are located on allotment sites. (www2.btcv.org.uk/display/greengym).

Lancastrians aim for gardening fitness

Sefton's Green Gym is based on the Queensway allotment site in Waterloo. It offers people of all ages and abilities the chance to learn new skills through growing organic produce, meet new people and improve their health. The Green Gym was set-up through a partnership between the BTCV, Sefton NHS Primary Care Trust and Sefton Borough Council, but its success has allowed it to move on to independent self-management under a committee of volunteers. They have been awarded the title of 'best Green Gym in the north' as part of the BTCV Green Hero awards. Around 25 people regularly attend sessions at the Green Gym which, apart from the health benefits, offers volunteers the chance to turn their new-found skills into a recognised qualification in horticulture.

(Source: abstracted from www.seftonpct.nhs.uk/news_and_publications/)

Gardening for Health ... in Bradford

The Sho Nirbhor project was set up in response to the fact that Asian women are at a particularly high risk of coronary heart disease. The project encourages community participation, physical activity, healthy eating and relaxation, whilst offering relief from isolation and social support for inner city Bangladeshi women in Bradford.

(www.bcep.org.uk/programmes/current/sho_nirbhor.htm)

Gardening for Health ... in Mansfield

Allotment gardening is increasingly being recommended as a suitable form of recreation for those in need of a little more daily exercise and fresh air. In Mansfield, every general practice has signed up to the local GP referral scheme, a joint initiative between the health authority and the borough council, which directs people to allotment gardening, some of whom may never have considered this pastime before.

The benefits to the new gardeners are matched by long-term savings to the NHS - and thus to every tax payer.

(www.mansfield.gov.uk/lei_menu/lei_getactive.htm)

allotments and disability

Allotments can also be of particular value, however, to people with more acute health issues. A survey by Brighton and Hove City Council suggests that around eight per cent of ploholders have a disability. There are probably many more people living with disabilities who could benefit from the outdoor activity and sense of community that allotment gardening provides.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has published a free downloadable factsheet *Allotments for All* that examines various ways of improving access to allotment gardening for people with physical and mental disabilities (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari).

Brighton and Hove City Council has identified a number of necessary qualities for allotment sites for those with special needs, as follows:

- accessibility to vehicles (possibly minibus size with modifications for special transport);
- flexible layout;
- variable height beds;
- adjacent to conventional plots;
- flexible and co-operative tenants nearby;
- provision of shelter;
- provision of lavatories;
- accessible paths, tracks and hard areas within and leading to the plots.

There are many examples of allotment sites and plots which have been especially modified and laid out for those with disabilities. The Cheam Park site in the London Borough of Sutton is one. It has eighteen plots surrounded by a sensory garden, in addition to a sheltered area, seating and lavatories. The project was developed in consultation with the voluntary sector and the housing and social services department. The facilities (and in particular the raised beds) have found particular favour with gardeners who live with severe back problems. (www.sutton.gov.uk/leisure/allotments/cheamallotments.htm).

Allotments have also provided support for school children with severe disabilities. For example, a plot has been provided at Springfield Land Allotments in Southend for use by children from Lancaster Special School. The plot includes a shed and lawn area, and the facility has been put together using materials provided by the council and the planning and construction skills of volunteers from the allotments association.

Raised beds at Thingwall Park allotments, Bristol



There are other ways of opening up allotments to people with disabilities which do not necessarily involve special plots. Ideas from research conducted by Brighton and Hove City Council include:

- arrangements for people with disabilities to work with existing volunteer ploholders on established plots;
- provision of help from local volunteer ploholders and organisations for disabled people on standard plots;
- provision of advice from council officers;
- formation of a disabled gardeners group open to those with disabilities and those willing to assist.

Rethinking mental health

The mental health charity Rethink runs a project at Tunnel Allotments in Salisbury for people with a variety of mental health issues. The project maintains two vegetable plots, a wildlife garden, a polytunnel and a shed. Clients are referred by the relevant statutory organisations, but can also refer themselves. The plots are currently used for therapy, but there are plans to introduce horticultural training in future. Clients visit the plots twice a week. (www.rethink.org).

In Newcastle the Clubhouse project took on a derelict plot at Nunsmoor Allotments in 2002, and has since fully restored the plot and installed a shed and 18 foot greenhouse. Clients attend the plot with a member of staff every weekday. Referrals are mainly from community psychiatric nurses, but clients can also self-refer. The project is jointly funded by social services and the local Primary Care Trust.

(www.newcastleclubhouse.co.uk/)

Horticulture has long been used as a therapy in both physical and mental illness and in rehabilitation. It allows skills to be learned and used, which can be appropriated to other aspects of life, it promotes relaxation and communication and improves wellbeing.

There are many groups, both large and small, which are involved in using horticulture as a therapy. The organisation Thrive, for example, is involved with the running of over 900 specialist projects – many involving allotment sites – promoting social and therapeutic gardening and horticulture. It is able to provide information and advice to authorities involved in horticultural therapy projects or considering them, and runs a website that offers useful advice to people who wish to make their own adaptations to disability and carry on gardening. (www.carryongardening.org.uk).



“Supporting access to green space should be routinely considered in care planning and social care assessment processes. For example, people on a care plan might be supported in finding an allotment or getting involved in a local horticultural project, and ‘buddy’ schemes could increase people’s confidence about taking part. The options for green activity should be highlighted by care co-ordinators and in the training and supervision of support workers.” MIND, Ecotherapy (2007), p30

Elder Stubbs

Elder Stubbs is a charity that owns a 12 acre allotment site in Cowley, Oxford and has used this land for community projects. Providing allotment land has been one of its charitable objectives since its founding in 1852.

For many years it has worked in partnership with a local mental health charity, Restore, which now cultivates over two acres of the site and grows fruit, vegetables, flowers and willow; and operates a ‘box scheme’ for local residents.

Other ventures have included:

- the creation of a wood and pond with the support of the Forestry Commission;
- a coppicing project to replace imported bamboo with locally-grown hazel;
- establishing an orchard of 46 different kinds of English apple;
- creating play areas for plotters’ children, and hosting visits from schools and youth groups;
- adopting a flexible approach to plot lettings including lettings as small as one pole;
- encouraging non-traditional activities on site including sculpture on the plots and participating in the annual visual arts festival in Oxfordshire ‘Artweeks’.

Elder Stubbs have a wealth of information and expertise and have received much recognition and many awards for their work.

(www.elderstubbs.org.uk)

allotments as community gardens

Many projects involving one or more allotment plots worked in common, and some sites, organised along more traditional lines, can be described as ‘community gardens’ or ‘community allotments’ where people work together for mutual benefit and to help others. These can be directed at regenerating neighbourhoods and strengthening the bonds in a community, producing food in a sustainable fashion, gardening as physical activity

health therapies and as recreation and training for people who are socially disadvantaged. Such projects can serve as a route into conventional allotment gardening, and thus have a useful complementary function where there are vacant plots to be filled.

Community gardens have no particular status in law, and care should be taken when setting up a community garden on a statutory allotment site to ensure that the land is used in accordance with the requirements of the Allotment Acts.

Many community gardens feature small tenanted plots, and the absence of a statutory minimum size for an allotment garden means that these can be accommodated, provided that the predominant use is the growing of fruit and vegetables for the plotholder’s own consumption. Surpluses can be donated to projects such as community cafes, with the same caveat, and where individual tenancies exist within the area worked in common, the outcome (if things go well) may be little different from the good neighbourly practices which are common between friends on a more traditional allotment site.

A variety of examples of successful projects based on people gardening together are presented as models of good practice in this guide. In granting permission for the use of allotments in this way, however, allotment managers also need to be aware of the potential risks associated with working in common. Where a tenancy is granted to a project leader acting on behalf of a group, it is essential that all members of the group are made aware that the continuation of the tenancy depends on collective adherence to the terms of the tenancy (and hence the Allotments Acts). Arrangements should also be in place to manage the consequences of the leader’s unexpected departure – or failure of all participants to comply with the tenancy. Problems can also arise when the ambitions of project members begin to exceed what the law permits, and recourse is made to extra-legal arguments (such as sustainability benefits) to provide political justification for what may become illegal use of the land. And when a project makes extensive investments in facilities and infrastructure, arrangements should be in place to ensure that the land can be returned to use for individual tenancies should the project fold, at no cost to the allotments budget.

Where a project seeks to exist on a more commercial basis, or to dispense with the tenancy arrangements required to maintain a site’s statutory status, a different approach may be required. This may involve using the provisions of Section 27 (5) of the 1908 Act³ to take the land out of use on a temporary basis. This is a particularly important matter for a community garden taking on valuable but essentially commercial or social enterprise functions such as providing accredited training or supplying food for sale to low-income communities.

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, the national representative body for community gardening projects, provides information, help and advice: www.farmgarden.org.uk

See also the ARI factsheet Project Allotment, which provides further discussion of the legal position.

Activity at Tatnam



The Tatnam Organic Patch is a community garden project and Local Agenda 21 initiative in Poole, set up on an allotment site that had been derelict for 25 years. It has six objectives:

- a sustainable food supply;
- a resource for biodiversity;
- a resource for health;
- an educational tool;
- a community resource and open space;
- social inclusion.

The project has run successfully for a number of years and has demonstrated the importance of adaptability in keeping things going. It has found, for example, that volunteers are not always available when you most need them. The project has adapted to this by planting crops that make less intensive and specific demands on time (such as fruit trees), and using permaculture methods that require less labour at peak periods,

(www.geocities.com/poole_1a21/tops.htm)

allotments, healthy eating and sustainable food supplies

By definition, an allotment garden is cultivated by the tenant predominantly to produce fruit and vegetables for consumption by his or her own family. For some ploholders gardening is solely a pastime, but for others the allotment still meets its original purpose: a means for people on low incomes to put food on the table

People on low incomes can be found in most communities putting allotments to good use. Organised food initiatives operating in areas of high social and economic deprivation include allotments as an important source of fresh local produce with an important role to play in community regeneration, as well as education in healthy eating (see allotments and education above). Building on past experience with Food Futures schemes, some allotment associations have built bridges with 5-a-Day projects, healthy living initiatives and community dieticians.

Number 49: youth and community allotment

During the earlier 2000's a consultation carried out by Barnardos North East at the Hive Family Resource Centre in Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear revealed that local people were interested in learning about gardening skills and growing their own food. Funding was obtained through Barnardos NE and URBAN II (European Regional Development Fund) to develop a community allotment project for 13-25 year olds on a plot (number 49) leased from the city council at Seaham Road allotments. In this area of high levels of deprivation, the young people the project works with tend to be from disadvantaged backgrounds and in neither employment, education or training. The project offers a crèche facility based in the nearby Barnardos Hive Project for the benefit of young gardeners with childcare responsibility. The crèche also visits the allotment once a month so that parents and children can learn together about gardening, the environment and healthy eating. Young people aged 15+ can access a Level 1 City and Guilds accredited horticulture skills course delivered by the allotment's staff. The project team continually reinforce the healthy eating and five-a-day messages in their work, by (for example) demonstrating how to cook with a range of fruits and vegetables grown on site.

(Information from Cath Bibby, Youth Allotment Project Manager www.barnardos.org.uk/thehive/microsite_the_hive_faqs.htm)

Allotments for healthy living

A report commissioned by the Manchester Joint Health Unit entitled Allotments for Healthy Living (2006) provides an excellent example of joined-up and evidence-based thinking about the role of allotments in supporting healthy diets. The report covers allotments and community horticulture projects as well as cookery and nutrition skills and training. Recommendations are wide-ranging, and include lavatory facilities on all sites, improved security, a more structured marketing strategy for allotments, and the introduction of a well-marketed GP referral scheme.

(www.foodfutures.info/site/images/stories/a4h1%20allotments%20report.pdf)



In some areas allotment land that is surplus to current requirements has been made available to community food growing projects which have proved successful in attracting grants and garnering support from NHS Primary Care Trusts. Projects like this also stimulate interest in conventional allotment gardening (and thus the demand for plots) amongst groups that might not previously have had either the skills or the confidence to try growing their own.

growing in the
community
second edition

Community food growing in Brighton

WHITEHAWK COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT

The Whitehawk Community Food Project in East Brighton occupies sixteen disused allotment

plots. Its main focus is to raise awareness of the many benefits of organic food, including nutritional issues, and to provide access to fresh produce. This involves informal teaching about different vegetables and herbs, together with various cultivation methods and techniques used to overcome the need for chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This training is achieved by encouraging a 'hands on' participation of volunteers who then learn through practical experience. The site has been turned into a productive garden including fruit, vegetable and herb beds, polytunnels, ponds and an orchard area. Fresh seasonal produce is available for free in return for helping out.

(www.thefoodproject.org.uk/)

Supporting better nutrition in SE London

The Downham Nutrition Partnership, a local charity aiming to help and support people to eat better and therefore be healthier in body and mind, has a plot at Kendale Road Allotments in the London Borough of Bromley. Here anyone is welcome to help – and those with more time can take on a plot of their own. The project runs every Wednesday morning, and one Saturday per month for those at school or in work, but people with their own plots can have a key to the site. It is supported by its own gardener and by a nutritionist who works for the partnership. (www.cafamily.org.uk/lewisham/LE0606.pdf)

The gardener, motivated by the promise of cheap and wholesome food contributes nonetheless to sustainable development through the reduction of food miles from allotment produce. The use of organic methods further enhances the inherent sustainability of allotment gardening (see organic allotments overleaf).

The opportunity to share produce grown on allotments with others is an intrinsic part of the culture of allotment gardening. Surplus produce is often given away to neighbours, friends and relatives. Provided that the allotment is used primarily for its intended purpose, the Allotments Acts do not proscribe the wider distribution of surplus allotment produce.

The popularity of farmers markets has raised the issue of whether it is appropriate and legal to sell allotment produce. Again, it is not illegal under the Allotment Acts to sell produce provided that this is not the primary use to which the plot is given over (see sale of produce p58). Otherwise the plot could fall within the definition of an 'agricultural holding' with different conditions of tenure. An appropriate way forward is to encourage the donation of surplus produce for distribution by the allotment association to a local charity or to the general public through a farmers market or equivalent. The proceeds of sales should be invested in non-commercial areas of common benefit such as site improvements and

the promotion of allotments. The presence in a farmers market, if only on an occasional basis, of fresh, organic allotment-grown produce in the hands of the grower is itself a potent advertisement for the benefits of allotment gardening.

allotments and local sustainable development

The integration of allotment gardening into local sustainable development strategies and campaigns such as Local Agenda 21 can enhance the benefits of allotments and strengthen local participation in green activities. By growing their own food, allotment gardeners already make a contribution to local food production and the reduction of food miles, and this benefit can be enhanced through the distribution of surplus crops within local communities. The adoption of organic methods provides the further benefit of production that is sustainable from an ecological standpoint.

Allotments are a repository of fruit and vegetable varieties which are no longer available through commercial channels. They provide forage, shelter and green corridors for birds, reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates, especially in urban areas where wildlife is otherwise scarce or rural areas dominated by intensive agricultural methods.

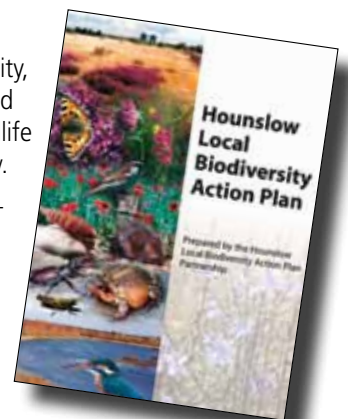
Links built through sustainability initiatives can enhance the role played by allotments in the reuse and recycling of materials that would otherwise go to landfill at public expense. Recycled barrels, discarded guttering and weighted cardboard can help gardeners to get by with less water, while encouragement to use fewer chemicals and compost more green waste as an alternative to the bonfire can help cut pollution of water and air.

While allotment gardeners care passionately for their own small patches of earth, most would probably not see themselves as environmentalists but as ordinary people engaged in a harmless pastime. The incorporation of allotment gardeners into sustainability initiatives is therefore a means for local authorities both to increase participation in and to enhance the popularity of such initiatives.

allotments and biodiversity

Allotments make a distinctive contribution to local biodiversity, highlighted by Natural England in its recent guidance on Wildlife on Allotments (2007) at www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature_In_The_Garden/.

Allotments can make a valuable contribution to conserving and enhancing variety, and in some places (notably on the Isle of Wight)



species have been found that are unique to a single cultivated site. It is important to ensure, therefore, that allotments are included within biodiversity action plans (BAPs) in their own right, and in a manner that is sensitive to the contribution that gardeners make to the day-to-day maintenance of these sites. These plans seek to promote biodiversity through new partnerships between local authorities, allotment associations and local wildlife organisations, and by helping allotment holders to encourage wildlife with bird and bat boxes, ponds, and wildlife-friendly cultivation practices. Good examples include the BAPs for Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire, Hull, and the London Boroughs of Bexley, Hounslow and Sutton.

The biodiversity action plan for the London Borough of Sutton is typical of many in including specific actions for allotments:

- ensure that the open spaces strategy takes account of the wildlife value and potential of allotments;
- ensure that the local development framework has strong policies to protect allotment space against built development, or other change of use leading to loss of wildlife/food sustainability value;
- develop a strategy for wildlife areas in allotments by 2008;
- encourage the use of allotments as areas for wildlife conservation (target two allotment sites per year for wildlife area creation);
- identify the responsibilities of garden and allotment holders under wildlife legislation;
- provide guidance and support to allotment societies applying for funding for conservation projects;
- carry out a survey of uptake of wildlife/environmentally-friendly allotment gardening.

(Full strategy at www.sutton.gov.uk/environment/Biodiversity/)

An allotment site may include some pre-existing natural features such as hedgerows, mature trees, ditches and ponds which merit conservation for their biodiversity value. The allotments strategy could usefully highlight those sites which have significant wildlife interest, and those where the contribution to biodiversity could be developed further.



Even in their choice of crops, allotment gardeners make an important contribution to the maintenance of biodiversity. Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library helps keep alive strains of edible plants no longer of commercial significance which are nevertheless a vital resource for future plant breeding. Many gardeners save their own seeds, process of selection which itself enhances the gene pool. Events such as 'Seedy Sundays' can help encourage this practice (www.seedysunday.org).

The act of cultivation encourages a range of wild plants, weeds which are easily controlled but make their own contribution to biodiversity and are increasingly scarce in the open countryside. Bee-keepers need seasonal forage for their insects, and this can be provided by leaving weeds on vacant plots to flower before they are cleared away. Even the bare soil of allotments is important for some declining species, eg some bees and wasps, and wildflower annuals. Freshly turned, manured soil offers a ready food supply for birds.

Uncultivated corners of individual plots and neglected strips along the boundary of a site can also provide a refuge for amphibians and reptiles, invertebrates and small mammals. Vacant plots can be deliberately managed as wildlife meadow, a technique that is particularly appropriate where soil fertility is low. Some allotment groups have obtained funding to develop 'wildlife gardens' which combine biodiversity value with good access, so that the garden can also be used as an educational resource.

A wildlife garden for Roundshaw allotments

Plot holders in Sutton founded the Roundshaw Allotment and Leisure Group in 2004 with the mission to regenerate their site. Their first success came in 2005 when they were awarded £5000 by the National Lottery's Awards for All to establish a wildlife garden and educational project. The garden was formally opened in 2007 by the mayor of Sutton and allotments author Michael Wale. Pupils from the Amy Johnson primary school have been the first to benefit from the scheme, using the allotments to learn about wildlife, biology and garden botany. (www.roundshaw.co.uk/?ac=raalg)



Worcester City Council's Biodiversity Partnership have produced a leaflet to promote the conservation of slow-worms, a protected species often concentrated on allotments, where they can sometimes be found hibernating in compost heaps or under carpets. Slowworms, like hedgehogs and frogs, are the gardener's friend, subsisting largely on a diet of slugs. (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/biodiversity)

organic allotments

Organic gardening practices, which do not use pesticides, artificial fertilisers or peat, also contribute to maximising biodiversity value and preventing indirect negative environmental effects, such as the destruction of rare peat bogs. Allotment authorities should encourage and support the use of organic alternatives to fertilisers and pesticides by providing technical advice and assistance and by forging links with local and national organic gardening groups. The growing popularity of organic produce also suggests that information on organic gardening, biodiversity and measures to protect and enhance habitats should be included in promotional materials for allotments to encourage greater uptake. Garden Organic is again the primary source for guidance.

growing in the community second edition

An organic show site could be a useful tool in the promotion of organic cultivation of allotments. The Bath Organic Group have such a site comprising six plots on a previously derelict allotment, and offer community activities and training in organic methods (www.bathorganicgroup.org.uk). Organic gardening can also be encouraged through organised competitions such as the 'Best Organic Gardener' class in the Brighton & Hove Allotments Federation's 'Coronation Bowl' allotment competition (www.bhaf.org.uk).

Growing fertility

The London Borough of Ealing has encouraged its ploholders to consider the use of green manure crops as an alternative to chemical fertilisers by providing free seeds, 70kg of which were given away during the summer of 2007 following a successful pilot programme the previous year. Phacelia and crimson clover were selected, to provide winter cover on heavy, wet clay soils and to encourage gardeners to make an early start on their plots in the spring.

Consideration should also be given to organic methods of weed control on vacant plots, thus avoiding the use of any forms of chemical herbicides. Here's a suggestion from Garden Organic:

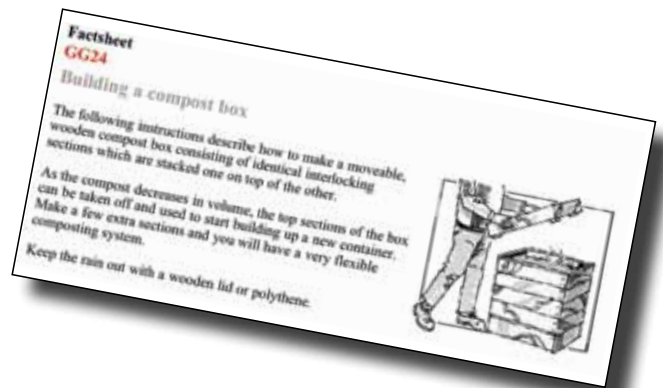
What about ... sowing a long-term fertility building sward on vacant plots? If clover is included, it makes a wonderful forage area for bees, and can be kept 'tidy' as necessary. This mimics what organic farmers do. If the correct mixture is chosen, with long-lived white clover and grass species, and the sward is kept mown at reasonable intervals, it should be possible to keep it going for around five to seven years, storing fertility for the day when the plot is cultivated without allowing it to appear 'derelict'. Although, in practice, derelict plots are often extremely fertile after a 10-year rest, they are also very daunting for a newcomer to take on. Not all sites could do this fertility building, but it would be a great step forward for those that could. Wildflower areas could still be incorporated, but if people regard them as 'weeds', which they might do, a grass/clover ley could act as a buffer zone.

waste management

Allotment gardening generates waste material, the disposal of which requires careful management, but allotment gardening can also make a valuable contribution to the reuse and recycling of wastes, including materials brought in from beyond the allotments and put to new uses. Good practice requires that both the generation and disposal of wastes should be covered by appropriate and holistic strategies that minimise pollution risks and the need for disposal off-site, the latter an important consideration given the environmental and monetary costs of landfill.

Most vegetable wastes produced on allotments can and should be composted and advice should be made available on methods of composting.

Many local authorities, including Birmingham and Bristol, produce excellent information and booklets on composting, and a range of guidance materials on composting and designs for compost bins is also available from Garden Organic.



(from Garden Organic Factsheet GG24 (© Garden Organic) www.gardenorganic.org.uk/factsheets/gg24.php)

The composting process can be hastened by the use of pre-shredded material and authorities should consider providing access to shredders, but care must be taken to ensure proper training in the safe use of the equipment.

Vacant allotments or dedicated bays can also be used by local authorities to compost municipal green wastes: this has been tried in Bristol and Bromley, and is to be expanded under Bristol's latest allotment strategy. In the past much waste from allotments was burnt. Many authorities however have now banned bonfires and some only permit them for the burning of diseased plant material under specified restrictions (see Bonfires). Bonfires must be viewed as a last resort.

Skips can be provided on sites for the removal of non-compostable, non-combustible material (such as glass and metal). Care must be taken to ensure that skips do not become a repository for hazardous wastes such as asbestos and garden chemicals, for which separate waste management regulations apply. Skips must also not become a source of nuisance from odour or vermin, and fly tipping should be guarded against.

It is good practice to encourage ploholders to bring onto site only those items that are of use in allotment gardening, to discourage hoarding, and to invite ploholders to think about how they will dispose of these items before they bring them onto the allotments.

energy and climate change

As noted elsewhere, allotments make a positive contribution to the fight against global warming by reducing food miles (and consequent generation of carbon dioxide) associated with the commercial food system. Recently, however, allotment associations have begun to invest in more sustainable means of meeting their own energy requirements as well, through the installation of wind turbines and photovoltaic panels to generate power for the site hut (see box). Technological change is rapid in this area, and the allotment manager should be on the lookout for new ideas and opportunities – at home and abroad. One site near Dijon in France, for example, has photovoltaic panels on each shed roof; the power generated is used to pump well water into holding tanks (see image opposite). When the tanks are full, excess power is sold to the national power grid – which enhances the financial sustainability of the allotments.

Grow-your-own power on allotments

At the innovative Narborough & Littlethorpe allotments site in Leicestershire, small grants have been obtained from a variety of sources to fund solar panels, which provide hot water to a small kitchen and the wash hand basin in the disabled lavatory. Space heating and lighting for the association's building and workshop is provided by a bio-mass stove burning wood pellets from local coppices and a bio-diesel generator. A photovoltaic panel with it's own built-in security alarm has also been installed at the North Park Avenue Allotments Association's site in Leeds. Wind turbines have been installed on a community meeting space building on allotments in Watford and at Spa Hill allotments in Croydon.

(Information from the Allotments Regeneration Initiative)



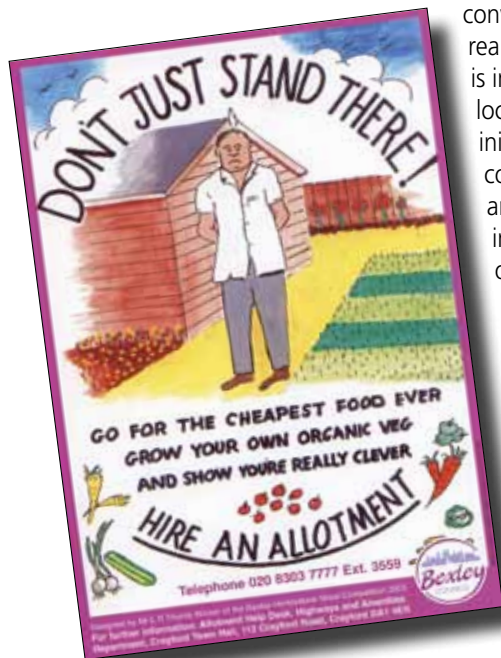
3.2 promotion of allotments

introduction

Good promotion creates demand for allotments and converts latent demand into real demand. Part of promotion is implicit – involvement in local sustainable development initiatives, open days, or collaborations with schools and the health services will inevitably draw the attention of a wider audience to the benefits of allotments.

There are also many different and imaginative examples of explicit promotion, and these all serve to raise awareness of allotment gardening, the existence of plots in the neighbourhood and the procedures for renting a plot. The London

Borough of Bexley ran poster competitions for several years, with the winning entry used to advertise allotments on leaflets as well as on billboards across the borough. Ealing has used humour to similar good effect (see part 3.1). Leicester's allotments have been advertised on the back of a bus, and in 2005 ploholders created an allotment on the pavement in Manchester's city centre, to the delight of passers by.



Show plot in Worcester

The Worcester Allotment Forum has established a permanent show plot in the grounds of a local garden centre. Volunteers are on hand each weekend to chat to customers, explain the benefits of allotments and hand out leaflets on how to get a plot. An annual 'scarecrow festival' is held on the plot, including a live scarecrow and artistic creations, and demonstrations of composting. Funding and other support are provided by the local authority, seed companies and the garden centre itself. (www.worcester.gov.uk/index.php?id=1261)

Potential ploholders need to know that:

- plots exist;
- plots are available;
- plots are affordable;
- plots are located not far from their homes;
- plots are easy to rent;
- help for new tenants is available;
- plots mean good exercise and fresh food.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has produced a free, downloadable factsheet on how allotment associations can Promote the Plot, including advice on promotion drives, nurturing new ploholders and working with the media. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

Promoting allotments to children and families

The Beanstalk project, a partnership between Sutton Parks and the Centre for Environmental Initiatives, aims to encourage young children to grow their own food on one of five participating allotment sites and learn more about gardening in a fun and informal way. By becoming a member of the Beanstalk group children can have a small plot of land on an allotment site, receive a free supply of seeds, borrow gardening tools and get advice from local gardeners. Children can also learn how to grow food organically using no artificial fertilisers or pesticides. The project is open to families and to any groups that include children, such as the Brownies, Beavers, Scouts and Guides.

(www.sutton.gov.uk/leisure/childrenleisureguide/beanproj.htm)

clarifying the procedure for obtaining a plot

In most, if not all cases the procedure for obtaining an allotment plot is straightforward, although quite often prospective tenants have to struggle to discover how the process works and who to contact for information. Sometimes this in itself will dissuade them from taking up an allotment tenancy.



The procedure for obtaining a plot can be put very simply on a single page. For example the following are extracts from the standard letter sent by the London Borough of Sutton:

To gain access to an allotment site you will need to call at the environment and leisure help desk in the civic offices, Sutton, to collect a key. You will be asked to pay a deposit of £10.00 which can be refunded on presentation of a valid receipt.

When you have visited an allotment and found a plot you like, please complete the allotment agreement form enclosed and return it to the address shown above. It is important to return the completed form as soon as you can as other people may be viewing the site and the plot will be allocated to the first person who returns their form.

Once your agreement has been received, a letter confirming your tenancy will be sent to you with an invoice for the rent due.

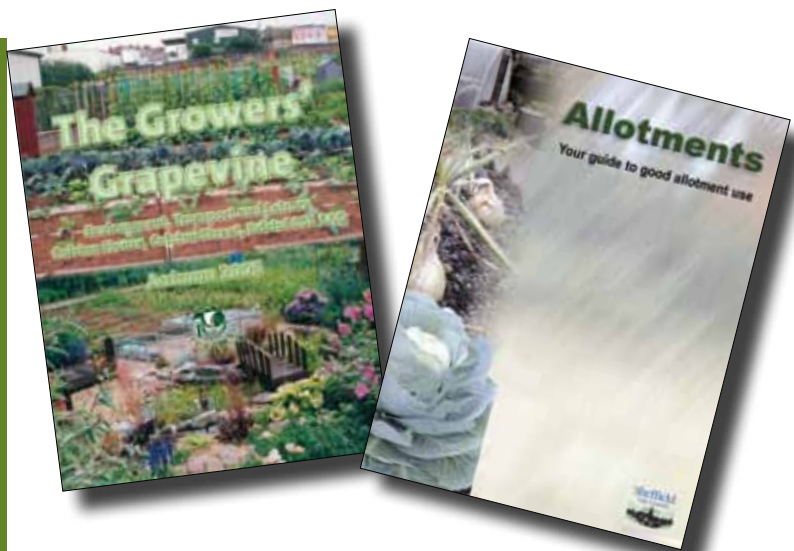
Information is then given about the size of the available plots, the rent to be paid and any concessions.

Ideally, contact details and information on plot availability should be made easily available in council contact centres and on the local authority's website (see part 3.5). At local level, information can be provided on the allotment notice board – which should be visible from outside the site – so that a single telephone enquiry or e-mail will enable the prospective tenant to make an application for a plot.

Leading authorities such as Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham and Sheffield produce excellent allotment packs which contain not only details of how to obtain a plot but also tips and hints on gardening and related topics. Other authorities have produced handbooks that perform a similar function: Great Aycliffe Town Council's Allotment tenants' handbook is a good example (www.greataycliffe.sedgefield.gov.uk/dms/resources/includes/file.php?id=2268), and includes a distinctive allotments charter that specifies the quality of service that gardeners can expect from the authority. The more interesting and readable the information is the more likely the prospective tenant is to pursue a tenancy.

All of the costs involved should be clearly stated and locations of allotment sites provided on a sketch map. Arrangements can be made for site representatives to be on hand to greet prospective gardeners and show them available plots.

Where sites are managed by associations, the contact details of representatives of the association should be readily available and up to date, and this information distributed by the local authority alongside details for directly managed sites.



Bristol City Council issues new ploholders with an allotment tenants pack which contains the tenancy agreement, information on gardening courses and organic gardening, composting leaflets, the Growers Grapevine newsletter, a copy of Kitchen Garden magazine, and even free seeds (when available).

Tenants' packs need not be expensive to prepare. Many information leaflets and booklets are available free of charge and organisers of events will be very willing to have their flyers and event diaries included in the packs. Some national gardening magazines will also supply excess back copies for nothing to council allotment officers.

Some associations have also had success with starter packs. The pack for Greenbank Lane allotments in Liverpool (based on an excellent handbook) was funded with a £1000 grant from the National Lottery.



on-site and other advertising of vacancies

Although many authorities are active in promoting allotments others may neglect this task. 'The Future for Allotments' inquiry report noted that:

'Some authorities pursue an active approach to maintaining vibrant and fully-occupied allotment sites whilst others appear at best lethargic and at worst to be instrumental in encouraging the decline of interest in allotments. Without a positive local approach, it seems likely that much of the demand for allotments will always remain latent.'

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Allotments need to be actively promoted and the following should be considered:

- a clear and simple procedure for obtaining an allotment;
- a clear indication of vacancies at each site, accessible both centrally and at the site entrance;
- information on plot rent (many prospective tenants will be unaware of how affordable allotments really are);
- contact numbers of either the council allotment manager (or officer in charge of allotment letting) or of the managing association, available at the site and on all publicity documents;
- a strategy for advertising the availability and benefits of allotments, not only through conventional means but also targeted at groups who are currently under-represented in the allotment gardening community;
- a periodic assessment and review of the advertising strategy;
- an awareness of other authorities' advertising initiatives.



This example from Birmingham shows how effective a good marketing strategy can be:

As a response to falling levels of allotment tenancies, Birmingham City Council used part of the monies resulting from the sale of surplus allotment land at Bordesley Green (the Bordesley Green Capital Receipts Fund) to sponsor an annual marketing campaign to generate new tenancies particularly amongst women and ethnic communities. A promotional pack was designed and through the council's marketing and PR section a number of approaches were employed. This included bus and press advertisements, street posters and media events. In 1999 the campaign produced over 120 new tenants and had attracted over 60 new tenancies by early 2000. It is intended to promote sites that have been refurbished in the near future.

Success will be achieved by a sustained effort, (an annual campaign in this example), and not by a one-off event. The example also underlines the need to monitor the effectiveness of any marketing. This can be achieved not only by measuring the number of new tenancies but also by monitoring the number of enquiries. A failure to convert a rush of enquiries into tenancies may require a reassessment of current allotment management or quality.

Consider also:

- providing times when allotment sites are open to the public so that prospective tenants can look around;
- organising an 'allotments fair' early in the year when prospective plotholders can inspect a site, talk to site representatives and take up a vacant and prepared plot on the same day;
- a postcard drop targeted at selected areas - particularly those close to a newly refurbished allotment site;
- working in partnership with voluntary organisations concerned with promoting sustainability and healthy living;
- assisting and promoting courses on allotment cultivation at local colleges;
- organising a competition to design a promotional poster - this could be one of the events at a horticultural show.

open days and National Allotments Week

Many successful associations will confirm that the most successful form of promotion is the simplest: word of mouth. If so, then the second must be the open day. If visitors have an opportunity to experience at first hand the pleasure that individual plotholders derive from their pastime, the taste of fresh vegetables pulled straight from the ground, and the camaraderie between people that turns an allotment site into a living community, then the chances are that they will consider taking on a plot. In recent years associations have been encouraged to open their gates as part of National Allotments Week, which is organised by the National Allotment Gardens Trust (www.NAGTrust.org) each August. In this way, local promotion can be augmented by national publicity, and by the additional credibility that this brings. Open days can also be combined with other annual celebrations, such as Mothers Day or Apple Day, and with promotional events. For example, an exhibition on allotments is held in Southend Library during National Allotments Week, featuring allotment photographs, fresh produce displays, and a free prize draw of allotment books and DVDs. This event is organised through a partnership between the library, Springfield allotments and the council's allotments officer. Allotment gardeners in Bexley have a display stand in the main shopping centre during National Allotment Week that celebrates the value of allotments to families. Children have fun decorating empty egg shells or small flowerpots with faces, then fill them with cotton wool; sprinkling with water and fast-growing salad rape seeds so that they can watch the hair on their allotment 'egg heads' grow.

Goodmayes walk guide

Seven Kings and Goodmayes Allotment Society in Redbridge have included self-guided walks in their open days to encourage a wider appreciation by the public of the social and environmental benefits of allotment gardening.



Selling the plot at Harland Avenue ...

The Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners started holding open days in 2005, targeting allotment sites with vacant plots. In August 2006 approximately 1500 flyers were delivered by hand to residents surrounding the Harland Avenue site in Sidcup. On the open day itself over 200 people visited the site and the plot holders signed up 36 new tenants, filling most of the vacant plots. Retention has been excellent: a year later all of the recruits bar one were still actively tending their new plots.

Things to do at an open day ...

The programme for the July 2007 open day at Trumpington allotments in Cambridge features:

- Scarecrow competition** - prizes for scary and/or artistic scarecrows. Build your scarecrow on the day or bring him/her/it along. Dress a scarecrow against the clock!
- Produce sale** - lovely fresh vegetables and fruit direct from our plots.
- Childrens trail** - young people of all ages can explore the site following an exciting trail.
- Gardening bring and buy** - bargains for your garden. We would be happy to accept suitable donations: tools, excess (in date) seed, and so on.
- Tombola** - with fabulous prizes.
- Composting** - with Master Composters.
- Beekeeping** - with Cambridgeshire Beekeepers Association.
- School garden project** - Fawcett school now has a garden project.
- Wildlife Trust/Cambridge City Greenways Project** - information about local conservation and in particular 'The Grand Scales of Cambridge' - this year's reptile and amphibians survey.

(www.allotments.net:8080/allotments/Trumpington/openday2007.htm)

promotion across boundaries

In some parts of the country and most notably in London, where the innermost boroughs are exempt from the statutory duty to provide allotments, long waiting lists can be found in one local authority area while vacant plots await tenants in the authority next door. Bringing supply and demand together across boundaries can occur spontaneously when an authority is keen to see vacant plots let; but allotment managers can also work together to facilitate this process. Further sharing of information on vacancies and waiting lists across the capital was one of the key recommendations of the London Assembly's environment committee report on allotments, A Lot to Lose (2006) (www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/environment.jsp). The London Borough of Camden, for example, has been able to bring some relief to applicants who might otherwise wait several years for a plot by encouraging them to apply for plots in Barnet, Haringey and Brent, with the active support of the allotment officers and managers of devolved sites in both boroughs. This is a model of cross-boundary working to ensure that the open space needs of all are met, no matter where they live. However this is achieved, the result is likely to be an infusion of enthusiasm and commitment to allotment gardening through a process of self-selection, given the effort involved on the gardener's part in travelling a greater distance to secure the use of a plot.

promotion and the press

Newspapers and magazines (and not just gardening magazines) carry stories about allotments. These may be descriptions of competitions, human-interest stories or simply comments on lifestyle. Local radio stations can also be a powerful way to communicate information about allotments, with items in otherwise non-gardening programmes being particularly effective in reaching newer or latent users and excluded groups, especially where multiple languages are involved. All of this helps to publicise allotments and allotment gardening to a wider public. The allotment manager should understand how to prepare and distribute press releases and how to cultivate and work with the media.



In larger authorities this will be carried out in co-operation with the press officer but in small ones they may be expected to do the task alone. Specific training in media management skills may therefore be helpful. From topics such as competitions to personal achievements, school projects, health projects, site successes, regeneration, installation of new facilities and many others, each article is an opportunity to advance allotment gardening and to make it a more visible process for obtaining an allotment plot.

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Allotment managers should also encourage activities that will help to generate widespread and positive publicity for allotments. Open days and local horticultural shows are good examples, along with participation by plottolders and sites in competitions such as the national best-kept allotments competition run by the National Allotment Gardens Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society's annual Britain in Bloom (www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/index.asp).

assistance for new tenants

Many local authorities offer some form of incentive or assistance to new tenants. The simplest of these is a concessionary rent offered for the first year of the tenancy for anyone who takes over an overgrown plot. Bristol City Council goes further, and offers half rent for the first two years of a tenancy. There is an argument, however, for offering discounts only in the second year. Experience has shown that in some cases giving a rent reduction in the first year results in plottolders simply not bothering to get going, since they've invested nothing in the plot, which then becomes even more derelict.

Bristol City Council recognises that there is nothing more demoralising to a potential tenant than having to face an uncultivated plot. On the other hand, there is a cost to the council in bringing a plot up to a suitable condition for a tenant to cultivate. This issue can be addressed by using low-impact and low-cost methods of reclaiming and preparing overgrown areas. And where a tenant allows a plot to fall into an uncultivated state, the council believes that the cost of clearing the plot should be recovered, as permitted under the Allotment Acts.

Newcomers to gardening are also likely to benefit from training courses in gardening techniques, offered on site or in collaboration with local colleges. At a more informal level, long-established plottolders are often happy to pass on their knowledge and skills to new gardeners.

Consideration should also be given to making available to new tenants plots smaller than the traditional 10 poles, a particular benefit for those who lack the time or the need to achieve the level of self-sufficiency in fruit and vegetables that the traditional plot presumes. New tenants on small plots who find that allotments are definitely for them can always move up to a larger plot later on. Conversely, reducing the size of the plot for a tenant who is in difficulty or whose circumstances have changed can be a useful way of increasing the retention rate amongst existing plottolders.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has published a free downloadable factsheet *Restore the plot* which examines various aspects of restoring derelict plots back to a productive condition. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

Basic allotment gardening for beginners

At Preston Lane allotments in Stockton, training in basic gardening skills and plot management is provided to help newcomers to look after their new plots and improve retention rates. The training is delivered through a partnership with Stockton Adult Education, with infrastructure (a recycled classroom, compost toilet and tools) financed with a £3500 grant received from the National Lottery's Awards for All in 2006. A generator was added thanks to support from the Co-operative Community Dividend. Learners have ranged in age from their 20s to their 80s, and most of the training is hands-on using what had been a spare, untenanted plot. The classes have been a huge success, and the allotments now have a long waiting list. (For more information see the NSALG's *Allotment and Leisure Gardener*, Issue 4, 2006)

active promotion

The failure of a local authority to promote its allotments properly entails a degree of risk, since disposal of surplus allotment land requires permission from the secretary of state under Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925. One of the secretary of state's criteria is that they are satisfied that "the authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites". Lack of demand cannot be cited if there has been no attempt to convert any latent demand into uptake of tenancies by methods of promotion similar to those described above.

3.3 allotment rents and other sources of funding

fixing of rents

In most cases rent will be the only income derived from an allotment site and expenditures will be manifold. These will include not only site maintenance and repair but also administrative costs and promotion. They cannot be sustained without adequate finance. The level of rent should be set so that, together with other available funds and incomes, there is sufficient funding to meet both present and projected needs of the site or portfolio of sites. Otherwise the quality of sites and facilities will inevitably suffer.

Although allotment rents are generally low, even small rises may provoke fierce criticism and sometimes threats to vacate plots. Many ploholders are unaware of the true costs of providing allotment sites and maintaining facilities and so information outlining those costs may be useful in allaying such criticisms.

In some cases ploholders may be willing to pay for the better facilities and promotion that will ensure that sites remain full. Keeping rents low under these circumstances prevents the development of the site to its true potential. Where raising rents is not a viable option, encouraging ploholders to accept devolved management arrangements would be appropriate to help reduce costs.

When fixing the allotment rent the following factors therefore need to be considered:

- long-term financial sustainability
- the nature, quality and cost of facilities provided (and desired);
- expenditure on promotion and administration;
- the present level of rent and its historic tradition;
- the likely effect of rent levels on plot take-up.

For the sake of comparability the following factors may also be useful:

- the level of allotment rents in surrounding areas;
- the level of agricultural rent in the area;
- charges to users of other outdoor recreational or leisure activities provided by the authority.

In addition, if the strategy is for the self-financing of allotments...

... there is a need for accrual of funds for future capital expenditure or maintenance programmes relating to the allotment sites. This assumes that the allotment site is in a fully maintained condition and does not require any immediate expenditure, and that accrual of funds is for maintenance or replacement work that would be carried out in the normal course of events, such as the eventual renewal of gates or fencing.

rent concessions

Rent concessions are permitted by allotment law and are granted by many councils to retired and unemployed tenants and occasionally to those who have held plots for a long time. Concessions should be considered as a method of promoting allotments to those most in need of the health and economic benefits that may be derived from allotment gardening.

rent collection

Most allotment rents are paid in advance. However, Section 10 of the 1950 Allotments Act states that if the yearly rent exceeds twenty five shillings (£1.25) (7) then it is not permissible to provide for more than one quarter's rent to be payable in advance. Clearly, if this condition were applied it would cause higher costs and inconvenience, so rent is normally paid in advance by agreement between the tenant and the authority. This is set out in the tenancy agreement.

renewal dates

Although in the past the traditional date for renewal of allotment tenancies has been March 25 this date has no legal significance. A renewal date in the autumn provides the allotments manager with details of ploholders who do not intend to renew their tenancies and hence the number and location of vacant plots. This gives ample opportunity for preparation of the plots for new tenants. An autumn renewal date is also likely to be convenient if tenants pay their rents to allotment associations, since allotments are still very active at this time and association secretaries may thus find it easier to contact their members.

other sources of funding

Although rents – and subsidies from council tax revenues – are usually the only regular forms of income for allotments, funding for specific projects or equipment may be found from a number of different sources.

Substantial if sporadic funding may be available from disposals (see part 2.3), which must be applied to securing replacement sites or improving the remaining portfolio. Funding for new sites can be secured through Section 106 agreements with developers: this is how new allotments have been funded at Cambourne in Cambridgeshire (www.cambourneparishcouncil.gov.uk/?q=node/34).

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Other types of funding will only be available to associations and will require that general charitable objectives be met. Ancillary benefits from funded projects (such as improvements to access and security) can help improve the site as a whole, however, and enhance the enjoyment of all ploholders, not just the direct beneficiaries of the project itself.

The allotment manager should become familiar with the different and diverse means of funding available and should make use of them when appropriate. They should also be able to help and advise ploholders, allotment associations and groups using allotments of where to seek funding of their own. Frequently, those involved in the voluntary sector are very aware of many of the schemes that provide grants, and good communication between the allotment manager and such groups will be beneficial to all.

It can be a big step for an allotment association to start fundraising. Not only is there much to learn, but there may also need to be significant changes to the way the association is constituted, the standards of both democratic and financial accountability to which it conforms, and the overall quality of governance, particularly if large sums are sought. Funders may require evidence that associations have effective policies in place to cover such issues as equal opportunities and environmental impacts. These are matters on which the allotments manager may advise – or signpost sources of advice and expertise available elsewhere. The network of Allotments Regeneration Initiative Mentors can offer advice and sample documents from volunteers who have been successful in raising funds for their own sites, and have personal knowledge from the inside of the pitfalls which associations should avoid.

Specific and wide-ranging advice on fundraising for allotments is available in the ARI information pack A Guide to Fundraising for Allotment Associations, which is available as a free download from the ARI website at www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari. The pack also includes advice on reducing the need for money through recycling, the use of volunteer labour, and ways of generating additional income (within the limits imposed by the Allotment Acts), such as sales of produce, trading huts, events and social enterprises.

For additional advice on both national and local sources of grant funding, as well as training and practical support in completing applications, the local office of the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) should be the first port of call, particularly when associations are involved which have little previous experience of fundraising: (www.navca.org.uk).

Up-to-date information on grants available to charities and community groups can also be accessed through dedicated funding websites:

GRANTfinder: www.grantfinder.co.uk

FunderFinder: www.funderfinder.org.uk

The following are examples of funding sources that have a track record of approving grants to allotment associations for allotment projects.

Awards for All

Awards for All is a lottery grants programme aimed at local communities throughout the UK. Grants of between £300 and £10,000 are available to support participation in art, sport, heritage and community activities, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community. Applications can be made at any time. The application form is short and simple, and the outcome is given to the applicant within eight weeks. (www.awardsforall.org.uk)

Local grant-making trusts

There are almost 10,000 UK grant-making trusts, the vast majority of which are small and give out a few thousand pounds per grant. By linking up with the local CVS applicants can research which trusts have criteria that suit their funding needs. This usually results in several applications being made for small amounts, but these amounts can add up to a substantial income for a specific project or theme.

B&Q

B&Q's Better Neighbour Grant Scheme provides £50 to £500 (at retail cost) of B&Q materials; for example, pond liners, plants, and peat-free compost or paints labelled low or minimal VOC for redecoration projects. There must be evidence of commitment from the applicants and from the local community to the project. Application is easy: contact is made via B&Q stores. The site of the project must however be within 12 miles of a B&Q store.

support in kind

Some commercial organisations are happy to provide 'support in kind' to worthwhile projects, and many (such as BT) have staff volunteering schemes that can supply willing (and very able) helpers. Approaches to suitable local businesses with well thought-out sponsorship proposals may pay dividends when particular items are required, not least through the positive publicity for allotments in local media that donations can generate. Of course, sometimes materials alone are not enough: extra hands are required too, particularly for regeneration projects. Organisations such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (www.btcv.org.uk) are happy to assist with projects which provide environmental benefits. In some places fruitful approaches have been made to the probation service, which can provide offenders on community service orders with an opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of allotments through work on construction and maintenance, under appropriate supervision.

Support in kind in Cardiff allotment regeneration

In January 2006 the Cardiff 'Communities First' team joined forces with IBM staff, BTCV volunteers and the Splott Communities First Police to kick-start the Pengam Green Allotments Regeneration Project by clearing away rubbish and brambles from derelict plots. The allotments are located in Cardiff's Splott ward, an area of high social deprivation. The project aims to deliver multiple benefits to the local community, including cheap fresh vegetables in an area of high food poverty and ill health and an opportunity for training and exercise for young and old alike.

([www.archive.cardiff.gov.uk/SPNR/communities_first/Splott/Splott %20Projects/pengam_allotment_clean.htm](http://www.archive.cardiff.gov.uk/SPNR/communities_first/Splott/Splott%20Projects/pengam_allotment_clean.htm))

A win-win approach to young offenders ...

A partnership scheme was set up in 2002 between Manchester City Council's Young Offenders Team (YOT), the Sports Development Unit and Parks and Open Spaces under which young offenders put something back into the community by helping to clear 30 derelict allotment plots over the period of funding. Only plots that actually had tenants lined up waiting to start straight away and that could be cleared in one day were included. This meant that when the young offenders came along the following week they could see that their efforts had not been wasted, but were appreciated and being followed through by the new ploholders. The incentive to take part in the scheme tapped into young people's enthusiasm for sport. When the job was done they were given vouchers that could be traded for training or equipment relating to their sport of choice - to encourage a positive alternative to re-offending. (Information supplied by Jim Canniffe, Manchester SDU)

There is a Young Offenders Team in every local authority area in England and Wales: contact your local YOT Manager to see if a similar scheme might be appropriate in your area. For further information on the Youth Justice System, visit www.yjb.gov.uk.

Hempland Lane allotments in York were looking under-occupied and overgrown in December 2002 when the newly-appointed council allotments officer arranged a meeting with all tenants and helped them to form an association. Members helped clear plots head-high in brambles and advertised the site with posters put up locally. Council grants were obtained to help renovate an ancient railway carriage for use as a shop and to make a car park and to renovate etc. The shop has made a great focus for the site, supplying local people with spare produce as well as selling gardening materials. A grant from People's Places enabled the association to convert two plots into a paved area with raised beds for gardeners with disabilities. Most of the construction was done by the Community Payback teams of North Yorkshire Probation Service, who have plots on site. The allotments have been transformed, and now have a waiting list for new tenants.

(Source: Allotments Regeneration Initiative Newsletter, Winter 2006)

bringing it all together ...

Past experience suggests that the most successful associations have accessed funding and support in kind from a variety of sources, on the principle that small amounts of money or goods can soon add up to a sum that can transform a site. This approach seems to work better than large, one-off applications to highly competitive funding schemes, where allotment associations can be at a disadvantage compared to general environmental, health or education projects that can more easily prove a wider circle of beneficiaries. Applications for small grants (especially to local funders) usually involve less paperwork and reporting, and may require fewer compromises in order to meet the funder's criteria.



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3.4 devolved management

The benefits and key issues involved in schemes for devolved management are examined in part 2.2 and in the sources of reference cited there.

The London Borough of Bromley has established a useful precedent by undertaking surveys of the associations which manage its 52 sites, all of which are under fully devolved management. Each survey covers tenancy rates, rents, facilities and other conventional matters, and includes a business plan, which focuses each association's attention on how it might improve the quality of services provided and, where necessary, how those improvements might be resourced. This information has then been fed into decisions about where the local authority's own capital investments in allotment improvements can best be concentrated. Investment decisions are made after discussions between the authority's officers, members and the Bromley Allotment and Leisure Gardens Federation at meetings of the Allotments and Leisure Gardens Consultative Panel.

Achieving the benefits of devolved management depends upon effective consultation with ploholders and associations in formulating the scheme, so that the degree of devolution matches the capacity of the association to deliver the services concerned. Ongoing support is also required from the local authority, and from representative bodies (such as the NSALG), to sustain the enthusiasm and develop the skills of devolved managers, along with periodic review to ensure that all is well.

Supporting devolved management requires skills beyond those of administration and horticulture. Local authority allotment offices must assume the additional role of a 'volunteer co-ordinator' in working with local associations if their work is to be effective. To ensure this, they should seek advice when necessary from sections of the council responsible for community development or additional training and guidance on the management of volunteers. While devolved management brings new challenges for officers, it can also bring rewards and career enhancement when the results of devolved management demonstrate a marked improvement in the quality of the service delivered to local communities. It is also important not to lose track of the fact that associations act as the council's 'agent' under devolved management. Ultimate responsibility for the service still resides with the local authority, which has an obligation to ensure that sites are managed in accordance with key customer service policies such as equal opportunities, and with due regard for financial probity and health and safety issues.

Although special concessions (such as reduced rents) may be available to ploholders who take on particularly onerous tasks on the council or association's behalf, in reality the workload involved for volunteers far exceeds the value of such compensations. Enthusiasm and commitment are essential, therefore, as is the ongoing support of the allotments officer. Sustaining devolved management involves strategies to cope at those times when enthusiasm and commitment subside. Where this is merely a temporary fatigue, the offer of training or a visit to another site to share experiences may prove enough. Where the problem is more serious, however, it may be time to encourage new volunteers to take a higher profile, while honouring the efforts and achievements of the current management team. It may also be necessary to reduce the responsibilities associated with devolved management, by switching to a scheme involving a greater input from the local authority, if only temporarily.

leases

In implementing a scheme for devolved management, it is important to ensure that the allotment association taking on responsibility has an appropriate and democratic constitution (models are available from the NSALG and ARI). The lease (if the arrangement is more than simply a licence) must be properly drafted, properly understood by the lessee, and of a duration that will encourage investment by the association. It should include review mechanisms to ensure that Best Value is being delivered, and provisions for the inspection of records to ensure that duties performed by the association as an agent of the council are properly undertaken and documented.

public liability insurance

The lease should also include a requirement for the association to take out an appropriate scheme of insurance to indemnify the local authority and protect the association, its volunteers and its members as well as third parties on site – with or without permission. Some insurers offer policies specific to the needs of allotment sites and associations; again, representative bodies can offer advice.

The benefits of devolved management: in Bury ...

Diggle Lane is one of 25 allotment sites in Bury, a local authority that acknowledges the benefits of devolved management and is keen for more allotment associations to get involved. The Diggle Lane Allotment Society were reluctant at first, because their site had poor fencing, hazardous paths, and 20 out of the 55 plots were derelict and untenanted. After negotiations, in which the local Allotments Regeneration Initiative Mentor provided advice and support to the society, Bury Metropolitan Borough Council agreed to repair the fencing and paths before the licence to run the site was signed. Under devolved management the society now collect rents, arranges and terminates tenancies, and carries out a range of other management duties. In just two years the site has been transformed: all plots have been filled and the waiting list has grown to over 60. Some plots have been split in half to make it easier for plotters to keep them well cultivated. The society runs plant sales and open days which generate income, it has entered the Bury in Bloom competition, and now has a community shed and a garage to store the horticultural machinery purchased to help keep the site in good order.

(www.bury.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/ParksAndRecreation/Allotments/default)

...and Thurrock

In 2002 many of Thurrock's allotments were overgrown, untidy and vulnerable to fly-tipping. But following Thurrock council's decision in 2003 to allow allotment holders to manage their own sites themselves, the allotments have been transformed. Twenty-three associations were formed throughout Thurrock under a steering group, with the council agreeing to invest £200,000 to improve security and facilities across all the sites. Mollands Lane allotment in South Ockendon is one of the sites that has been transformed. Before the scheme, only seven of the 30 allotment plots were occupied. Now all the plots have been taken and there is a waiting list. Like other allotment associations, the Mollands Lane Allotment Society has been able to access funding not available to local authorities, starting with a £180 grant from B&Q's Better Neighbours Grant Scheme to help set up a wildlife garden. The bees from the site's own hive produce Mollands Lane Allotment Society Honey, which can be bought on-site. Thurrock's cabinet member for environment says: "Some of the allotment schemes in Thurrock are nothing short of amazing. They've gone way beyond the idea of just producing fruit, vegetables and flowers; we now have orchard gardens, beehives, wildlife areas and ponds. The self-management of allotments has breathed life back into neglected allotments, making a huge difference to our environment."

(www.thurrock.gov.uk/news/content.php?page=story&ID=1809)



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3.5 communication and consultation

consulting with ploholders and associations

Effective communication and consultation with allotment associations and individual ploholders (both present and future) is an essential component of good practice. This is particularly the case when an allotments strategy is to be prepared which will chart a new course for the development of the service. For many ploholders allotments are havens of tranquility, places towards which they have a strong sense of ownership. Changes (or rumours of changes) which threaten to disturb that tranquility or other aspects of the established order may not be popular, particularly if they are made without prior consultation, explanation or warning. No single group can reasonably expect to exercise a veto over how a resource for the whole community is used. It is important however to respect the fact that without the continuing enthusiasm of existing ploholders, sometimes in the face of discouraging circumstances, allotments may not have survived as a resource with so much potential for the future. The allotments manager should always try to handle relations with ploholders with the utmost consideration and courtesy, and in accordance with the local authority's policies on customer care.

A consultative framework, such as an Allotments Consultative Panel (as in Bristol and the London Borough of Bromley – usually with representative membership), or an allotments forum (as in Worcester, Swindon and the London Borough of Brent – usually with open membership), enables effective communication between the authority, the ploholders and their associations. Such a body requires a constitution or document defining its terms of reference and its structure. Consultation can also be with federations of allotment associations, which can be a very effective voice for allotment gardeners, in part because of the wider perspective that they can command. The active federations in the Wirral, Manchester and Brighton are all good examples with particularly useful websites:

www.wirralfedallotments.20m.com
www.amas.org.uk
www.bhaf.org.uk

Meetings should be open wherever possible, the press and public permitted to attend, and agendas and minutes of the meetings should be published and made available to those wishing to see them.

Additionally, an annual general meeting will allow the authority to report its performance directly to the ploholders, and provides them with an opportunity to express their views and opinions – something that can also be achieved using regular opinion surveys.

resolving disputes

It is essential to recognise that there are many different groups and individuals who inevitably hold diverse opinions about allotments in general or on what happens on a particular site. There may be long-established ploholders who appear resistant to change; recent tenants and other voluntary groups keen to introduce new facilities and a wider range of activities; local residents with concerns about security or traffic congestion; and different council departments with very different views of allotments. Often these different views only surface when changes, however well-intentioned, are proposed or introduced. Things can then easily descend into conflict around issues, with groups taking positions from which they will not be budged — much pointing of fingers and not enough listening. A breakdown of trust ensues leading to a general 'them and us' culture of conflict and suspicion in which it can be very difficult to achieve anything positive.

Getting the process of communication and consultation right is a skilled and time-consuming business. It is not just the responsibility of the allotments manager, but of everyone concerned to ensure a positive future for allotments. Here are just a few ideas to help you along the road of effective communication:

- identify all the 'stakeholder groups' who might have a view, in advance of any particular issue surfacing;
- try to build trust and rapport with all groups by meeting key individuals on an informal basis outside 'set-piece' meetings;
- provide regular communication to all stakeholders through newsletters (see below), posters and meetings;
- understand the history behind a particular site or issue. Memories can be long and scars slow to heal and this may provide clues in finding new solutions to old problems;
- seek to understand groups' underlying needs and concerns that are likely to be genuine, rather than getting stuck on any particular stated position that may appear unhelpful or antagonistic;
- try to identify and build on shared hopes and needs between stakeholder groups, like 'we all want the land to stay as allotments' or 'we all want somewhere that minimises the nuisance to local residents' rather than the specific issues that divide such as 'we don't want the new car park there';
- focus discussion around issues not personalities;
- if you want to make a change, then design a process to engage all groups at the earliest planning stage, rather than when ideas are set in stone.

At times of major change, or when you are developing an allotments strategy, you could consider employing independent specialists to help design and facilitate a dialogue process. The use of an independent facilitator enables everyone to be part of the process and builds trust as it ensures that the dialogue is genuinely non-partisan.

In situations of open conflict between factions where there appears no prospect of moving forward, independent mediation may be an effective way of trying to resolve disputes in a constructive way.

At individual level, a dispute can arise when a plotholder is judged to be in breach of his or her tenancy agreement or the allotment rules in some particular. As the demand for allotments increases such disputes may well become more frequent, as tenants who are judged to be 'bad' are accused of blocking the way into gardening of others who would do a 'better job' and 'improve the site'. Fifty years ago there was a uniform view of what 'good cultivation' might consist of, but with the development of organic methods, the expression of different gardening cultures from around the world, and the recognition of multiple benefits from allotment gardening, it has become much harder to define the limits of acceptable practice, or to be certain that complaints framed around poor cultivation are not actually masking unacceptable attitudes towards difference and hidden forms of discrimination. Tenancy agreements should spell out the circumstances under which termination is justified. It is essential, however, to have in place a system for independent appeals (such as an appeals panel) to ensure that due process has been followed. Any termination must be based on an interpretation of the tenancy agreement that is informed not only by the Allotments Acts, which are very prescriptive in parts, but also by local codes of customer care. Plotholders must be treated fairly and reasonably and with due regard for their rights under the Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Acts. This responsibility applies equally to allotment associations acting on the local authority's behalf under a devolved management scheme. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens offers a mediation service to its members (www.nsalg.org.uk).

site contacts and representatives

Nominated site contacts and elected site representatives can provide an effective line of communication between the allotment authority and the plotholders. The precise roles that these volunteers perform will depend on the degree of devolved management (if any) of local allotment sites.

The functions and responsibilities of site representatives and contacts need to be clearly stated, and in many cases some form of inducement or payment is given in recognition of their efforts. For example, Bristol City Council offers representatives a 50 per cent discount on plot rent (up to three plots) and a full discount for those representatives who manage plot letting and waiting lists.

The responsibilities of site contacts and representatives may require them to:

- act as a communication link between plotholders and the allotments manager;
- meet new gardeners to show them available plots;
- notify the allotments manager of site problems and maintenance requirements eg security, fence repairs, vandalism, vermin;
- investigate uncultivated plots;
- keep notice boards up to date;
- attend meetings of the representatives forum.

Additionally, depending on the degree of devolved management, they may:

- manage waiting lists, plot letting and inspections;
- collect rents;
- manage the site budget;
- arrange for minor repairs and maintenance to be carried out.

The local authority should ensure that training and/or written guidance is produced for site representatives. Regular communication with site representatives will ensure that potential site issues can be resolved before escalating.

newsletters

Council newsletters such as Bristol's Growers Grapevine are a very useful form of communication between the allotment authority and its plotholders. Similarly, association newsletters help devolved managers to keep in touch with their members. There is rarely a shortage of material for newsletters: details of forthcoming events, advice and information, features and editorials, contact names and telephone numbers of people in authority. Newsletters can also include questionnaires for gathering information regarding current gardening practices or opinions. This information can be used to promote particular aspects, such as organic methods or rainwater collection.

One of the problems associated with newsletters is their distribution. Even if an authority is able to provide a copy to each individual plotholder, it may have to rely on associations to distribute them, unless they can be included with the rental invoice. Many newsletters are pinned up on notice boards, yet their design in terms of size of typeface and headings is not particularly suitable for such display. Particular consideration, therefore, needs to be given to the design of printed newsletters, and to alternative means of communication, including making newsletters available on the internet. The downloadable newsletter of the Association of Manchester Allotment Societies, *The Plot Holder*, is an excellent example (www.allotment-holder.com).



the internet



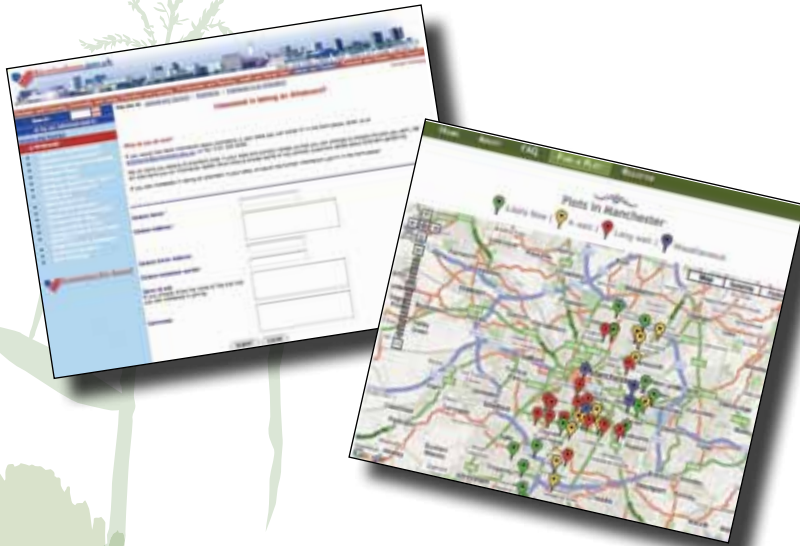
The internet hosts an enormous resource on all matters related to allotment gardening. Search tools afford allotment managers easy access to detailed information relating to allotment promotion and use – though care should be taken to ensure that information obtained through this route is up-to-date.

The internet is also a good way of finding out about good practice demonstrated by other local authorities: a search tool that gives

easy access to the allotment service websites in any area can be found at:
www.local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRRedirect/index.jsp?LGSL=510&LGIL=0

In addition to becoming the medium of choice for distributing information about allotments, including downloads of key documentation, a growing number of authorities also accept on-line applications for plots and advertise vacancies on their website.

When advertising or soliciting feedback on the web or by e-mail it is a good idea to create an obvious e-mail address (such as allotments@council.gov.uk) that is easy to remember, short, and does not change when responsibilities within the service are reassigned.



A growing number of local authorities and federations now use on-line maps to help encourage new applications for plots: these may be simple images that convey nothing more than locations, or complex interactive devices that offer much more information. The map developed by the Association of Manchester Allotment Societies (www.amas.org.uk/manchester_allotments/) includes clickable coloured pins that advise potential applicants about plot availability. Click the pin and the applicant is taken to the contact details for the allotment manager, a detailed street map for reaching the site, and a summary of site features (such as lavatories, trading huts, best times to visit).

Useful websites are also maintained by allotment societies and individual enthusiasts, many of which are accessible through the Allotment and Vegetable Gardening Ring at:

www.q.webring.com/hub?ring=allotmentring

There is also a range of discussion groups and bulletin boards available on the internet that cover allotment issues, including:

The Kitchen Gardens e-mail list: www.groups.yahoo.com/group/kitchengardens

The AllotmentsUK e-mail list: www.groups.yahoo.com/group/AllotmentsUK

The Allotments UK forum:
www.allotments-uk.com/forum

The Allotments4All forum:
www.allotments4all.co.uk/smf/index.php

The Chatting on the Plot forum:
www.chat.allotment.org.uk

The Kitchen Garden Magazine forum:
www.kitchengarden.co.uk/forum/index.php

multilingual communication

Multilingual communication should be provided where there are a number of different languages spoken by ploholders or prospective ploholders. Another approach to multilingual communication is to offer an interpretation service to those unable to speak or read English rather than to attempt to translate existing literature into many different languages. Interpreters could be recruited from within local ethnic communities and organisations and this in itself may help to spread the message if the interpreter is personally involved in growing food.

advertising allotments in Birmingham's community languages



record keeping

Effective communication with plotheolders also depends on efficient record keeping. Modern information technology has made the process of keeping detailed records very much easier. Accurate and well-maintained records provide easily accessible contact details and allow trends to be observed and monitored, offering significant information on the performance of the allotments service. Waiting list statistics are particularly important, given their role in assessing the demand for existing allotments – and in making the case for new ones.

The following list is a suggestion of records that should be kept:

- waiting lists;
- site statistics and inventory;
- tenant information;
- details of site representatives;
- association details and relevant legal documents, eg lease, constitution;
- financial information, including expenditure, rents and arrears;
- complaints, permissions, applications;
- injuries and illnesses (could be a clue to serious underlying problems such as contaminated land);
- maintenance record;
- site and plot inspections (including digital images of problem areas);
- risk assessment.

allotment management systems

There are a number of proprietary allotment management systems available on the market which can store the information listed above and also send out invoices, notices, plot offers and other standard letters. The advantage of these compared with own-produced systems is that they have been developed specifically for allotment management, and have been tried and tested by allotment authorities and shown to be effective and easy to use.

Standardisation of systems between local authorities allows help and advice to be provided easily by the manufacturers and operation and maintenance is not dependent on the presence of a resident information specialist. The use of a standardised system of record-keeping enables consistent indicators of performance to be produced and comparisons made between authorities.

Authorities using these systems are pleased to offer advice and opinions, and further information on two of these systems is given in the box.

Allotment management systems

Colony was developed in Microsoft Access by MCPC Systems and can be used on individual PCs or on a network. Free updates are available and there is an annual user group meeting. At present 55 local authorities use Colony, including Bristol, Leicester, Ashford, Kirklees and Luton.

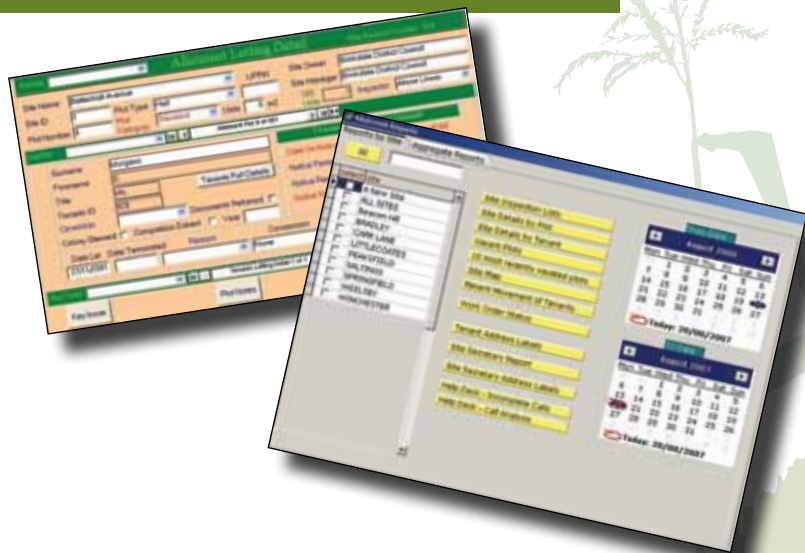
Further details from:
MCPC Systems (UK) LLP
2 Vounog Hill
Penyffordd
Near Chester
Flintshire
CH4 0EZ

Tel: 0845 055 6441
Fax: 0845 055 6442
(www.mcpcsystems.co.uk)

Clear Advantage was developed in SQL Server originally for the London Borough of Sutton and is now used by around 20 other authorities, including Bath and NE Somerset, NE Lincolnshire, Mole Valley, Swindon, Windsor and Maidenhead. It also offers an annual user group meeting and annual updates.

Further details from:
Clear Advantage Ltd.

Tel: 01451 812251
Fax: 01451 812250
(www.clear-advantage.co.uk/allotments.htm)



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3.6 provision and management of facilities on allotment sites

introduction

Whilst at one time allotment gardeners were content with a plot of land to cultivate and very little else, there is a growing realisation that the provision of good facilities will help to ensure that the demand for allotments continues to grow – and become more inclusive. Plotolders and their associations should be consulted regarding the type of facilities required. This may vary from site to site and may also depend on the location of the site in the country and local allotment culture. For example plotolders on a very small site may not feel the need for a car park and may even be hostile towards the idea. Where facilities are poor, however, and access difficult, the result may be that some latent demand is not expressed. The needs of under-represented groups should also therefore be taken into account, if not on every site, then at least across the local authority's portfolio.

Whilst maintenance and running costs may be met from revenue, the capital for facilities such as lavatory blocks and trading huts will have to be found elsewhere. However, these need not be elaborate or expensive structures. Potential sources of capital are discussed in part 3.3. There are also opportunities to link the provision of facilities with local sustainable development initiatives, through the use of recycled materials and design features that enable conservation of energy and resources.

site huts and clubhouses

Allotment gardening is a sociable activity and a clubhouse, communal shed or trading hut will serve as a meeting place for the plotolders, for the bulk storage of materials and as a centre for sale or distribution of equipment and seeds. Such a focal point is desirable for the long-term prosperity of a site and for the future popularity of allotments in general.

Again, the building itself need not be new or expensive. In Bromley, Dorset Road allotments (www.dorsetroadallotments.org.uk) have converted a surplus temporary classroom obtained through the local authority into a splendid clubhouse used by plotolders and for community activities. In Dartford plotolders have reassembled as an equipment store a discarded concrete section garage that was heading for landfill. More ambitious projects (see box), can firmly establish a local allotment site as the heart of a local neighbourhood.

A house of straw ...

Wakefield's first straw bale eco-building was officially opened in October 2006 at the annual Agbrigg and Belle Vue Pumpkin Festival. The building is the final part of a three-year, £500,000 environment project to improve the local area, and is located on the regenerated Woodcock Street allotments. The design incorporates recycled and green materials and is super-insulated so that it doesn't need much power to heat and run. The windows are triple glazed to keep as much energy inside the building as possible, the plaster is made from clay dug out for the foundations, plants are grown on the roof and there is a solar panel to provide hot water. The building is already used by groups such as the Wakefield Primary Care Trust which runs a healthy living, Five-A-Day programme there. The Sandal Magna Junior and Infant School are creating a wildlife garden at the back of the eco-building as part of their natural science, biology and geography lessons. The council's family services runs a gardening club for adults with special needs from the eco-building and the Agbrigg and Belle Vue Allotments Group are based on the site. The £90,000 building was developed in partnership with the community association, the Agbrigg and Belle Vue Allotment Group and Wakefield council's Parks and Public Realm and Single Regeneration Budget teams.

(taken from Wakefield Express, 25 October 2006)

Minor maintenance and cleaning should be the responsibility of the plotolders or their association and financial arrangements agreed with the authority should enable such maintenance to be carried out in a satisfactory manner.

lavatory facilities

Many plotolders spend a great deal of time on their allotments and so provision of lavatory facilities will be welcome. This is particularly true where plotolders or user groups with disabilities have no accessible alternative, and on larger sites where the number of users more than justifies a standard of provision comparable to that established for other leisure activities. The cost of connecting a lavatory to main drainage can be considerable, but there are alternatives, including chemical toilets and composting toilets – the latter being preferable from an environmental point of view.



Careful consideration needs to be given to cleaning and maintenance arrangements and handwashing facilities. If not kept in proper order such facilities can rapidly deteriorate to the point when they become a liability rather than an asset.

Consideration also needs to be given to security measures to prevent vandalism. A lock with a key-pad can be a useful alternative to individual keys.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has published an authoritative fact sheet, Affordable toilets for allotments, which includes case studies and contact details for major suppliers.

access



A community allotment with excellent access

Access to allotment sites should be safe, secure, and not in itself

prove a barrier against any group of users, such as people with disabilities (as required by the Disability Discrimination Act). Every effort should be made to promote walking and cycling as appropriate means for local people to reach allotment sites, and the provision of secure cycle parking facilities near the entrance to the allotments may also be appropriate.

Although plottolders usually live close to their allotment site, there are times when the journey needs to be made by car or a car is essential because of the circumstances or disability of the plotholder. The provision of adequate parking helps to prevent nuisance or danger from on-road parking or damage to verges or vacant plots if cars are parked there. A small tarmac parking area is desirable but in many cases a designated patch on hard ground may suffice. This should be located as close to the site entrance as possible to minimise the use of haulage ways for motorised access. The presumption should be against the wholesale provision of access by car, as this in itself would undermine the unique tranquility and safety of the allotment site for users of all ages.

water supply

Access to a reliable supply of water is essential for cultivation. There is no minimum standard of provision required of allotment authorities, however, and some sites still rely upon little more than the rainfall draining from shed roofs into water butts (a practice which should nevertheless be encouraged).

Allotment providers should aim to ensure access to a mains tap water supply for every plotholder, with one outlet shared between no more than six to eight plots. Outlets should be situated in a convenient location, bearing in mind the difficulties elderly and disabled gardeners may face in transporting water any distance.

Water is a scarce, valuable and increasingly expensive resource. Whilst the capital costs of providing and maintaining the supply system may come from other sources, the cost of the water itself is often incorporated in full into the rent, particularly where the supply is metered and the costs are known.

Since it is currently impractical to charge individual plotholders according to use, the average cost is usually shared between plotholders on the site. Excessive use and potential abuses of the supply system can be prevented through the tenancy agreement and allotment rules. Most authorities prohibit unattended and overnight use of sprinklers and hosepipes, while others ban the use of hosepipes entirely or only allow people who would otherwise be disadvantaged (such as plotholders with physical disabilities) to use them. The restrictions governing use of the water supply should be clearly stated in the allotment rules, and attention should also be drawn to the need to comply with any restrictions specific to allotments included in hosepipe bans and drought orders in the event of these being imposed.

Many water supply companies now provide printed advice on water conservation in the garden, and much of this advice is relevant to allotment holders. These information leaflets can be included in an allotment tenants pack or distributed with newsletters.

Mulching with loose material (such as straw or compost) is a particularly environmentally-friendly way of reducing moisture loss (and water bills) and this practice should be encouraged. This would be a productive end use for safe, composted municipal green waste, for example.

An information leaflet covering water supply issues on allotments is available from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners. This also covers water requirements of different plants — many newcomers to gardening have the mistaken belief that watering is simply a case of indiscriminate soaking.

sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels

A shed on an allotment site serves many purposes. It provides shelter in inclement weather, it may have a small stove for brewing tea or coffee, it is a storage place for tools and clothing or for special equipment for the disabled, and it may even be a place to sit and relax with other plotholders. In short it is almost a necessity.

Plotholders frequently construct their own sheds using discarded or recycled materials, and whilst this is generally a sustainable and laudable practice, some degree of sympathetic regulation may be necessary to prevent the site from appearing too untidy or presenting a hazard.

Authorities are entitled to require permission for erection of sheds within tenancy agreements and to specify details regarding their size, construction and location, but should not impose unreasonable restrictions or specifications. The report of the Allotments Advisory Committee in 1950 recommended that the procedure for application for sheds be made as simple as possible and this is also true today.

In some cases authorities provide sheds for the use of plottolders and charge rent for them. This ensures that they are erected to the specification and standard required by the authority. If rented out in such a way the authority should ensure that they are in good order at commencement of the tenancy. It is important to note that erection of sheds or other small buildings on allotments by a local authority will usually benefit from permitted development rights under Part 12 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, in which case local authorities would not need to apply for planning permission for them.

Greenhouses and polytunnels may be treated in the same way as sheds but conditions may be imposed to ensure that they do not become dilapidated and present a hazard or nuisance from broken glass or shredded polythene.

paths and haulage ways

Allotment authorities (or allotment associations where there is devolved management) should ensure that main paths on allotment sites are kept clear for access. This includes, in particular, paths that are adjacent to uncultivated or overgrown plots so that they can be quickly returned to cultivation when required.

Responsibility for minor paths should lie with the plottolders themselves and the duties with respect to the maintenance of paths and haulage ways should be made clear within the allotment rules or tenancy agreement.

fences and hedges

Good fences or hedges around the boundaries of the allotment site are important to ensure the protection of the plottolders' crops and property (see site security p63), and these should be kept well maintained. Where boundary features (such as hedges) harbour beneficial wildlife, care should be taken to ensure that maintenance practices are appropriate. Consideration should be given to replacing (or augmenting) hard fencing with hedgerow wherever possible as a green, effective and far cheaper alternative.

Responsibilities for paths should be clearly stated in the tenancy agreement or allotment rules...

Paths within allotments must be kept free from flowering weeds and rank growth must not exceed 150mm (over 6 inches) high. Shared paths between two allotments must be maintained, and kept cut and clipped up to the nearest half width by each adjoining tenant; paths must be kept clear of obstructions at all times. All paths should be wide enough for easy pedestrian access to neighbouring tenants' plots. Where car parking or vehicle access is permitted on an allotment site, the tenant must ensure that all haulage ways have free access for other users.

(Extract from the Brighton and Hove City Council allotment rules www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1125723)

3.7 management of tenancies

uses of an allotment

An allotment garden is defined in the Allotments Act, 1922, as being

“wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”.

This definition excludes ‘trade or business’ (see sale of produce p.58) and allows restrictions on the keeping of certain livestock (see keeping of livestock p.59). It does not preclude some limited commercial activity in the form of sale of surplus produce, nor does it preclude part of the allotment being used for relaxation and recreation along the lines of continental ‘leisure gardens’.

Indeed, the continental style leisure garden was commended by the Thorpe Report in 1969 as a model for all allotments to emulate. Although this idea never really took hold, there are a number of sites around the country (in Bristol and Birmingham, for example) that were converted to the Thorpe model, with chalets provided and the cultivation of lawns and flowers encouraged.

On occasions there have been disputes between tenants on more traditional sites and local authorities over the cultivation of flowers and other leisure activities. Most authorities, however, are keen to ensure that plots are well kept and cultivated, and do not concern themselves with the detail of the actual plants being grown. The use of part of an allotment for ‘leisure’ activities is usually tolerated, provided that these do not become a source of nuisance nor give cause for concern about returning the plot to an adequate condition should the tenancy end.

In the past, some local authorities have sought to limit the types of produce grown to those which do not take longer than a year to mature. This condition has been imposed because tenancy agreements are for periods of one year and require only a year’s notice. Authorities that impose such a ruling are afraid that any produce which cannot be grown and harvested within that time may increase the liability for compensation in the event of notice being given. An exclusion clause can be included in the tenancy agreement, however, which states compensation will not be paid for crops that take more than one year to mature.

Apart from restrictions on trees there is little useful to be gained from attempting to limit the type of produce grown in this way, when the result may be to limit the diversity of a site (in all senses) and provoke resentment amongst plottolders.

There have however been problems with illegal activities on a small minority of allotment sites, such as the hiding of stolen goods and explosives and the cultivation

of cannabis. The inclusion of a clause in the tenancy agreement that allows for termination of the tenancy in the case of illegal activity should therefore be considered.

Brighton and Hove City Council’s allotment rules define the permitted use of an allotment as follows:

“The allotment is rented to the tenant for the purpose of recreational gardening and/or the cultivation of herb, flower, fruit and vegetable crops. Part of the area may be used for associated purposes eg sheds, compost heaps and a patio. The maximum area for hard landscaping (eg a patio, internal paths) is 20 per cent of the plot area.”

conditions of tenancy

The conditions of tenancy are stated in the tenancy agreement which is signed by the authority and the tenant or the allotment association and the tenant in the case of advanced schemes for devolved management. Each of the parties should receive and retain a copy of the agreement.

The following need to be considered for inclusion in the tenancy agreement:

- **rent, including water charges and rental of sheds or other structures;**
- **collection of rent, including proportionate rent for part of the year and date when rent becomes due;**
- **rent arrears;**
- **prevention of nuisance or annoyance;**
- **prohibition of the use of barbed wire;**
- **prohibition of sub-letting;**
- **determination of tenancy and notices to quit;**
- **compensation;**
- **observance of conditions of lease (if the land is leased by the council from a third party);**
- **prohibition of trade or business;**
- **erection of sheds, greenhouses and other structures;**
- **keeping of livestock including bees;**
- pruning of trees, removal of timber, soil, sand or gravel (or other specified material);
- level of cultivation and cleanliness;
- maintenance of sheds, greenhouses and other structures;
- planting of trees, shrubs or of plants likely to be detrimental to the site;
- upkeep of paths or boundaries between plots;
- management of wastes, including limitations on bringing waste materials on site;
- control of dogs;
- display of plot number;
- use of water;
- use or storage of chemicals;
- **Page 99**

- conditions relating to the cultivation of other allotments;
- restrictions or specifications on allowable distance between allotment site and home dwelling;
- maintenance of hedges, ditches, paths and boundaries.

Conditions above in **bold type** are items which are specifically covered by legislation and therefore must be included in the agreement.

allotment rules

Although the conditions of tenancy are laid out in the tenancy agreement, this is essentially a legal document. The conditions should be explained and expanded in the allotment rules, preferably in plain and unambiguous English – and in other languages when use of English alone is unlikely to enable all tenants to understand what their rights and responsibilities are. Care should be taken however not to introduce ambiguities that might undermine the legal force of the tenancy agreement. Alternatively, the tenancy agreement can be augmented by a question and answer sheet that addresses the most common areas of misunderstanding. Additional information can be provided in the rules or on separate sheets to cover specific additional issues, for example construction and size of greenhouses and sheds, use of chemicals, bee keeping and construction of ponds.



The allotment rules of the London Borough of Sutton are presented in the *Allotment Gardeners' Guidelines*. These include a brief history of the allotments movement, advice on gardening and a section on organic gardening, location; of allotment sites and background information such as water charges, rules on polytunnels and how allotment rents are fixed. The use of photographs makes this a very readable publication and clearly demonstrates what is possible given sufficient enthusiasm on the part of the allotments manager and those around them.

(An on-line version is available at: www.sutton.gov.uk/leisure/allotments/gardhandbook.htm)

sale of produce

The use of allotments for 'trade' or 'business' is prohibited but the government has acknowledged that some small scale sale of produce is allowable⁴:

"The present legislation already enables some limited commercial activity to take place on allotments, but primary legislation would be required to allow commercial use to be greater than an ancillary use".

This view stems from the definition of the purpose of an allotment garden being a plot that "is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family": any sale of produce should be subsidiary to that purpose.

Some consideration should be given as to the manner in which any surplus produce is sold. Clearly it should be allowable for a plothead to sell small amounts of fruit or vegetables to his or her friends and neighbours but any overt commercial activity, such as the placing of signs by individual tenants advertising crops for sale, should not be allowed.

Nevertheless, allowing non-plotheaders to buy produce enables them to participate in allotments and benefit from them without actually being allotment tenants. Plotheaders with surplus produce could be encouraged to donate this to their allotment association, which can then sell it for the purpose of raising funds for the upkeep of the site. The presence of allotment associations at farmers' markets raises the profile of allotment gardening, enables participation and assists promotion⁵, though participation can be difficult to sustain over long periods when using only volunteers. Some associations take the simpler route of providing an 'honesty box' at the front gate, where donations can be left in exchange for surplus vegetables donated by plotheaders.

Allotments in Bideford Pannier Market

Marland Allotments Association in Bideford, south Devon, rents a stall at the local 'pannier market', an institution that draws its name from the wicker baskets in which farmers' wives once carried their wares to market, and can trace its roots as far back as the thirteenth century. The stall was secured at a discount from the town council, which runs the market, and is shared with the local Womens' Institute. The stall brings in around £200 per month to association funds. (Information supplied by the Allotments Regeneration Initiative.)

3.8 livestock and bees

keeping of livestock

At one time livestock reared on allotments played an important part in the diet of many ploholders. During the war years people were encouraged to keep pigs on allotment sites, particularly as a communal undertaking. However, with increasing prosperity this activity waned and nowadays the keeping of livestock is greatly reduced and even prohibited by some authorities. The keeping of racing pigeons as a hobby on allotments is well known: there are sites in some parts of northern England almost exclusively devoted to this pastime. In some parts of the country it has also been culturally acceptable in the past to keep horses on allotments, although many councils and the RSPCA do not now recommend this practice because of serious equine welfare concerns.

Recently there has been renewed interest in keeping small animals on allotments and under the right conditions they can enhance the attractiveness of sites and provide interest and enjoyment. The keeping of hens, for example, and associated exchange of eggs with other members, is a distinctive feature of the award-winning Dorset Road Allotments and Leisure Gardens Society in the London Borough of Bromley. (www.dorsetroadallotments.org.uk)

The allotment legislation does not prohibit the keeping of livestock, provided that the plot is mainly used for growing vegetables and fruit for the ploholder and his family, but allotment authorities can impose conditions and restrictions (and prohibitions) as they see fit. These should be clearly stated in the allotment lease or tenancy agreement. The tenant must also be responsible for obeying any restrictions or regulations imposed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

The 1950 Allotments Act specifically allows for the keeping of rabbits and hens (but not cockerels), provided that they are kept in such a manner so as not to be prejudicial to health or cause a nuisance.

If livestock is kept on allotment sites consideration should be given to:

- DEFRA regulations or restrictions;
- animal welfare* and husbandry;
- specification and construction of shelters, including security of the structure (the 1950 Allotments Act permits the construction of shelters for keeping hens and rabbits);
- storage of animal feed;
- rodents and other vermin;
- noise, smell or other nuisance or annoyance;
- site security.

A free booklet entitled *The Welfare of Animals on Allotments* is available from the RSPCA – as a download on the website or from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department, tel. 0870 7540 203 or e-mail: farm_animals@rspca.org.uk. This covers horses, goats, rabbits, chickens, ducks and other domestic animals, as well as care of wildlife.

* The Animal Welfare Act (2006) makes owners and keepers responsible for ensuring that the welfare needs of their animals are met. (www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/act/index.htm)

Under the Act the five basic welfare needs of animals are: a proper diet, including fresh water; somewhere suitable to live; any need to be housed with or apart from, other animals; allowing animals to express normal behaviour; protection from and treatment of, illness and injury.

The RSPCA's advice on the Animal Welfare Act can be found at www.rspca.org.uk/petcare

bee keeping

Bees are a natural part of the countryside and of every garden and allotment. Whether they are wild bees or from hives, they aid with pollination, increase biodiversity and are of immense value to the farmer and gardener.

The keeping of bees brings pleasure not only to the beekeeper but also to many others, not the least of whom are those fortunate enough to share in the produce. There are many amateur beekeepers in the UK most of whom are members of local associations or organisations. As well as seeking permission from the allotment authority, any ploholder considering keeping bees should first contact his or her local beekeeping association either directly or through the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA), which is the national organisation for beekeepers (see box). The BBKA also provides insurance for its members.

For more information, visit www.bbka.org.uk. Useful advice on keeping bees on allotments can also be found at www.allotments.net:8080/general/bees.htm

Allotment authorities should be able to provide contact details for local beekeeping organisations and they, together with allotment associations, should work in partnership with these organisations to ensure that beekeeping is of benefit to all.

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Bee-keeping has occasionally caused problems on allotment sites and should therefore be subject to consent from the authority, and this should be clearly stated in the allotment rules and tenancy agreement. Special conditions may be imposed as for ponds or other installations or structures and not all allotment sites may be suitable for bee keeping. The authority should provide a list of sites where it is permitted.

Bexley Council provides a formal agreement for the keeping of bees on an allotment site which sets out conditions relating to:

- duty of care;
- siting of hives;
- consultation, ie provision of notices indicating that a request to keep bees has been made thus allowing objections to be raised;
- details of stand-by bee-keepers;
- complaints procedures;
- insurance requirements;
- diseases — notification to the National Bee Unit;
- warning notices;
- sale of honey;
- arrangements for review and withdrawal of consent.

3.9 hazards and nuisance

duty of care

In general allotments pose few hazards. However, it is important that even these are minimised, particularly since allotment gardening is promoted as a family activity and young children may be present on the site. Allotment tenants have a duty of care to each other and also to visitors to the allotment, irrespective of whether these are invited visitors or intruders. This duty of care should be stated within the allotment tenancy agreement or the allotment rules, as well as in any lease for devolved management.

Consideration should be given to identification of potential hazards, and appropriate advice supplied where possible, or enquiries directed to an appropriate and responsible authority. Any injuries or illnesses arising from the use of allotments that are reported to the authority should be recorded and investigated and the facts established.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has published a free, downloadable information pack, *Health and safety on allotments: a management guide*. This includes factsheets on risk assessments and activities requiring special management, eg ponds, as well as a sample allotments risk assessment form and detailed site hazards checklist. (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)



ponds

Ponds can be of benefit to allotments in a number of ways. They can enhance the appearance of a plot, they can provide a habitat for wildlife and promote biodiversity and they can act as a 'watering hole' attracting a variety of animal life. However, under certain circumstances they could present a danger, particularly to children under three years. Decisions about ponds lie with the organisation managing the site, although the actual landowner could have the final say. Decisions about ponds should be made on a site-by-site basis, taking into account the site's physical layout, level of open access and users. Building a pond on a site with a public right of way raises different issues to one with secure fencing. It is important that conditions and guidelines exist as to the construction and siting of ponds and that these are available to the plotholders. These conditions could include the following:

- requirement for permission to install a pond;
- siting of pond — distance from paths;
- size of the pond;
- arrangements for inspection by site representatives or allotment manager.

water butts

Water butts may also present a hazard to inquisitive toddlers and wildlife and consideration should be given to ensuring that they are covered when not in use.

bonfires

In the past, local authorities have received many complaints regarding bonfires on allotment sites. Site managers should take into consideration the cumulative effect that frequent bonfires (particularly those left to smoulder) on individual plots across an entire site can have on neighbours and other plotholders. The burning of painted timbers, plastics and other non-plant material can also cause soil pollution by heavy metals and other contaminants. Most local authorities now seek to limit bonfires and apply strict conditions if they are permitted, in which case the detailed rules governing them should be clear, explicit, unambiguous and readily available on site.

The options will depend on the authority's environmental policy and strategy and these may include:

- a total ban on bonfires on allotments;
- limited permission for burning diseased plants and dried-out material that will burn without smoke or hazardous residue;
- an additional seasonal constraint on bonfires (for example: only permitted between November and March).

There should be no need for bonfires if skips are provided for disposing of non-compostable wastes and a total ban on bonfires is far easier to police than a selective ban on materials being burned.

The law relating to bonfires

- There is no law against having a bonfire, and there are no set times during which bonfires cannot be lit. Smoke Control Areas only apply to smoke from domestic chimneys.
- Under the Highways (Amendment) Act 1986 the police can prosecute anyone who allows smoke from a fire which they have lit to drift across a road. The maximum penalty for this is £5,000.
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990 prohibits a statutory nuisance being caused by smoke, fumes, gases or odour.
- Whether a statutory nuisance is caused depends on how often the problem occurs, the amount of smoke produced, and how the smoke affects the person complaining. To be a nuisance the smoke or fumes must either be a cause of material harm or must substantially interfere with the enjoyment of land.

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herbicides and pesticides

In recent years there has been a growing interest in organic produce and organic gardening, together with an increased awareness of the possible harmful effects of chemical residues. Many gardeners have reduced the amount of chemical pesticides and herbicides that they use in favour of more organic methods, on which organisations such as Garden Organic provide useful advice.

Allotment managers should become familiar with relevant legislation and regulations regarding the use and storage of gardening chemicals, such as the Control of Pesticides Regulations Act (amended) (1997) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002).

Allotment managers and allotment associations can help to reduce the amount of chemicals used and to ensure that when they are used, they are used safely and effectively.

- **Provide information on the safe usage and storage of chemical herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers.** This can be in the form of information leaflets and can be supplemented by talks and seminars.
- **Consider alternatives to spraying vacant plots.** Garden Organic has suggested using a sowing of clover on vacant plots to act as a green manure to build up fertility (see Organic Allotments).
- **Contact Garden Organic.** The organic gardening charity is keen to promote organic methods and to supply information which can be disseminated to ploholders. Some authorities include information about Garden Organic in their allotment packs.
- **Assess the level of use of chemical pesticides and herbicides.** Some authorities include questions about the use of chemicals in occasional allotment surveys. The results are often very encouraging; for example, a survey of ploholders in Brighton and Hove showed that three-quarters of allotment holders did not use any chemical fertilisers and used biological control for pests, and only one in ten used any form of chemical control for pests or diseases.

contaminated land

If there are any grounds to consider that allotment land may be contaminated, including representations made to the authority by ploholders or their associations, the authority must ensure that the land is tested and certified safe by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). If the site is found to be contaminated and remediation is not practicable then adequate provision should be made for relocation of the affected tenants. The same procedures should be followed as in the disposal of land for other purposes under Section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925. Planning Policy Statement 23 Planning and Pollution Control (2004) is also explicit on the need for special care to be taken when land is to be

allocated to allotments (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143917).

Further advice on contaminated land is available from Defra www.defra.gov.uk/environment/land/contaminated/index.htm

See also the FCFCG publication Food Growing: How Safe is Your Land? (2002) (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari)

theft and vandalism

One of the main factors influencing the uptake of plots and the subsequent continuation of the tenancy is the fear and reality of theft and vandalism. The authority should therefore ensure that adequate security measures are provided, and that tenants are informed of these measures and instructed in their use.

There should be no need to convert allotment plots into private fortresses – these only present a greater challenge to vandals and spoil the appearance of the site. Ploholders have a duty of care not only to other ploholders but also to intruders. Defensive measures that can cause injury must not be used.

Although in many cases security will be best provided by fences and lockable gates, there will be circumstances in which other methods may be more effective. Consultation should be undertaken with ploholders' associations and advice obtained from local crime and arson prevention officers.

Some responsibility for the prevention of vandalism lies with the tenants themselves, who should report all instances of vandalism to the police and obtain an 'incident number'. The police are more likely to take action if they are aware that a problem exists and that this is of concern to the ploholders and to the wider community.

The recording of reported instances of crime should be considered (see record keeping) since in many cases it is possible that the perceived level of crime is different from the actual level. Statistics can serve to allay the fears of the ploholders or else alert the allotment manager to a situation requiring action.

For additional advice, see the free downloadable ARI Factsheet Safe sites: tackling vandalism and other offences on allotment sites www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

Allotment Watch in North Tyneside



North Tyneside council, Northumbria police, allotment holders, and nearby residents have teamed up to form an Allotment Watch at Wiltshire Drive in Wallsend. Each plot holder

already has their own key to allow them in and out of the allotment site, but North Tyneside council has supplied 500 hawthorn and blackthorn bushes for the site's 95 tenants to plant around the perimeter of the site, making it more difficult for intruders to enter. Allotment holders have posted leaflets to neighbouring homes, informing them that the scheme is in operation and asking them to report any suspicious incidents. North Tyneside Crime and Disorder Reduction and Misuse of Drugs Partnership has funded Allotment Watch signs, and Northumbria police are providing crime prevention advice to allotment holders.

(www.northtyneside.gov.uk/news/newsinfoitem.shtml?p_ID=4167)

site security

Site security appears to be a particular concern for people who are vulnerable, or who frequently work alone on the plot during the day and value the ability to lock the gates and keep trespassers out. Lack of adequate fencing and gates, or other effective security measures, may well deter some people from taking up plots and may also persuade existing plotholders to give up. An alternative strategy is to maintain an 'open site' policy during the daytime to actively encourage visitors to the site. This helps to ensure that plotholders are not isolated and that there are additional eyes maintaining passive surveillance of the site – which can also be useful if plotholders are suddenly taken ill. An 'open site' policy also helps facilitate access for emergency services should they be required. The choice of strategy will depend on the individual site and its location and requires careful consideration.

It is also worth considering supplying a set of keys to the site to park rangers or community wardens, for use in emergencies but also to encourage them to include the allotments in their regular rounds.

A number of local authorities and individual societies have established 'Allotment Watch' schemes (with appropriate signage) as a means to address crime and vandalism. Typical objectives of such schemes include:

- increasing awareness of the need for crime prevention;
- explanations on how crime can be prevented;
- promoting garden security and other crime reducing measures;
- encouraging gardeners to be vigilant and report suspicious activity;
- giving an overall improvement to the allotment and giving gardeners a sense of pride;
- discouragement of vandalism;
- promoting property-marking of tools and machinery to deter theft and to enable stolen goods to be returned.

Councils can sometimes access additional support for plotholders when working in partnership with the police on allotment watch schemes, such as free shedlocks and property marking kits.

Practical experience with Allotment Watch does suggest that they can lose momentum after a while, so they should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the voluntary support required is sufficient to sustain the scheme. Experience also suggests that such schemes can be a useful complement to, but not necessarily a substitute for, secure fencing.

Informal schemes can also be effective, particularly on small sites. Local residents can be encouraged to keep an informal watch on a site and alert the police in case of damage or trespass. A small, local, postcard drop quoting police phone number and site representative contact details is a successful example from the City of York.



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in conclusion: the next step

This guide has been written to encourage and empower allotment managers to think clearly and positively about the opportunities to achieve excellence in the service provided to allotment holders and the broader community. It advocates constructive engagement with a variety of agendas in local government and beyond, and emulation of innovative good practice wherever it may be found.

The guide is not exhaustive in its treatment of current good practice, and new projects and initiatives are emerging all the time. We have therefore appended a list of useful organisations that can help to keep you up-to-date.

The achievement of excellence in managing allotments is based on a partnership between local authorities, support organisations, allotment associations and individual ploholders — the people who ultimately care for the land, and whose attachment to it has ensured that allotments have survived as part of our common heritage. This guide points to new and better ways to promote the full and effective use of plots everywhere, to help ensure a bright future for allotments. The evidence of change in the world of allotments since the first edition of this guide was published shows that a new and positive future is already taking shape. We invite each reader to play their part in driving this process forwards.

appendix 1

useful organisations and contacts

Allotments Regeneration Initiative

www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari
The Greenhouse, Hereford Street,
Bristol BS3 4NA
Tel 0117 923 1800
Email ari@farmgarden.org.uk

British Beekeepers Association

www.bbka.org.uk
National Beekeeping Centre, National
Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park,
Warwickshire CV8 2LG
Tel 02476 696679
Email [use form on website]

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

www.btcv.org.uk
Sedum House, Mallard Way,
Doncaster DN4 8DB
Tel 01302 388 883
Email information@btcv.org.uk

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

www.farmgarden.org.uk/
The Greenhouse, Hereford Street,
Bristol BS3 4NA
Tel 0117 923 1800
Email admin@farmgarden.org.uk

Garden Organic

www.gardenorganic.org.uk
Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry
CV8 3LG
Tel 024 7630 3517
Email enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk

Green Flag/Green Pennant Awards

www.greenflagaward.org.uk
Green Flag Award Scheme, The Civic
Trust, 5th Floor, Century Buildings, 31
North John Street, Liverpool L2 6RG
Tel 0151 231 6900
Email info@greenflagaward.org.uk

National Allotment Gardens Trust

www.NAGTrust.org
NAGT, PO Box 1448, Marston,
Oxford OX3 3AY
Tel 01752 363379
Email naw@nagtrust.org

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action

The Tower, 2 Furnival Square,
Sheffield S1 4QL
Tel 0114 278 6636
Email navca@navca.org.uk

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd

www.nsalg.org.uk
O'Dell House, Hunters Road, Corby,
Northants NN17 5JE
Tel 01536 266576
Email natsoc@nsalg.org.uk

Natural England

www.naturalengland.org.uk
Northminster House, Peterborough
PE1 1UA
Tel 0845 600 3078
Email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

www.rspca.org.uk
Wilberforce Way, Southwater,
Horsham RH13 7WN
Tel 0870 010 1181
Email enqserv@rspca.org.uk

Thrive

www.carryongardening.org.uk
The Geoffrey Udall Centre, Beech Hill,
Reading RG7 2AT
Tel 0118 988 5688
Email Info@thrive.org.uk

A more detailed list of organisations
that can offer help and support can
be found on the Links page of the
Allotments Regeneration Initiative
website:
www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

appendix 2

a brief review of allotments law

A knowledge of the legislation is essential for the effective management of allotments. The purpose of this section is to act as a brief reference guide and overview. Clayden's brief but informative book, *The Law of Allotments* (footnote 1) is an excellent source of reference. Present allotment law is set out in statutes that were passed in the period from 1908 to 1950.

Statutory and temporary allotment sites

- Statutory sites are those that have been acquired by the authority for the purpose of being allotment gardens whilst temporary sites have been acquired for other purposes and are used as allotments in the interim. Statutory sites are directly protected by the allotments legislation but temporary ones are not.
- In many cases allotments have been in use for many years and the reason for acquisition of the land in the first place has been forgotten. The legal status of the land and its protection in law may therefore be uncertain. It is useful if the status of allotment sites managed by an authority is known.

Provision of allotments

- Authorities are duty bound to provide allotments for residents of their areas under section 23 of the 1908 Act (as amended) if they consider that there is a demand for them.
- In their assessment of demand an authority must take into consideration any representations made to them by six parliamentary electors or council taxpayers resident in the area. They must also provide a sufficient number of plots.

Time to provide

- There is no time limit laid down by the legislation from an authority being aware of a demand for allotments to them being made available for plottolders.

Disposal of allotment land and relocation

- If statutory allotment land is considered to be surplus to requirements it may only be sold with the consent of the secretary of state under section 8 of the 1925 Act. If plottolders are displaced by that action then adequate provision must be made for them, unless the secretary of state is satisfied that such provision is unnecessary or not reasonably practicable.
- Leasing of allotment land for any other purpose is covered by section 8 of the 1925 Act and requires consent.
- Consent of the secretary of state is still required for erection of any dwellings (but not sheds or greenhouses) by the council on allotment land [section 12 of the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1950].

Alternative temporary use of allotment land

- Section 27(5) of the 1908 Act provides for the temporary use of allotment land for other purposes if it cannot be let as allotments. However, if the land is subsequently required for use as allotments the authority must be able to regain possession by giving no more than twelve months notice.

Revenue from the sale of allotment land

- Revenue obtained from the sale or exchange of statutory allotment land must be spent on discharging debts associated with the acquisition of allotment land, acquiring new land for use as allotments, or improving the existing stock of allotments. Only the surplus may be used for other purposes [Section 32 of the 1908 Act].

Use and purpose of an allotment

- Section 22 of the Allotments Act 1922 ("the 1922 Act") defines an "allotment garden" as "an allotment not exceeding forty poles (footnote 2) in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family". This definition clearly precludes the use of an allotment garden for carrying out any trade or business but provided that it is cultivated mainly for growing fruit and vegetables other activities are not prohibited. These could include:
 - use of part of a plot as a 'leisure garden';
 - limited sale of surplus produce;
 - use of part of a plot for keeping livestock.

Use of an allotment as a 'leisure garden'

- There is no legal restraint on using part of the plot as a leisure garden for recreation or for growing flowers or crops that take longer than twelve months to mature.

Sale of produce

- Provided that the allotment is mainly cultivated for production of crops for consumption by the plottolder and their family there is no legal constraint on selling surplus produce.
- This is a view endorsed by the government in its response to *The Future for Allotments* report (footnote 3) "The present legislation already enables some limited commercial activity to take place on allotments, but primary legislation would be required to allow commercial use to be greater than an ancillary use".

Livestock

- The keeping of hens and rabbits is permitted by Section 12 of the Allotments Act 1950 (“the 1950 Act”) but not in such a manner as to create a nuisance. The legislation also allows for the construction or erection of shelters for hens and rabbits.

Fixing of rents

- There is no requirement on the authority to exact a “full fair rent”.
- Section 10 of the 1950 Act provides that land let by a council for use as an allotment shall be let at such rent:

“as a tenant may reasonably be expected to pay for the land if let for such use on the terms (other than terms as to rent) on which it is in fact let”.

What is meant by “reasonably” has to be construed in the context of the legislation as a whole.

- There is also provision in section 10 of the 1950 Act for payment of reduced rent in special circumstances which might include retired, elderly, unemployed, or disabled tenants or tenants of long standing, or any other circumstance which the authority thinks fit.

Collection of rents

- The renewal date for allotment tenancies has traditionally been 25 March but this date has no legal significance and any convenient date can be used.
- Section 10 of the 1950 Act provides that if the yearly rent exceeds £1.25 then it is not permissible to provide for more than one quarter’s rent to be payable in advance. However, most tenants now enter into an agreement with the allotment authority whereby the rent is paid in advance. This arrangement is convenient to all parties.

Notices to quit

- Under section 1(1)(a) of the 1922 Act, tenancies of allotment gardens can be terminated by giving twelve months’ or more notice to quit. This must expire on or before 6 April, or on or after 29 September in any year, otherwise it will be invalid.
- An authority has power of re-entry after three months’ notice if the land is required for:
“building, mining or any industrial purpose or for roads or sewers necessary in connection with any of these purposes”. [section 1(1)(b) of the 1922 Act]
- Under section 30 of the 1908 Act the authority has the power to determine the tenancy on giving one month’s notice if:
 - the rent is unpaid for 40 days or longer;
 - the plot is not cultivated to the required standard three months after commencement of the tenancy (footnote 4);
 - conditions of the tenancy agreement are breached. These conditions should be stated in the tenancy agreement.
- An allotment authority’s duty of provision is only towards the residents of its district or parish, and the tenancy agreement can be determined on a month’s notice if the tenant becomes resident more than a mile outside the district or parish [section 30(2) of the 1908

Act]. However there is no reason why allotments cannot be provided to non-residents if there is adequate provision for the residents themselves.

Compensation

- An allotment tenant whose tenancy is terminated is entitled to compensation for:
 - crops under cultivation (section 2 of the 1922 Act);
 - manure applied to the land (section 2 of the 1922 Act).
- The value of compensation for crops is based on their value to an incoming tenant but compensation can also be decided by negotiation and agreement between the parties.

Footnotes

- 1 Paul Clayden, The Law of Allotments, Shaw & Sons Ltd, 2002.
- 2 40 poles is equivalent to 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres (1 pole = 30 1/4 square yards).
- 3 The government’s response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs committee’s report, The Future for Allotments, cm 4052, 1998, p3
- 4 The required standard of cultivation for a new plotholder is not prescribed by the 1908 Act but set by the authority. This is usually one quarter cultivation of the plot after three months and three quarters after twelve months.

appendix 3

further reading

Paul Clayden
The Law of Allotments
Fifth Ed. Shaw & Sons, Crayford, 2002

CLG
Allotments: A Plot Holders' Guide
2006
www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/documents/plotholdersguide.pdf

CLG
The Government's Response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Report. The Future for Allotments
Cm 4052, 1998
www.communities.gov.uk/archived/general-content/communities/future

David Crouch and Colin Ward
The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture
Five Leaves Press, Nottingham, 1997

Caroline Foley
The Allotment Handbook
New Holland, London, 2004

Clare Foster
Your Allotment
Cassell Illustrated, London, 2007

House of Commons - Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee
The Future for Allotments, Volume 1, Report and Proceedings of the Committee
HC 560-I, London The Stationery Office, 1998
www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56002.htm

Natural England
Manifesto for Gardens, People and Nature
2007
www.naturalengland.org.uk/campaigns/breathingplaces/manifesto.htm

Natural England
Wildlife on Allotments
2007
www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature_In_The_Garden

Pauline Pears
Successful Allotments: Green Essentials – Organic Guides
Impact Publishing, Bath, 2007

Richard Wiltshire
Allotments in Local Agenda 21
Discussion paper written for the LGA, 1998
www.btinternet.com/~richard_wiltshire/lga3.htm

Richard Wiltshire
Devolved Management for Allotments Models and Processes
Discussion paper written for the LGA, 1998
www.btinternet.com/~richard_wiltshire/lga4.htm

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Telephone 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030
Email info@lga.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk

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authors

Dr Richard Wiltshire
School of Social Science and Public Policy
Kings College London

Deborah Burn
Network Coordinator
Allotments Regeneration Initiative

Glyphosate product usage over the last five years by the three maintenance teams.

	Glyphosate Product Usage, in Litres		
Year	Parks	Housing	Highways / COLAS
2017	70	-	900
2018	80	-	860
2019	60	-	720
2020	80	166	540
2021	75	64	720
2022	55	10.73	560
2023	50	0.03	100

The above figures need to be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- Parks usage figures for 2017-2019 represented the grounds maintenance operations carried out by the newly established in-house team that covered the north, east and south areas of the city. These figures did not include any usage by the external contractors for the west, cemeteries, schools (under Traded Services) and golf course and unfortunately, we do not have a benchmark figure for these. In 2020, the west, cemetery and schools' maintenance also transferred in-house and in 2021 the golf course maintenance transferred in house. Therefore, the figures for 2020 and 2021, although higher than 2019, actually represented a continued reduction in overall use for all maintained areas and estimated to be a 25-30% reduction overall in those years. Since 2021, usage has continued to reduce through the adoption of alternative measures and maintenance practices and it is estimated to have reduced by 55% overall since 2017.
- Housing usage figures for 2017-2019 are not available for representation but show a 60% reduction between 2020 and 2021 and the latest figures show current practices are using alternative methods of weed control.

COLAS records represent a 35% reduction between 2017-2022, with latest usage figures to be provided. Colas are also trialling a reduced concentration product that reduces the glyphosates from 490g/l to 360g/l concentration. This represents an effective 26.5% reduction in glyphosates.

Tabled at the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 13 July 2023.

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Last reviewed August
2023



Pesticide Report

GREEN & CLEAN SERVICE, HNB

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Past

In past years we had a different approach to the control of weeds using pesticides this included;

- **The use of MMC pro chemical to treat areas of moss** - this is no longer used in our service and we use machinery instead.
- **The use of Dicophar chemical to treat weedy grassed areas** - this is no longer used in the service and we no longer treat grassed areas.
- **Weed spraying as part of a gardening round** - This wasn't effective due to conflicting work streams, created a higher risk to safe practices and use of chemical was inconsistent.
- **Recording use in paper form** - All weed spraying records are now inputted onto a database in which we can monitor and extract information as necessary.
- **Only operatives were trained on safe use of pesticides** - Managers now attend courses along with the operatives to gain understanding and be able to safely manage operations. Unlikely to be necessary going forward due to movement away from use of pesticides.

Throughout the time in which we have been weed spraying we have been continually exploring better ways of working and alternative methods which have not always been successful;

In 2018 we trialled using soda crystals to treat moss

Soda crystals were evidenced as a cheap and effective way to remove moss.

Our findings were;

- To best apply the soda crystal/water combination we applied through a knapsack sprayer which clogged up regularly.
- The process was labour intensive from mixing the product to applying, agitating and removing the moss.
- Soda crystals were slippery on contact so created another hazard.

In 2019 we trialled foam from a company called Weeding tech

Foamstream is a herbicide-free weed control solution. It kills unwanted vegetation, including weeds, moss and algae, using the precise application of hot water insulated by a specially formulated biodegradable and organic foam. Our findings were;

- Does not kill all weeds on first application and would require a few treatments
- Significant investment in a new machine is needed and training of staff
- You will not always be able to park the machine near to your site due to parked cars

Vision

Our vision

In line with Portsmouth City Council's commitment to the phasing out of pesticides over a 3-year period, we aim to control weeds where needed and to allow growth where we can accommodate the biodiversity this creates. With our increasing understanding of the harm that the use of pesticides can cause to our environment we need to change how we perceive weeds and our desire to remove them. For example, many of the plants we deem as weeds are beneficial for our insects and do not need to look unsightly. Some grassed areas do not need to be kept as lawns but can be left to grow longer to encourage biodiversity or even planted as wild meadow areas to create beautiful sites, that benefit insects and birds.

It is our intention to control weeds across our estates without the use of chemical treatments.



Present

How we identify weeds:

Before we put in procedures to control the weeds, we are identifying our areas of concern through site validation during our gardening rounds and from reports during cleaning operative's assessments of the buildings. From this we build an understanding of where we typically need to weed spray and have created specific rounds for weed spraying purposes.

Designing out the need to weed control:



Over planting

We work with the landscape architects to design and plant beds with plants chosen to specifically fill planters and beds. Planting in this way not only suppresses weeds it also creates an attractive area, whilst increasing biodiversity and improving air quality.

This style of planting has been implemented over the last five years and is now established in many areas across the city.



Repairs

Part of our weed control also includes working with the repairs team and surveyors. Our operatives when attending sites conduct an assessment of the site which includes reporting of repairs.

This efficient reporting of repairs helps to control weeds by ensuring the ground around our properties is well maintained reducing the ability for weeds to grow as they would through damaged ground or paths.

To improve the estate now and into the future we are collaborating with surveyors and landscape architects to influence future decision making around the type of flooring and 'street furniture'.



Suppressing

As well as planting we also use bark mulch as a natural suppressant whilst plants become established and around new trees.

This is a cost effective and sustainable way to suppress weeds as we use bark mulch produced by Gristwood and Toms from tree work they have completed on our estates.

Designing in designated areas for weeds to flourish:

Where we cannot eliminate the weeds we are finding innovative ways in which to embrace them such as;



Re-wilding

From the learning of our gardening rounds and with consultation with our residents we have identified appropriate areas in which we can re-wild.

In these areas we are allowing for the grass and weeds to grow naturally, cutting in a neat border and desired walk lines.

In areas of wilding we have created signs to display our purpose and demonstrate our commitment to improving the environment.

Re-wilding is extremely cost effective as we are embracing the natural plant species and saving time on maintenance.



Wildflower

Similarly to re-wilding we have identified areas across the estate which can implement wildflower meadows.

Although initial outlay of the wild flower soil/seed mix is expensive. The result is a fail-safe native and attractive looking wild meadow that flowers twice a year every year.

Along with increasing biodiversity, improving air quality

Controlling weeds

Equipment & Method

- Weed control will form part of the day-to-day work carried out by our Cleaning and Grounds maintenance teams when attending site to carry out tasks. Staff will be equipped with the appropriate tools to deal with this task. Where there is a concern with weeds causing a safety concern such as a trip hazard or obstruction then a specialist service request can be made, and the issue dealt with using the below equipment.
- **Cleaners** attending sites to carry out cleaning tasks will as part of that task assess the area for weeds and will, where deemed necessary remove or reduce growth of the weeds by use of hand scraping tools on in hard surfaces.
- **Grounds Maintenance operatives** attending sites will as part of that task assess the area for weeds and will, where deemed necessary remove or reduce the growth of the weeds by use of hand or power tools on hard surfaces, beds and grassed areas.

Controlling without pesticides:



Weed Ripper Machine

After testing various machines, we purchased Westermann weed ripper machines to assist us in our ability to control weeds without using pesticides.

These machines although resource intensive have proven to be very effective so far in removing weeds and moss in large areas such as drying areas, block paved areas and ball courts.

As technology progresses the ability to access better machinery increases so year on year we are finding alternatives to using pesticides.

Further info on weed ripping equipment:

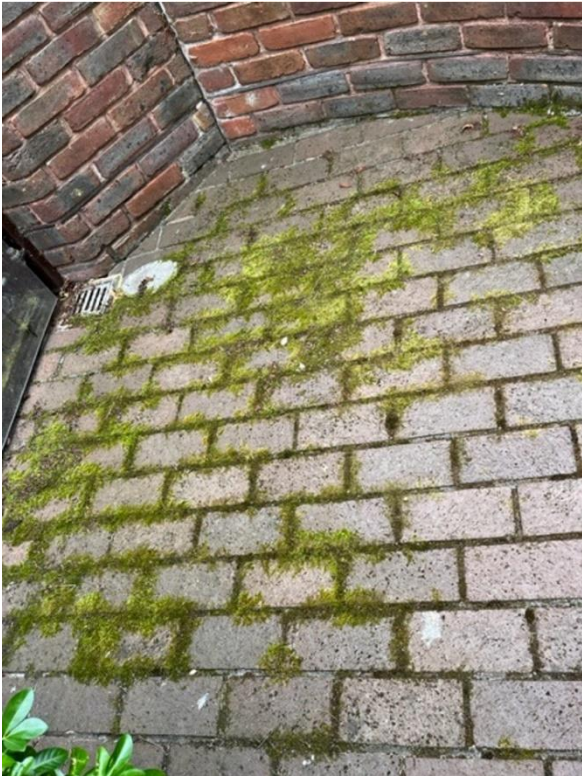
Weeds will be controlled by use of mechanical methods.



Westermann Weed Ripper - Moss Brush

When will we control weeds...

- When deemed hazardous or has the potential to cause damage.
- Weed growth can:
 - interfere with visibility for road users and obscure traffic signs
 - prevent or slow down drainage in kerbs or around drains
 - damage the surface of pavements causing broken and uneven slabs
 - damage hard surface areas, walls, and kerbs



1 Before treatment with Weed Ripper



2 During treatment with Weed Ripper



3 After treatment with Weed Ripper



4. Before the use of Weed Ripper



5. After use of the Weed Ripper



6. Four weeks after weed strimmer last used

It is not our aspiration to completely remove weeds as this is not possible without the use of chemical treatment. The above is a clear illustration of the approach we will take and the expected outcomes. we will need to manage expectations on what are estates will look like in future.



Our cleaning and gardening teams work together to control weeds across the estate.

Our gardening teams use the battery operated equipment when on gardening rounds and the weed ripper machine in appropriate areas.

Working to a systems thinking method our operatives will carry out all work required whilst on site before moving on. Weed control is part of their usual cleaning tasks and therefore operatives will use a long handled scraper to manage small areas of weeds such as entranceways and external balconies.



In 2020 we invested in battery operated equipment including hedge cutters, trimmers and blowers.

This equipment has proven to be lightweight, robust, easy to maintain and heavily reduced the risk of Hand Arm Vibration (HAVs) injuries to our staff.

This equipment has been so effective that it has now been rolled out across Green & Clean.

This equipment combined with the effective management of our gardening rounds has reduced the necessity for our teams to have to weed spray.

Alternatives for dealing with invasive species

The only viable alternative to herbicides that is actually capable of treating invasive species like Japanese Knotweed has proven to be Electrothermal treatment. This works by applying high-voltage electricity to the plants' foliage. This heats the water inside the plant to boiling point turning it into steam, which causes the cells to burst, instantly killing the plant.

Pros

- will kill all plants targeted while glyphosate only kills vascular plants
- many plant species are naturally tolerant of glyphosate and there are now nearly 60 plant species with evolved resistance to glyphosate
- can be used in a greater variety of weather conditions than pesticides
- no issues with drift - can use after rain
- small amount of initial training but no certification necessary
- low noise level
- safe to use in all environments
- low ongoing cost
- no impact to soil, surrounding plants or wildlife

Cons

- expensive initial outlay for machinery, £12,000 for Rootwave Pro and generator, although there are a number of ways to mitigate this
- limited to use where suitable grounding point can be accessed
- lower versatility than some other options as only really suited to weed control
- requires a generator to power
- cannot use while raining

Suppliers - Rootwave <https://rootwave.com/>

This is not something Estate Services will investigate further at this time.

Exceptions to chemical treatments

1. Japanese knotweed and other invasive species

To eradicate Japanese knotweed you must kill the rhizomes (underground root-like stems). Glyphosate is effective because it penetrates through the whole plant.



Injector kit for Round Up (glyphosate) - key for size comparison

The recommended dilution rate for stem injection is 2ml neat per stem

Recommended Dilution Rates for Round Up		
Rate Per Hectare	Dilution Per Litre	Weeds Controlled
3 Litres	15ml per litre of water	Annual grasses, annual broad-leaved weeds
5 Litres	25ml per litre of water	Most perennial weeds
2ml neat per stem	Stem Injection	Japanese Knotweed and other invasive species

If the root of the plant is too small then it cannot be treated by injection and must be sprayed.

2. Wild meadow - selective herbicide treatment to reduce grass dominance.

To maintain a healthy wild meadow, originally planted via wild meadow earth supplied via wildflower turf Overton, occasional treatment may be necessary.

- For example, Centurion Max or Laser chemicals. This is the quickest and most effective way of removing the grass from within the meadow and then a rapid follow up with an over-sow of wildflower seed only into that space, using a half rate application of Meadowscape Pro.

Conclusions

Cost

- No impact on cost has been noticed at this stage.

Complaints

- No complaints have been received at this stage.

Visually

- The estates will have more weeds on them, mostly noticeable in hard landscaped areas. This does not appear to be noticed so far by residents who have made no comment either way about how the Housing Areas are maintained.



Portsmouth

CITY COUNCIL

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY
SCRUTINY PANEL

A REVIEW INTO BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT IN URBAN PORTSMOUTH

Date published: 22 March 2022

Under the terms of the Council's Constitution, reports prepared by a Scrutiny Panel should be considered formally by the Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member within a period of eight weeks, as required by Rule 11(a) of the Policy & Review Procedure Rules. However, due to purdah, consideration of this report will be deferred to the first Cabinet meeting in the new municipal year.

PREFACE

When the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel received the instruction from full council to perform this review we were very eager to get our teeth into it, though there were many who feared we wouldn't be able to complete it this year and so it risked being one of those ongoing reports that never reaches fruition. However, this was not the case and I'd like to thank my brilliant team of Councillors Matthew Atkins, Stuart Brown, Charlotte Gerada, Jo Hooper (until 30 November) who was replaced by Hannah Hockaday (from 14 December) and Leo Madden who have all left their politics at the door and really worked hard. At some points we were meeting weekly in order to get through all the information, and we also held a site visit around the city to see the areas of interest.

We had excellent levels of attendance, and when people couldn't make it, they sent in the standing deputies Councillors Ryan Brent, Graham Heaney and Judith Smyth who even took the minutes for our site visit and wrote them up for us to have as an appendix. This has been an excellent example of how cross-party working can benefit the city when we all pull together for a common cause.

This difficult challenge of course could not have been completed without diligent and intense officer support from Democratic Services and in particular Jane Di Dino who has worked hard to ensure that we have kept to schedule and turned around minutes and agendas at great speed.

I would like to thank all the officers, outside bodies, residents and others who have presented to us and you will find more details on them later in this report.

I highly commend this report to you and urge you to accept its recommendations that have been unanimously agreed by the committee and are essential for the current biodiversity emergency we are in.

.....
Councillor Lee Mason
Chair, Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

Date: 22 March 2022

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Appendix 1 – A list of meetings held by the panel and details of the written evidence received.

Appendix 2 - A glossary of terms used.

Appendix 3 - A list of wildflower meadows in Portsmouth

Appendix 4 - A summary of responses to the questionnaires sent to the Allotment Associations

Appendix 5 - notes from visits on 18 January 2022 to Portsdown Hill, Farlington Marshes, Milton Common, Eastney Beach and Tipner.

Appendix 6 - views received from Councillors, members of the public and organisations.

1. Purpose.

The purpose of this report is to present the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel following its review into biodiversity enhancement in urban Portsmouth.

2. Background.

On 13 October 2021 Full Council resolved to request that Scrutiny Management Panel and the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee:

- Reviews all relevant policies and practices on urban biodiversity that might harm or undermine local ecosystems, such as grass cutting across the city, re-wilding on allotment plots to improve habitats for insects, including bees. In general, approaches should aim to positively contribute to re-wilding and support other approaches to re "greening" Portsmouth.
- Seeks views from residents, interested community groups and ward councillors.
- Report back with recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

This review was undertaken by the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel, which comprised:

Councillor Lee Mason (Chair)
Matthew Atkins
Stuart Brown
Charlotte Gerada
Jo Hooper (16 November to 30 November)
Hannah Brent (from 14 December)
Leo Madden

The Standing Deputies were Councillors Simon Boshier, Ryan Brent, Graham Heaney, Ian Holder, Lee Hunt, Benedict Swann and Rob Wood.

At its meeting on 16 November 2021, the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel (henceforth referred to in this report as the panel) agreed the terms of reference for the review:

This study will review all relevant policies and practices on urban biodiversity that might harm or undermine local ecosystems, such as grass cutting across the city, re-wilding on allotment plots to improve habitats for insects, including bees. In general, approaches should aim to positively contribute to re-wilding and support other approaches to regreening Portsmouth.

The review will:

- Provide a strategic overview of the current level of biodiversity set out in the council's policies.
- Indicate areas where improvements are required.
- Make recommendations on future focus.

The panel met formally to discuss the review on seven occasions between 16 November 2021 and 22 March 2022.

A list of meetings held by the panel and details of the witnesses and the written evidence received can be found in *appendix one*. A glossary of terms used in this report is in *appendix two*. The minutes of the panel's meetings and the documentation reviewed by the panel are published on the council's website [Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meetings](#).

All Councillors were invited to write in with their views for this review. Written views were also welcomed from residents and community organisations.

3. Policies

The panel considered the following council documents:

Partnership for South Hampshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017-34.¹

Solent Mitigation Strategy 2017²

Wilder 2030: Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust Strategy³

Portsmouth Local Plan and the biodiversity background paper - Biodiversity & Portsmouth (Portsmouth Local Plan 2038)⁴

Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2012-2022⁵

Greening Strategy⁶

Greening Strategy Update⁷

Greening Strategy - Future Review & Delivery⁸

The Greening Strategy

Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness reported that he and the administration are very pleased that this review is being undertaken and considers it vital to achieving the council's goals. A significant amount has been achieved including planting, by late 2021:

- 33,300 plants, shrubs and hedges
- 671 trees
- 257,000 daffodil bulbs

The Head of Estate Services added that these figures are reflective of the Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services (HNBS) Green and Clean efforts only, not the council as a whole.

The Team Leader Landscape Architect explained that the council's Greening Strategy incorporates many different themes on what can be done in parks, streets and gardens etc. This was drafted two years ago and provides an overview for what is possible. However, the council is mostly reactive at the moment to requests for rewilding/ greening of areas and does not have a clear overarching vision with regard to improving biodiversity.

¹ [S Hants Green Infrastructure Strategy 2017-2034](#)

² [Solent-Recreation-Mitigation-Strategy-December-2017.pdf \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [HIWWT Wilder Portsmouth brochure](#)

⁴ [New local plan evidence - Portsmouth City Council](#)

⁵ [Parks & Open Spaces strategy 12-22](#)

⁶ [Greening Portsmouth Strategy - Cabinet 10 March 2010.](#)

⁷ [Greening Strategy Update - Cabinet 5 October 2010.](#)

⁸ [Greening Strategy - Future Review and Delivery - Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery 9 February 2022](#)

The Head of Estate Services added that speaking for his department, there is a written strategy under the heading of 'environment and sustainability'. That being - each Green & Clean area will produce a sustainable planting plan annually, to include: trees, shrubs, wild meadows and be open to ideas such as creating natural looking areas. The intention is to design planting improvements within the boundaries of the allocated budget or to seek out other funding routes such as CIL and grants. This has been the case since around 2017.

The approach includes:

- Removal of some of the large evergreen shrubs takes place across the estates to clear out mature plants that are past their best in terms of appearance and have little value in terms of visual appearance and landscape character. In many cases these shrubs have been heavily pruned around their base over the years, boxed into peculiar shapes, and have foliage growing around the top only, which looks unbalanced and unattractive.
- These plants provide little value for wildlife habitat (birds and insects, including bees) since they are non-native species.
- Our overall aim is to grass over most of these areas to open up visibility and make a smarter appearance, but we are also creating some wildflower areas and areas of spring bulb planting.
- There is an intention to replace some areas of planting with new shrubs and hedges where space allows or to make an attractive feature either using native hedge species against boundaries and fences, or using low-medium height mixed evergreen and herbaceous shrubs and perennials with colour and seasonal interest that will require less annual cutting and pruning than the existing large evergreen shrubs.
- Shrubs and hardy perennials are chosen for size, seasonal interest, textural and foliage character, flowering and colour. Though most of these are not native, many provide value for bees and insects throughout the year.
- Many trees are planted as part of these works. Trees offer long term habitat for birds and insects as well as all the other benefits to climate and healthy living. We aim to use a mix of native and non-native species to provide a range of tree sizes and qualities for the urban environment, some with flowering and leaf interest.
- These works require phasing to first clear and tidy, then plant up afterwards
- We believe this will create housing estates that feel fresher, lighter and more appealing to the residents.

As shown in the Greening Strategy, there are many means to improve biodiversity for example, introducing/ encouraging hedgerows, scrubland and woodlands. Fruit orchards have proved popular. These may not attract the most wildlife but encourage people to connect to nature, which is just as valuable.

The Green & Healthy Streets Coordinator explained the development of the Greening Strategy. In 2019 the Cabinet received reports on the development of Green Infrastructure for the city. At the same time, discussions around the

response to the climate emergency were developing; and the city was considering the responses to challenges around air quality.

It was therefore agreed that it would be sensible to develop a single approach to increasing the greenery in the city. The Greening Portsmouth strategy was approved in March 2020.

The focus of the work from the strategy has been to double canopy coverage in the city, 360 new trees in parks and open spaces, and 120 new street trees (net of replacements) every year need to be added for the next 25 years. However, the city is in the midst of a climate emergency and therefore planting has been significant over the past two years.

Housing has reported that over the last three years (not including this Winter's planting) they have planted 34,300 mixed plants, shrubs and 683 trees and 437,140 daffodil bulbs and wildflower meadows created across seven locations on housing land. Six wildflower meadows have been created on highways land. Parks and Open Spaces have reported that over the past three years 22 urban meadows/ wildflower meadows have been created and 13 areas of rewilding.

Over Winter 2021/2022, there are plans to plant 208 standard trees and 8,000 whips to create native hedges through the funding received from Forgotten Places and Trees for Cities. This is in addition to other planned programmes across directorates.

Therefore, planting has rapidly increased over a short period of time.

The council's Greening Strategy will naturally enhance the biodiversity of the city, but it isn't specific to this need and does not reflect on plant specific planting to protect and enhance the animals, insects and ecosystems.

However, we do know that the more plants and trees invested into the city of any kind, the more homes are created for a variety of insects and animal species. Creating greater biodiversity and a healthier ecosystem.

- As well as preserving trees and greenery in the city, the council needs to proactively take other measures such as enhancing lower-level planting (hedges and shrubbery).
- Private gardens can also be beneficial through helping to ensure that neighbourhoods are more resilient to some of the impacts of climate change, but also through the benefits they bring to local ecology and overall biodiversity in the area.
- It is recognised that some of the UK's declining wildlife species are now found more often in gardens than anywhere else. With gardens playing host to a range of species, they can be the main avenue through which people witness the natural environment day to day.
- A significant proportion of the city is covered by private gardens due to the highly built-up nature of Portsmouth, which equates to 17.7% of the entire area of the city.
- Many gardens are now completely paved over with artificial materials, and devoid of natural surfaces or vegetation such as trees and shrubs

The work plan in relation to greening and biodiversity includes the following:

- The council needs to continue developing a programme of communication and activity to make sure that everyone in the city understands the approach to trees and greenery and give people help and advice to play their own part.
- The team will consider how the information around the city about trees and greenery can be improved so that people can understand why these things are important and republish the Tree Charter for the city.
- A strong mechanism for gathering feedback will be created about where people think a "greening intervention" could be helpful and make sure that the council responds to ideas on a regular basis. This will help keep the action plan fresh and up to date.
- Our work with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the local community is helping us to support the community with our push to increase greenery, biodiversity and development of ecosystems.
- A dedicated senior communications officer is now in place who will lead on climate change/ green / carbon topics.
- The council has engaged St James hospital into a programme with Earth watch to plant trees and improve the biodiversity on their site.
- Our work with schools is also helping to increase greenery and education around biodiversity and ecosystems. Manor infant school is the latest project with a community planting day on Saturday 22 January - funded provided through our links with Trees for Cities.
- Our most recent project is to support new Horizons school with funding opportunities to create a greening project on their site, with landscape advice from Helen Bergin - Landscape architect.
- Our focus for Spring will be to engage more schools in greening and biodiversity. We are hoping to work in partnership with Trees for Cities who deliver an excellent funded schools' programme.

To measure success, the team will seek to baseline the council's current tree stock, greenery and open space, and reassess on an appropriate basis to benchmark:

- Number of trees
- Canopy cover
- Air quality
- Engagement levels
- Open space quality assessment

To further develop our duty to demonstrate our commitment to conserving and restoring biodiversity we can:

- Develop policies and strategies set out to work towards the council's declared Climate and Ecological Emergency and put them into practice - strategies that can be used and adopted by all directorates.
- Identify habitats and species in the city that are of national, regional and local importance and outline a plan of action for their protection, management and enhancement (some of this work has been done - geese at Great Salterns).

A clear biodiversity strategy would empower departments and ensure a consistent approach is applied so that all parts of the city receive support.

The grant for the planting of 208 standard trees and 8,000 whips year includes five years of watering and maintenance. After that time, a tree needs less frequent watering and is established. There will naturally be increased maintenance costs year on year. Service managers may need to discuss the budget needs with their directors and finance leads.

It is not yet known if the greening the city budget will continue each year. The focus will be on work that schools and communities can do to green their schools, gardens and outside spaces. Additional funding opportunities will continue to be sought.

Street trees are significantly more expensive to plant due to the costs through the Private Finance Initiative contract and due to the built-up urban areas, many trees do not survive unless the right type of tree pits are installed. Therefore, the focus is on areas where a significant difference can be made.

The council is working to encourage big landowners to take responsibility for greening their land. One example of this, is the hospital which has undertaken a successful greening project with support from the council.

Schools are supported to find funding opportunities. 600 whips have been planted at Manor Infant School. The council helped the school secure funding from the City Partnership Programme and the delivery is volunteer-led, and the school will maintain them. The Education Superzone Programme at Arundel Court School is a place-based approach to coordinated public policy and community action, aiming to reduce childhood obesity in one specific area. We are focusing on improving green spaces to encourage outdoor activity and safe spaces for children and families.

Redevelopment of Arundel Park was due to a safer streets initiative This project is a joint project with the police and crime commissioner with the goal of reducing crime and encouraging safety in the park, which aligns with the need to improve green space and support the superzone work.

A project is currently being explored where QR codes would be put up in parks linking to information about the plants and ecosystems.

The £35,950 funding from Forgotten Places included training development days for volunteers and free literature.

She would like to see improved communication with residents to encourage them to take ownership of greening their gardens or balconies or communal space. Wider education around that would make a significant difference. A fun and interactive Instagram campaign is currently being discussed that would show what steps you can take to make your garden more attractive to wildlife. This campaign and website pages with this information are being drawn up with the new Communications Officer.

Funding was applied for a joint project called The Journey of a Bee is underway with the University of Portsmouth to create a green wall on for Central Library. As bees need green areas to be close together in order to find enough food, this wall would be the starting point for a series of green areas throughout the city in areas with low air quality. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful, and the costs are huge, so other ideas will be explored. Rather having green walls, self-sustainable plants could be encouraged to climb naturally.

The Head of Estate Services added that there is potential for green roofs to be put on bin sheds and shed roofs on HNBS land.

Councillor Kimberly Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery explained that her role is different from other portfolios as it is more strategic which means that she is involved with other Cabinet Members' areas to discuss what they can do in terms of dealing with climate change and the green recovery. She finds this very interesting and helpful.

Although there is no budget for this portfolio, pots of funding pots are available. Anyone with an idea for a green project can apply for money from the Greening Funding pot.

When she took on this role, economic development and land use had changed and led to a decline in biodiversity. However, this situation has already improved with all the planting and initiatives that have been carried out since including:

- The planting of greenery and trees along the travel corridor in Southampton Road
- The development of an interactive green assets map
- Wildflower meadow planting
- The trialling of the first bio-retention facility (a rain garden) which is very low maintenance and attractive.

An update report on the Greening Strategy which came to her February portfolio meeting explained the council's clear ambition to improve the urban environment. One key target is increasing tree canopy cover by 400/500 per year for the next 25 years. Last year 1,600 trees were planted and even more should be planted this year. The strategy will be aligned with the emerging provision set out in the Environment Act 2021 and other relevant strategies including the Health & Wellbeing Plan 2020-2023 and the Portsmouth Local Plan (consultation will be carried out regarding regulation 18).

It is important that greening take place across the city, particularly in areas of high deprivation with not much green spaces. Health and the improving the environment go hand in hand.

She is open to suggestions on greening projects from residents and groups and acknowledged that the council can always do a bit better around community engagement. She has been speaking to Portsmouth Friends of the Earth and Portsmouth Climate Action Board to get an outside view.

Locations for planters are being sought in many areas including Eastney, Charles Dickens, Nelson and Fratton.

Biodiversity loss could be as harmful to our planet as climate change. She supports the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's suggestion that the council declare a Nature Emergency. The declaration of a Climate Emergency has had a very positive effect in terms of starting discussions across directorates and targets being set.

There is no one big thing that the council could do that would make a difference; there are many small actions that would add up to make a significant difference.

The declaration of the Climate Emergency has triggered many important actions including the carbon audit and the carbon budget.

There are one or two officers in each department that she tends to approach in the first instance. If she were to have a wish list, having more officer time across all the departments and more funding would be high on it. She would also like more rain gardens and parklets.

An interactive map showing all the green infrastructure in the city is being developed.

The council will continue to lobby government explaining why Portsmouth must be treated differently because it has a high population density coupled with a high rate of long-term health conditions, poverty and deprivation so close working with public health is very important.

The process for responding to requests to green areas from community groups needs to be improved so that it is consistent regardless of which department owns the land.

Work has been done to ensure that the Local Plan has a strong policy regarding greening and health.

Planning.

The Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth explained that all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan and it is therefore that Plan, which is primarily made up of the Portsmouth Plan 2012, which dictates what can be required from developers. Policy PCS13 of the Plan requires all new development to ensure 'that development retains and protects the biodiversity value of the development site and produces a net gain in biodiversity wherever possible. Any unavoidable negative impacts on biodiversity as a result of development should be appropriately mitigated.' Greater protection and scrutiny is provided for proposed development on sites of local, national and international importance for nature conservation. This local policy ensures planning decisions meet the duty placed on all public authorities to have regard in exercising their function to the purpose of conserving biodiversity by s40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

This general duty is in addition to the duty imposed to comply with the 'Habitats Regulations' in respect of specific designated sites, such as the Solent Waters Special Protection Area (SPA). This regulatory requirement is that no planning permission can be granted for a scheme that is likely to have a significant effect on the designated site, whether alone or in combination with other projects unless it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of that designated site.

While strategic scale schemes, or developments in particular proximity to the SPA around Portsmouth, can have a direct 'likely significant effect' when considered on their own the requirement to consider all projects in combination with other projects has meant that Habitat Regulation Assessment is needed in respect of a large proportion of new development in Portsmouth. This applies primarily to residential development that increases the number of people living in proximity to the SPA.

When such development is combined this results in both increased recreational disturbance of wildfowl, including species for which the SPA is designated, and increased wastewater flowing into the SPA resulting in eutrophication and associated adverse impacts on the SPA and relevant species.

These significant effects therefore require mitigation before development can be granted planning permission and the cost of that mitigation is a requirement placed on developers. Recreational disturbance is managed through a range of mitigation measures collectively called the 'Bird Aware' programme, and eutrophication resulting from increased nitrates and phosphates is managed through the 'Interim Nutrient Neutral Mitigation Strategy'. Both these strategies require a financial contribution to developers to fund mitigation schemes to resolve the adverse effects resulting from the proposed development.

Finally, it can be noted that following the introduction of the Environment Act at the end of 2021, the government intends to change how biodiversity conservation and enhancement will be achieved through the planning system. Further secondary legislation is required before this new approach is introduced so full details are not yet known, but the Act makes provision for a requirement for a net gain in biodiversity to be a condition of all planning permission.

The Act also makes provision, subject to further legislation, for the general duty referred to above to be amended not just to conserve, but also enhance biodiversity and increase the obligations on local authorities to publish reports on biodiversity in their area. The regulatory and statutory regime for biodiversity within the planning process is therefore going through a very significant review and is likely to be significantly more beneficial to biodiversity and onerous on both developers and councils within the next few years.

The representative from the Portsmouth Climate Action Board (PCAB) explained that the Green Factor Scoring System holds developers to account to ensure they follow through with what they promise in their plans. This is being considered by other Planning Authorities.

The Wilder Communities Project Officer, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (the Wildlife Trust) has a dedicated team of experts who work with local authority planning officers. All new developments should have an Environmental Impact Assessment included in their applications. He does not know if they all do.

4. Allotments

The Allotments Manager explained that there are ten sites in the city and one outside, near Rowlands Castle used by Leigh Park area residents.

He feels that the council's policies regarding allotments are about right.

Regulations

The rules and guidance are set out on the allotments section of the council website. New allotment holders sign a written agreement and receive a full set of rules.

Rewilding of Sites.

Up to 25% of a plot may be uncultivated but it must be managed so as not to be a nuisance to the other plot holders. The 25% can also include space for a shed or seating area. The 25% uncultivated rule was determined by the council and is clearly explained in the rules.

Information about rewilding is available from organisations including the Royal Horticultural Society.

The Chair of the Cosham Allotment Association (AA) explained that three or five plots at this site have been left to go wild in part and the weeds are causing problems for the neighbouring plot holders.

Some allotment holders claim that they are rewilding part of their plot. It would be useful if there was a clear definition of the term to differentiate this from simple neglect. This definition could be used across all sites.

The Chair of the North Harbour AA explained that they do not believe allotments should be included in re-wilding as there are more than enough people on the waiting list for them to be used in this manner, and there is plenty of natural re-wilding taking place when plots are not re-let promptly causing other plot holders problems.

The Chair of Milton & Eastney AA felt that re-wilding/ re-greening does not and should not, be associated with allotments. By their nature, allotments are already green sites in that there are many different types of plants/ vegetables/ flowers grown on individual plots which, when considered collectively, contribute immensely to the provision of a bio-diverse environment. Encouraging plot-holders to re-wild (grow grasses, weeds, wildflowers) is the first step leading to a dirty plot. It is also very inconsiderate to adjacent plot-holders who have to deal with the issue of rapidly spreading weeds/ grasses etc from re-wilded / dirty plots.

They are not against biodiversity but believe that, in the case of allotment sites, biodiversity and rewilding/ re-greening are, and should be treated, as separate issues.

The Chair of Long Meadow AA felt that the problem with rewilding plots is that of a weed spreading problem caused by seeds spreading throughout the area. Plot holders have enough problems with this as is, often being accused of dirty plots because of fast growing weeds, without close by plots being turned into weed havens.

Inspections.

The Allotments Manager informed the panel that he carries out the inspections of all the allotment sites and the rules are uniformly applied. He has a background in horticulture and has his own plot and therefore can understand the challenges that plot holders face. He listens to people to understand what they are trying to achieve with their plots. Each case is determined on its own merits.

Inspections are carried out mainly during Summer, normally from mid-March. All the sites are visited. Any holders with an unworked plot, receive a Dirty Plot Notice (DPN). The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that he accompanies the Allotment Manager during the inspection of the Cosham site and sometimes, rather than issue a DPN, the inspector asks him to nudge the plot holder. The inspectors are very fair as far as he is aware and are quite lenient.

The Allotments Manager explained that the plot holders are given 28 days to correct issues or to explain any extenuating circumstances. A follow up inspection is carried out after this time has elapsed. If the issues have been corrected, the plot holder is told that if there are any further issues in the following 12 months, they will be evicted. If the issue has not been rectified, they will receive a notice to quit letter. Their right to appeal is explained and they are given seven days to clear their property. The plot is then cleared and relet. He has a colleague who deals with the administration and Doug's team clears repossessed and vacated plots which is a big drain on resources.

Over the past three years 579 DPNs were issued, 92 plots were dispossessed from these and a further 59 were dispossessed for failing to work the plot properly within the following 12 months so total repossessions over the last 3 years were 151.

The issuing of DPNs was suspended during the pandemic due to shielding and restrictions between July 2020 and June 2021.

Pesticide Use.

The Allotments Manager explained that the use of pesticides on allotments is left to the individual. Slug pellets have been withdrawn now. People are expected to act responsibly and use as per the manufacturer's instructions. Pesticides sold to the public are premixed now which prevents some over-use. Most people only use them as a last resort. There are many more younger allotment holders now; they tend to be more ecologically responsible.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that most plots are gardened organically at this site. It is very environmentally friendly and has five active beehives.

He uses slug pellets on his plot as he has found the natural methods of discouraging slugs and snails to be ineffective. The strict rules regarding organic gardening are off-putting.

The Portsmouth Climate Action Board (PCAB) noted that gardeners are advised to create ponds for frogs and toads which will eat slugs. It was suggested that the council:

- Provide information to allotment holders (as part of their introduction pack) of the consequences for wildlife of using pesticides.
- Suggest alternative nature-based pest and disease control measures, including increasing habitat for frogs and toads (ponds).
- OR even better, introduce a wildlife-friendly policy on the allotments where only Soil Association approved herbicides/ pesticides are allowed.

Contaminants

The Allotment Manager informed the panel that tyres are sometimes used as planters and if they are left on vacated plots, the disposal is very expensive for the council. They should not be used for growing vegetables as there is a high risk that the tyre could break down and leach contaminants into the soil.

Demand

The three Milton sites	4.5 years
Hilsea Lane, Stamshaw	18 months- 2 years
Stamshaw & Tipner	2 years
Long Meadow	2 - 2.5 years
Moneyfields	2 - 2.5 years
Salisbury Road	2.5 years
North Harbour	18 months
Knowsley Road (7 plots)	24 people are on the waiting list.

Applicants indicate which site they would like; any/ all/ some or indicate their preferred plot. If they turn down an offer, they will be deferred on the list for 12 months, not just dropped to the bottom.

Demand for allotments has grown, particularly during the pandemic.

There is very limited scope for the creation on new sites. If one was identified, the water supply and facilities would need to be installed, the plots laid out and prepared. The costs would be very high. Much land has been contaminated in the past and so would not be suitable.

A 250m² plot will be divided into three when it is given back to the council. Smaller, more manageable plots are very popular with younger plot holders. The number of plots has increased from 1,600 (approximately 2010) to 1,800. Post meeting actual number is 1884 in Portsmouth plus 64 at Rowlands Castle.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that plots were originally approximately 10m x 20m and are now 10m x 12.5m. When they are given up, the council often splits them so that more people can have allotments. They cost approximately £65 per year.

Biodiversity

The Allotments Manager said that there is a lot of biodiversity on the allotments.

The Chair of the Cosham AA explained that the allotment holders at the Cosham site are receptive to rewilding and improving biodiversity but in his opinion, it is already very diverse.

The Chair of the North Harbour AA explained that members support biodiversity in principle and practice with many plots being totally organic and peat free. They have a healthy population of wildlife with a considerable number of birds and resident beehives on the site which belong to the Portsmouth Bee-Keepers Association. There is an abundance of other insect life on the plots and in some cases far too many blackflies and aphids.

They welcome the use of wildflower beds and landscaping in large green spaces like Port Solent Green where a good number could be introduced without detriment to the overall utility of the space and most beneficially on the "Motorway Hills" to the west of the M275. Consideration to regular grass cutting so that dog walkers can effectively clean up behind their dogs.

The Chair of Milton & Eastney AA explained that keen / experienced plot-holders are fully aware of the benefits associated with biodiverse environments and are quick to embrace new ideas from wherever they originate - be that TV, internet, books or magazine articles

The Chair of Long Meadow AA explained that many members already plant flowers on their plot to encourage bees, along with vegetables which require pollinating in order to produce i.e., beans, pumpkins, marrows and peas.

Some members encourage foxes to stay on site because of their catching and eating rats on site.

The Chair of Horsea Lane AA explained that quite a few allotments have ponds for frigs, newts, toads, dragonfly, damselfly. You can sit for hours and watch them dart about. We will be planting hawthorn on our perimeter to replace what the environment agency had cut down (1/4 mile of blackthorn, blackberry, hawthorn and elderberry trees and hedging).

A short questionnaire was sent to the city's allotment association Chairs to learn about members' views on biodiversity. Eastney & Milton, Horsea Lane and Long Meadow AAs responded (their responses are attached as appendix four). Their views can be summarised thus:

Some or most of their members took various measures on their plots to improve the soil, attract wildlife or improve biodiversity. In the communal area at Long Meadow, fences were used as frames for climbing plants.

In the communal areas of both sites, hedges were grown around the perimeter, the grass is only cut when it is more than 5cm long and left for more than two weeks in the summer. There is also a log pile in both sites' communal areas. There were no maintained wild areas nor any nesting boxes/ hedgehog houses.

Neither association was in favour of areas of rewilding on individual plots nor did they have any projects in mind to improve biodiversity of the site.

Both associations felt that there is a problem with dirty plots but would like more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity on their allotments and would like help/ advice or training on identifying biodiversity opportunities.

The Chair of the Cosham AA also explained that he would like to see food grown in communal spaces. This would make the city less reliant on imported food and be very good for the environment. A study carried out by Sheffield University concluded that if food was grown on community space, it would provide for 70% of the city's food requirements. He is a member of Incredible Edible online group where people grow fruit and vegetables in their own gardens and support each other.

He would like the council to plant wildflowers on roundabouts and verges.

5. Council Practices

Greening Initiatives

Councillor Cal Corkery explained that across the council estates in Charles Dickens ward there are lots of great examples of greening initiatives which promote biodiversity and tackle the climate and nature crises. Often these projects are led and maintained by the residents themselves resulting in a more locally rooted initiative with strong community buy in. For example, the Cornwallis Crescent community orchard and the Australia Close community garden. These kinds of projects should be supported and expanded where possible.

It is not always clear what residents are allowed to do and different advice seems to be given in different areas. He believes it would be useful to have clear and consistent guidance available to council tenants and leaseholders about exactly what they can do on their balconies and in other shared areas.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader noted that there are numerous initiatives being carried out and that bioersivity is at the forefront of many people's minds.

The landscaping team works very well with the Green & Clean Team within the Housing Department and the Parks Team in many areas. The teams are

very energetic and positive to requests from local people for greening projects.

Site Assessments.

Prior to development or greening of any area, he recommended that an assessment be carried out to consider:

- The needs of the location.
- The needs of the people and how they behave there.
- The possible negative impacts of the proposed measures on the existing ecology.
- The unique conditions and needs of the area and any mitigation measures that would be required.
- The size, aspect, wind conditions, sun exposure.
- The objective of the proposal.

Expectations must be managed from the start to avoid disappointment. For example, if more biodiversity were to be introduced on Southsea Common, it could change the character of the Common, and sometimes naturalised areas look quite messy, so this may not be desirable.

Native hedges, scrubland, woodland and wildflowers are not appropriate for all sites. They often need space to mature or fill out.

Councillor Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that planting the right plants, shrubs and trees for the right soil is essential so that they will thrive. Work needs to be done with the Planning Department to ensure the Local Plan clearly stipulates this.

Work With Schools

The Deputy Director of Children, Families & Education reported that where schools have engaged, it has been very well received. There is a lot of opportunity here and it fits in well with the curriculum and the work schools are doing to make children aware of their environment and climate change.

He recognised that schools are currently under a lot of pressure due to the impact of the pandemic and the number of children (and staff) who are absent, both in primary and secondary. This is the main barrier to engagement at the moment but hopefully this will improve as the peak of the latest wave of infections passes.

Some of the primary schools have very little space and no green space so this will limit their engagement. It does vary across the city.

The main point of contact will be the Headteacher, particularly in primary schools. There will not be a consistent approach due to the diverse mix of schools and Multi Academy Trusts that we have.

Communications have been good and the Education Service is more than happy to promote the work and support the engagement of schools through our weekly communications to schools (PEP bulletin and Friday message to Heads) and our monthly briefings with Headteachers.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that many schools are already looking at greening their grounds and the council is working with the Tree Council to supply trees.

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation noted that in Iceland, all pupils take part in the weeding of the verges near their schools. Getting young children between 5 and 7 involved in planting is essential to spark a lifelong passion.

The Wildlife Trust has a good relationship with maintained schools via the council. It has encountered some hurdles when trying to engage with academies. The Wilder Portsmouth Programme will target schools this year. He is currently working with 8 or 9 schools. Next year the trust hopes to hold an event where a teacher and 4 pupils from every school will come together to explain what they want to achieve at their schools in terms of increasing biodiversity and greening measures. These aspirations will feed into an action plan for the city.

Rewilding

The Landscape Architect Team Leader suggested that the panel may wish to consider teasing out the difference between an area maintained to encourage biodiversity and areas that become neglected in this review. They can become areas where rubbish is dumped, or where it feels very overgrown and even unsafe in some instances.

Rewilded sites need regular monitoring and maintenance to make sure they are not becoming neglected or unsafe.

Grass Cutting.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager explained that 280 hectares of council land is mown. There are different regimes depending on the location and type of grass. The frequency has decreased over the years; it was average of 16 per year and is now 9-12.

The grass in parks and cemeteries are mown fortnightly. Grass in sports fields is cut as and when in Winter and fortnightly during the rest of the year.

Reducing the frequency of mowing, saves money and carbon emissions and also increases biodiversity.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader noted that sometimes there are simple steps to improving biodiversity e.g., mowing grass less often or leaving the verges uncut.

Some areas can thrive from human interaction, for example Eastney beach where the shingle vegetation is trampled or battered by people walking on/through.

The PCAB suggested that larger trials be conducted in a trial area reducing the grass mowing in parks and cemeteries. Close and frequent mowing of grass areas means they can become parched in warm / dry weather leading to bare soil. We see this on Southsea Common every summer, when it turns

yellow. Bare soil leads to the emission of carbon. Allowing grass to grow longer before cutting (every 3 or 4 weeks?) would lessen the risk of this happening. Andy Ames, the Trust offered to help by consulting Wilder Portsmouth users for the wildflower trial.

Sea Defences.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that before sea defence work started at Hilsea Lines the importance of the area was investigated and how any impact on the ecosystem could be mitigated.

To meet the council's objectives regarding rewilding and improving biodiversity, more could be done to encourage departments and Colas to work together, in order to provide a more cohesive approach to biodiversity and greening.

The Coastal, Highways & Drainage Team Manager and the Head of Coastal Partnership submitted a handout that shows the enhancements in the flood defence schemes that support the environment and benefit the local community and explained that the Environment Agency is funding the defence work and it is incumbent upon the council to embed biodiversity improvement work in the business plans when submitting funding applications. It is not an add on. There are many aspects to this including tree replacement on a 4:1 basis, saltmarsh replanting, creating more than 60 tidepools at Southsea and North Portsea and the creation of a bird island in Langstone Harbour.

Although Southsea is not environmentally protected, it is still incumbent on us to minimise the impact of the works. There is a zero to waste target and 10,000s of lorry movements are saved.

There is tension regarding the need to control public access, especially when trying to combine increased public amenity and environmental improvements. They are working with PR to ensure they get it right when undertaking this work.

Opportunities to create wildlife corridors across the Solent are considered.

They are confident in being able to deliver the best scheme in not only Portsmouth but Gosport, Fareham and soon Chichester. This shows you can deliver an environmentally sound project of any size.

Textured Ecoformliner seawalls create habitat on the face of the seawall and is funded by the Environment Agency and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Bee posts are being integrated into the landscape and experts are consulted to ensure that the appropriate maintenance regime is in place.

It is important to note that enhancement of the public realm is a cost met by the Capital Budget, but most ongoing maintenance is revenue cost.

Environmental improvements elsewhere have been carried out including putting in drainage along the football pitches.

The feedback from residents has been very positive with 30,000 people on social media saying the works were fantastic.

The tidepools near Southsea Castle will be at different levels to create different habitats with different species. Ready-colonised lumps of rocks will be taken from locations and placed into the new rock armour to encourage rapid colonisation. Green hay has been trialled and proven successful.

The new bird island will be built subject to securing funding using broken out concrete from the flood defence work which is then covered with shingle and silt. The funding bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership has not been successful, and the production of an overarching council policy would assist with funding applications. The policy would cover how works would attract biodiversity.

This flood defence scheme is at the forefront of environmental protection in the region at strategic, tactical and operational levels.

Approximately 1,200 historic coastal landfill sites on the English coastline are potentially at risk from coastal erosion over the next 50 years but at this time no national funding is allocated to reduce or manage this increasing risk with climate change.

The scheme carried out at Salterns Quay has enabled a failing asset to be removed, create a new habitat in the Harbour within the previous footprint and reduce the cost of the project to reduce flood risk at Milton Common and protect the PCC historic coastal landfill by reusing chalk fill material from the redundant quay.

Political commitment to collaborate more in partnership at strategic level is required to ensure we deliver outcomes greater than the sum its parts. There are several organisations working on various objectives within our harbours where it is proposed we should be “stacking benefits” and “blending funding”.

Farlington Marshes flood defences need refurbishing. The plans are in the early stages of scoping a preferred option. It is hoped that the business case will be presented at the Environment Agency approvals panel in December and the works will start in 2024. The value of the works is estimated to be approximately £19m.

Wildflower Meadows

Wildflowers thrive in poor soil but need regular maintenance including cutting back at least once a year and the removal of other plants such as pernicious weeds (brambles, thistles). They may also need to be overseeded after the first year if the take-up is poor, and they become overly dominated by the more competitive species in the mix.

The landscape architect team training includes identifying biodiversity opportunities and objectives in the planning stages of a project. This is brought up by the client or the architects at a very early stage of projects.

The Operations Manager, Colas explained that they are responsible for grass cutting on verges and care is taken to ensure that it does not block sight lines for traffic. and that the programme of wildflowers is expanding every year. Wildflower areas may cost more than grass to maintain because of the need to oversee them every year and inspect them regularly. The cost can also depend on the area.

He suggested that it would be a great idea to bring all parties together about greening, biodiversity and wildflowers. The activity is currently disjointed.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager explained that in the last 4-5 years, 24 meadow areas have been created with colourful wildflower mixes covering 2,500m². A list of the council's 13 urban meadow areas are in appendix three.

There are three types of wildflower meadow areas: the first type is annual cultivated urban meadows with the colourful displays the other two types are annual meadows with cultivated cycle associated with farming (annual sow, cut down harrow self-seed) and then perennial wildflowers.

There is no formal monitoring of the areas. There have been no complaints therefore other areas will be considered.

The creation of wildflower meadows is not part of a council strategy. It is simply ad hoc. There are no specific policies regarding rewilding or urban meadows.

They are aiming to have an even distribution of urban meadows across the city.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness stated that 4,220 m² wildflower meadows have been created in Lake Road, Princeton Road, Kingston Road and other areas.

PFOE noted that weeds, or wild plants, are important for biodiversity because they have evolved to support a broad range of native species. 75% of British insects can only feed on certain wild plants and if these not available the insects disappear.

The Portsmouth Tree Wardens (PTW) and Charles Dickens Community Orchards (CDCO) explained that perennial wildflowers suitable to the types of soil in our urban areas could be introduced. This would reduce mowing, energy costs and labour needed and create a more pleasant environment for local people.

Streets

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that streets in Portsmouth are underdeveloped in terms of biodiversity. There is one town in Germany, Freiburg, where many of the streets have trees in parking pays. It makes a huge green impact but is part of a much wider greening ethos. Most of the streets are wider than in Portsmouth, but not all of them.

Grass Areas.

Grass areas used for parking are not always the most effective because it is difficult for plants to grow through if they are heavily used or compacted. However, they can have a good effect on sustainable drainage because rainwater can penetrate its permeable surface and not run straight off into the drains.

Portsmouth Friends of the Earth (PFOE) stated that it would be hard to give a view on whether the plastic matting put on grass before areas are used for car parking are harmful to the soil. The national Wildlife Trust recommends the use of gravel, and the Royal Horticultural Society recommends that gaps are left and that cars are moved regularly. Generally, people want to do what is good for wildlife so ensuring information is easily available is crucial.

The Landscape Architect Team Leader explained that some plants (shrubs and perennials) are not native but are good pollinators so can still have value to bees and insects.

On some sites the opportunities may be rather restricted, but it is about exploring the opportunities for biodiversity. For example, at King George V playing fields proposals include artificial grass pitches and a new pavilion. There are many mature trees around the edge and some bats roost in the building but currently the biodiversity is rather low. This can be improved by some wildflower planting on soil mounds that use the excavated soil. The site is mainly used as playing fields so the uses/ needs must be balanced out.

The PCAB suggested that climbing plants for the perimeter fences and the greening of the buildings' roofs could be considered there

The council cares very well for its green, open spaces. There is room for improvement, but the Parks Team and Green & Clean do a good job in trying new methods to improve biodiversity. Even Colas have been trialling wildflower areas. But it would be good to capture this all together and be working better towards a collective vision rather than working in silos.

Clear parameters are required to ensure that rewilded areas and neglected areas can be distinguished. Thorough assessments at the planning stage are essential to prevent unintentional consequences on the local ecosystem.

It is important that the council and Colas are clear regarding wilding projects and also the spraying of weedkiller which is sprayed on pavements and the walls of forecourts. The review must be strategic in its approach. Rewilding is not always the best option to improve biodiversity. It may be useful to identify the common themes where the council can work in a consistent way city-wide. The proposal for a parking space to be converted into a parklet in Southsea has been supported by local businesses. Although planting trees in streets is a great long-term objective, streets tend to be narrow and people want to be able to park near home.

Biodiversity

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that there is a clear distinction between biodiversity and greening. Both are important but

greening an area does not automatically lead to increased biodiversity. To increase biodiversity, the right conditions need to be created including ensuring that the soil is appropriate for the chosen plants.

She does not think the council does enough to create ecosystems.

The PCAB's view on biodiversity is that it is fundamental to us slowing down and being able to live with climate change. Biodiverse ecosystems are currently shielding us from many of the impacts of climate change in the future. In cities, this includes protecting us from flash flooding, the urban heat island and, of course, promoting our mental and physical health, making us more resilient. Ensuring cities are biodiverse is a win-win for any city.

The Wildlife Trust is asking all that Local Authorities including Portsmouth City Council declare a Nature Emergency Motion:

The council resolves to:

1. Declare that we are experiencing a nature emergency, recognising that:
 - a. Nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this.
 - b. A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society.
 - c. The nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.
2. Commit to embedding nature's recovery at the heart of all strategic plans, policy areas and decision-making processes.
3. Commit to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and investing in nature-based solutions to climate change.
4. Develop and agree on an evidence-based strategy and action plan for nature's recovery and report on the progress made. This could be part of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
5. Set clear strategic goals for nature's recovery by 2030, for example, covering the following areas:
 - a. Committing to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with national and international commitments to biodiversity.
 - b. Increasing space for wildlife and long-term maintenance and expansion of a Nature Recovery Network.
 - c. Reducing pressure on wildlife.
 - d. Improving doorstep access to nature, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - e. Supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to support nature's recovery.
6. Work with local communities and organisations to achieve the strategic goals, particularly engaging with disadvantaged and underrepresented sections of society.

Overall swift numbers have decreased but in some areas of the city they are doing well. We need to find out what they need and how we can provide that in the areas where their numbers are low. Bats are affected by light pollution and tend to be located in the East of the city. The council could consider using new streetlights that channel the light differently and makes it softer and so more bat friendly.

Wildlife areas could be tidy and have signs up explaining how important the patch is to wildlife, as clear messaging is vital to show positive changes and bring people on board.

He suggested that the Traffic & Transportation Liaison Group membership could be extended to various local green groups.

Councillor Hannah Brent explained that the immense greenery from our parks and tree lined roads provide a home to a range of insects which in turn feed a range of birds that will delight the ornithologist. The coastal landscape provides yet more sea life that need the range of conditions to survive and thrive, and in turn maintains a food chain leading up to the seals that we see sunbathing on the mud flats of Langstone Harbour.

The PTW and CDCO stated that rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution by removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators. Different types of habitats could be explored by introducing to some areas boggy areas or ponds creating a different habitat.

Road Verges.

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation requested that a continuous wildflower verge be created from the roundabout near Farlington Marshes to Milton. This could be created when the works to improve the shared pedestrian and cyclists' path has been completed. As part of this work to make the path safer, a hedge will be removed and in mitigation, a green fence will be erected in its place and more trees planted on the other side of the road.

Bus Shelters.

As old bus shelters are taken down, they will be replaced with new ones with green rooves as part of a rolling programme. The first ones will be installed in London Road. This is part of a rolling programme that will see bus shelters with green roofs installed all over the city.

The PCAB representative explained that green bus shelter roofs is her area of expertise and offered to help.

Planters

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation noted that in low traffic neighbourhoods, planters are used rather than bollards. The intention is to install planters in as many roads as possible.

Trees

The Sikh community recently planted hundreds of trees on the roundabout near Farlington Marshes.

She would like to see more trees along roads, but the maintenance cost is up to £5,000 per tree. Underground services cables and any possible nuisance from fallen leaves must also be considered.

It is important that the type of trees and their possible maximum height is considered before planting trees in residential roads to ensure that they do not block daylight.

A documentary called The Air We Breathe conducted an experiment where a busy road in Birmingham was closed for 24 hours and trees were brought in planters all along the road. Carbon dioxide levels reduced by approximately 58% and the trees had absorbed a significant quantity of particulates.

Weeds between paving stones along paths can be a trip hazard. The council is using less pesticides.

Rewilding generally is a great thing. In allotments, careful management is essential to prevent problems for neighbouring plots.

A new ecosystem could possibly be created in the road verge in the middle of the M27 near the port. It would require very little maintenance.

The large shadow that the new university building that will be built next to Victoria Park is a concern. Perhaps a woodland ecosystem could be created there that would thrive in the shade.

In Sydney, Australia there was a multistorey carpark with many plants hanging off the edges with a self-watering system. It was very attractive and absorbed lots of particulates.

The Operations Manager at Colas explained that they are responsible for all the infrastructure on the highway including trees. The trees are inspected every four years in accordance with the PFI contract to identify any issues including disease or overgrowing. Sometimes fallen fruit can cause issues for vehicles or pedestrians. Removal is always a last resort and replacements are planted between November and March. More care is taken to ensure that suitable tree species are planted in residential areas now.

Colas works closely with the council to ensure that clear information is sent to residents regarding trees and the way that they are managed. Many people think they have the right to light. Sometimes satellite television aerials are put up but have poor reception because of nearby trees. He offered to help support the council with any communication to the public. He is open to suggestions from the public which will be considered with the council's PFI team.

The PCAB noted that most cities are warmer than rural areas by 2-10 degrees. There can be a high mortality rate in summer especially during heat waves. Green spaces can help by releasing water which has a significant cooling impact which extends outside their boundaries.

Trees also provide shade and reflect light but need to be well-watered. Drought-resistant trees are being considered elsewhere but are not so good for biodiversity as they are not native. A mixture of species would be best.

PFOE suggested that the council should stop putting stop putting tarmac over street tree pits right up to the tree stump, remove tarmac from tree pits and stop killing weeds in tree pits unless an obvious trip hazard.

The PTW and CDCO explained that it would be good to stop tarmacking tree pits. During the last few years, we obtained permission to plant trees in tree pits and planted them. Shortly afterwards someone removed them and retarmacked. There needs to be greater communication between teams that carryout maintenance. The orchards have suffered some losses due to information not being passed from one team to another. When it should be recorded as part of the history of the area and subsequently passed on to the new team taking over. Whether it be a new contractor or otherwise.

Strimming around tree trunks should be carefully avoided, more damage is done by labourers doing this than anything else and this can set back trees many years. Greater care needs to be taken over strimming. The Head of Estate Services explained that this can be solved by the use of strimmer guards, installed on all the trees in HNBS. Strimming means no pesticide is used around the trees to kill grass and guards cost pennies each.

The PTW and CDCO explained that more native and heritage trees need to be planted in Portsmouth. A tree nursery to grow our own native trees in Portsmouth is needed. Propagating from our rare varieties.

We need to increase the tree canopy in Portsmouth we can do this by celebrating the Queen's platinum anniversary. More wildflowers on verges to encourage butterflies and birds. Great care should be taken in coming years to provide mulch for every tree planted so they can retain moisture and cope with the drier weather we are due because of climate change. A large pot of money needs to be put aside for future maintenance of all trees in Portsmouth. We need more tree canopy cover for future generations to survive in the coming years.

The National Tree Charter has become the Charter for Trees after 800 years. The PTW and CDCO have signed up to this agreement. It would be good if the council did this as well. The Local Portsmouth Tree Charter would need to include the Tree Wardens more in what is done and how communities of interest are kept informed of things like tree removals and tree preservation orders for our very rare trees.

Gardening competitions could be reintroduced into Housing services and across the city. Which helps people to take pride in where they live, improve the environment and keep people interested in wildlife.

Ownership of small micro plots by community groups to grow things in areas that are grassed currently would be a great idea. Removing some of the tarmac in urban areas will break up the landscape and allow the rain to soak away more readily, reducing flooding risk and urban runoff. Trees soak up water and pollution.

Biodiverse areas may look unmanaged because they are not trimmed and cut back as much as those neatly kept gardens some folks are used to. Perhaps some local guidance with the aid of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust and friends of the Earth could be made available to help with this.

The city should make more of valuing the trees and their contributions to the environment. Giving a listing and protection for the very rare varieties like the Black poplar we have in our city (there are only 7,000 in the country). The city could introduce trees which have add biodiversity and supply food for wildlife to the city. Such as Oak trees which support a large variety of wildlife. Also by having a variety fruiting trees or hedges. We also now have some very rare fruit trees incorporated in our orchard planting such as the Bardsey apple.

Larger trees should be valued more and have more protection such as (Tree protection orders) as they work harder for the environment. There could be designated community trees, orchards and fruiting hedges under these protection orders.

More could be made of the horticultural opportunities for careers in the city. Our very own National Tree Council Director of Science and Research, advisor to the Department for the Environment & Rural Affairs lives locally. More could be specifically offered through horticultural and national training with a career path into different areas.

The new Environment Bill November 2021 comes into effect shortly, so this will mean more people having to train in these areas so that Portsmouth city council will meet its legal obligations.

Above all we need to offer opportunities and incentives for residents in both private and rented accommodation to grow more trees at home. Perhaps free trees, resources and training working with the support of schools to help inform young people of the benefits to them in the future. Problems faced by residents and community groups are funding for trees, compost, mulch and moving large items from a delivery area to the site.

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The Arboriculture Officer explained that there are 27,000 trees on the system in many areas and come under different departments including cemeteries,

parks, asset management, property, social services, traffic & transportation and education (for schools with a Service Level Agreement with the council).

Most of the trees are inspected every four years; those in high-risk areas e.g., education sites are inspected every year. Any defects that are identified are actioned swiftly.

There has been a marked increase in people who are interested in tree planting.

The council's target is to plant 350 trees per year over 20 years. In the last two years, including this year, 4,000 trees have been planted. 1,600 of these were planted last year with help from Colas, the housing service and CDCO.

There is sufficient funding available for tree planting from the Trees for the City and the Tree Council. This money covers two years of watering which our contractors carry out. The Parks Team was awarded a considerable amount from the Tree Council which enabled the council to plant 400 whips on Great Salterns Field. He has engaged with the PTWs. The council is creating a corridor for nature from Baffins, Great Salterns and along the Eastern Road verges to Farlington. The Head of Estates Services explained that the Clean & Green have received approximately £70,000 for capital and revenue costs for trees planted on HNBS land.

The Arboriculture Officer explained that tree maintenance may be an issue in the future if budgets remain at the same level. He is not able to say how much will be needed in 10-30 years' time.

His team manages the trees on the East of the highway on Eastern Road. The management of the trees along the sea defences, near the Eastern Road does not come under his remit so he could not say why that had been flailed.

Trees are only removed if there is a risk to the public or is causing structural damage.

Trees in parks are inspected every two to three years for issues such as disease. There are not many ash trees in the city and very few cases of Ash Dieback disease. The elms planted are resistant to Dutch elm disease.

For the Queens Canopy Project, people will be asked to plant a tree in their gardens if they can. The council has identified some public areas in case they are required for tree planting.

The council is trying to plant a mixture of tree species that can cope with different conditions.

There is a big Black Poplar at the front of Portsmouth Cathedral but not many have been planted over the years because they require a lot of space. The council is looking at restoring the dense line of poplars in Great Salterns field.

The council is working on a database of tree coverage. I-tree software is very good as it shows the changes over time. The PTWs use Treezilla to plot the trees they plant.

Education is key to empower people to plant the right trees in the right locations.

The council uses a local nursery to source its trees as it does not have the space nor manpower to grow its own trees.

Fruit Trees

At the request of the PTW, the Tree Council wrote to the panel to say that Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the UK. It has a relatively low number of trees per resident, something that the PTW have been trying to improve over the last 20 years. The project that has been developed by the PTW and the CDCO, is to my knowledge one of the most exciting community orchard projects in the UK, because of its aspiration to bring suitable fruit trees to residents throughout the city, which builds on the rich heritage of the city and its connections through Dickens to fruit trees.

The scale of the communities' efforts is amazing with 60 orchards being designated and planted and over 899 fruit trees having been planted throughout the city over the last five years.

Speaking as part of the National Orchard Group, we know orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. The reason they are special is that fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are "early senescent". This means they get 'old' relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs. These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle. It's not all about the decay either though, as fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Orchards can have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles. And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight which makes them particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

The orchards being created in Portsmouth also allows for community engagement with a huge range of people and communities, providing not only trees for biodiversity and climate change (both of which are vital), but also developing a source of free and community-based fruit available to anyone in the city. The natural bounty that is being created, has already been used to provide free food and fruit to foodbanks like Landport Larder, North End Pantry and community cafés.

The PTW and the CDCO stated that its groups and volunteers have been planting orchards and other trees in many different areas around the city. Planting fruit trees provides humans and animals alike with food and foraging opportunities, harvesting events and bringing the community together to learn

about and celebrate nature. As we have seen in the CDCO and Ark Dickens fruiting hedge. They give free fruit for local people will help those with a diminishing amount of finances to lead a healthier lifestyle. Where they can pick what they need from local trees. Communities will then invest themselves in looking after their local trees. When they can see what they will get out of it. Excess produce has been given out to the food banks and larders to help those most in need and provides an amazing source of support, which has been very appreciated.

Hedges.

The Wildlife Trust noted that hedge removal was highlighted as having a significant impact on the city's wildlife. Hedges absorb lots of carbon as well as been home to a wide variety of wildlife. Hedges and trees are both important. Many hedges were removed because they were considered untidy, or it was more convenient to build a wall instead. If we create the right environments, the wildlife will return

The PTW and CDCO stated that fruiting hedges should be allowed to grow 50cm per year until about 5' wide and allow the fruits to be harvested by animals and people. Not cut back harshly each year by the flail machine. There is a fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens which has been growing for 12 years. It is not treated as a fruiting hedge by Colas, it is harshly cut back and is never allowed to fruit. It is just treated as a normal hedge.

Parklets

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation explained that parklets can bring lots of benefits to an area including increasing biodiversity and providing people with a green space to relax in. However, they can be very expensive.

Green Fences.

Green fences have wires to support the climbing plants and the one that will be erected on Eastern Road will help reduce the traffic noise for the residents at the caravan site. It will also give oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide and particulates.

Gardens and soil.

PFOE stated that according to the council's Assessment of Tree Cover, 31% of Portsmouth's trees are in private gardens. In some wards the percentage is even higher: Central Southsea 74%; Eastney & Craneswater 55%; St Jude's 49% and Drayton & Farlington 48%.

The council's policies and strategies need to acknowledge the important contribution of private gardens and streets for biodiversity in our city and celebrate the plants, insects and birds to be found in these spaces. Good practice information needs to be made readily available to Portsmouth residents and businesses because the choices made by individuals in their private space have an impact on our city's ecology

The importance of soils to biodiversity has been overlooked for far too long. Soil is home to 25% all living species on earth and improves drainage, acts as a carbon sink, and helps cool our city. PFOE suggests that very small

changes in forecourts and backyards, such as lifting one 60 cm x 60 cm paving slab to reveal the soil beneath and allowing plants to grow, will have a beneficial effect on biodiversity levels in Portsmouth. Removing the tarmac from around street tree-pits would also be beneficial. Many small changes add up.

PFOE suggested that a public communications strategy be developed to raise awareness about 'Natural Portsmouth.' Local residents and businesses need to understand the importance of our private garden forecourts and backyards for nature and the whole urban ecosystem in which we live. Where residents and businesses are considering whether to make changes to their forecourt, backyard or driveway surface, they should have easy access to information about (more) wildlife friendly approaches. If public transport and walking & cycling infrastructure were improved, car ownership would reduce, fewer front gardens would be paved over to make driveways and our city's ecosystem would benefit.

PFOE worked with schools and the Natural History Museum for its Bed & Breakfast for Bees campaign which encouraged people to:

- Have an untidy patch in their gardens for insects.
- Create a small pond with pebbles in it.
- Stop using pesticides.

An untidy area in your garden would be more beneficial to wildlife than a bee hotel. A small area in every garden would make a huge difference to the city's ecosystem.

The group has observed that the concreting over of front gardens has increased as has covering tree pits with tarmac right up to the tree trunk.

The Wildlife Trust explained that rather than telling people to remove their concrete driveways and plastic grass it is suggested that we need to look at what they could add to make the driveways etc better for them and for wildlife. More people connected to nature will mean more nature in our city which is not only good for nature but is good for the people who live here.

Hedgehogs are very rare now in Portsmouth. If you want a hedgehog in your garden, speak to your neighbours about everyone putting holes in your garden fences/ walls so hedgehogs can have a large territory to find food, water and shelter.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness reported that residents are encouraged to make their gardens more wildlife-friendly and be more self-sufficient.

The PCAB noted that would be interested in developing, in partnership with the council, the university and the Wildlife Trust, a wildlife garden advice/support team that can respond to resident requests for help creating wildlife friendly gardens / organic food growing/ de-paving. This could also be offered to schools.

This scheme could be means tested so that those on low incomes are helped for free, funded by wealthier residents who could be charged. Volunteer groups like the Green Gym/ Urbond are very willing to help do initial clearance work, and residents could be guided about and supported with what to plant, how to maintain the garden etc.

The PTW and CDCO suggested that people could be encouraged to plant trees in their gardens to feed birds and help our pollinators. Maybe people could be encouraged to have green space on roofs to help wildlife.

Rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution through removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators.

Removal of Paving Stones.

The Grounds Maintenance Manager noted that removing paving stones on some paths could be considered to create meadow pockets in paving subject to any funding.

PFOE suggested that when changes are made to street layouts, for example new modal filters or build outs, these changes provide an opportunity for leaving a small unpaved area which could be planted with shrubs and flowers. This decision needs to be made at the time the street layout is changed, so it is essential that Transport and Planning Officers liaise about this potential well in advance or opportunities to green our streets will be missed.

PFOE strongly supports an experimental approach to increasing biodiversity in our streets. We are pleased to see that Colas has agreed to experiment with removing occasional paving slabs to plant wildflowers where these would not be a trip hazard.

Community Engagement.

The PCAB reported that it had invited residents near Marine Court Green in Eastney to see if they wanted to enhance the flora and biodiversity of green spaces where they lived. Residents from Marine Court Green, Eastney got in touch and asked if they could add some wildflowers, raised beds and fruit trees to the site. Negotiations with the council took a while but eventually a planting plan was formed, and permission given. A number of community groups attended the first planting event in September. Since then, liaison with the council has been really quick and helpful in deciding how the site can be developed. Another event was held in December where 20 dwarf fruit trees were planted and adopted by residents to commemorate loved ones who had passed recently. The council's greening coordinator is working on a protocol to make it easier for community groups to carry out similar schemes, without such a long initial wait.

The Wildlife Trust felt that engagement with the community is vital but can be a little piecemeal.

The Countryside Officer explained that engagement with local community groups who would like to plant in an area would be best controlled by a central body liaising with the Countryside Officers. This would ensure that the impact of the proposed projects on existing green sites is understood. Their local knowledge about the flora and fauna could help ensure mistakes are not made.

6. Residents' Associations.

A short questionnaire was sent to representatives of council residents associations and blocks. Two questionnaires were returned; from the representatives of was from the representative of Cotswold House and the Australia Blocks residents associations who reported that:

The residents at Cotswold House do not engage in any of the following activities:

- Growing plants or vegetables in tubs, containers, hanging baskets of planters, window boxes on their patio or balcony.
- Providing a water source for wildlife.
- Providing nesting boxes/ insect hotels/ bee blocks/ bird feeders on their patio or balcony.

No measures have been taken to encourage biodiversity in the communal areas.

In the representative's view, although residents in this block are not at all concerned about biodiversity, they have raised the issue of improving biodiversity and that it would be helpful for residents to receive more information the role they can play in increasing biodiversity opportunities and would like help/ advice and training on identifying opportunities. They do not have any projects in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The representative commented that they had their own garden club that help with planting but got fed up with the council's garden team grass seeding the borders and cutting up the plants we planted. So, they decided to give up with planting the borders and wasting their time.

Some of the residents in the Australia blocks grow plants or vegetables in tubs, containers, hanging baskets or planters, window boxes on their patio or balcony, provide a water source, nesting boxes, insect hotels, bee blocks or bird feeders.

In the communal areas there is a space for residents to grow fruit and vegetables. There are also hedges and native tree or fruit trees and nesting boxes/ hedgehog houses/ insect hotels/ bat boxes or bird feeders. The grass is only cut when it is more than 5cm long and left for more than 2 weeks in the summer.

There is no maintained wild area for wildflowers or wild grasses and no log pile. Fences are not used as frames for climbers. They do not think about enhancing biodiversity when planting children's play areas.

The Chair felt that although residents have not raised the issue of improving biodiversity, they are quite concerned about it and it would be helpful for them to receive more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity in their outside spaces. They do not have any projects in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of the site.

7. Council Properties and Land

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness stated that his experience as champion for the CDCO project had seen him help them get permissions to plant on land owned by different parts of the Council. This is getting better due to the new appointments that encourage co-ordination. When appropriate, requests for areas on Housing land are agreed.

Housing Association tenants are not permitted to have mats or plant pots outside their front doors because of fire regulations.

In council blocks, a balanced approach is taken with regard to plants hanging over communal balconies; taking into account safety and whether there is a culture for planting in the block. A list stipulating exactly what is permitted would not be appropriate for all cases.

The council encourages residents to grow fruit and vegetables. It does not discourage people from taking ownership of some areas but does not proactively encourage them to do so. Cases are assessed on their individual circumstances.

Green walls in Grafton Street and Estella Road are being progressed. This is part of a wider plan to green key traffic corridors to cut air pollution. For example, trees and shrubs had been put into council blocks on Eastern Road Northern Parade, Kingston Road, Church Street, and various locations in Somerstown. Officers had also contacted Cosham councillors to discuss something similar on Southampton Row, as that is also a key traffic corridor. Councillors agreed to meet officers to discuss using Community Infrastructure Levy money, as had happened on Church Street in Charles Dickens ward.

The management of greening initiatives within Housing land falls within the Clean & Green Team.

As far as he is aware, a comparison of all local authority estates across the city in terms of greening has not been carried out and he is not sure the benefit it would bring, given the differences between estates. Housing Association properties have varying types of green measures and areas. Registered Social Landlords tend to be more remote since their operations were centralised.

Residents are encouraged to be more self-sufficient in terms of growing more fruit and vegetables which can be supported by the service Community Gardener role.

He is keen that living roofs be installed where possible.

In 2017 council officers changed their approach to planting e.g. planting long-term shrubs which has resulted in savings and requiring less maintenance.

Whilst the Leamington and Horatia Community Panel's aim is to ensure that the area is as green as possible whilst keeping the rents as low as possible, he recognised that this may not be feasible. York City Council has the largest Passive House Programme but is finding it difficult to fund that while delivering social rent levels.

The PassivHaus pilot in Havant runs alongside other measures to see if this type of design will work. He hoped it would, but wanted to be guided by the evidence.

The Head of Estate Services explained that the council supports residents having plants on balconies and outside their front doors where appropriate. There is no specific policy regarding this. Potential fire risks are considered and a 'managed use policy' is followed with each case being assessed on its own merits.

Where housing blocks have built in planters to communal balconies the service plants flowers in blocks - such as in Old Commercial Road where annual flowers are planted every year.

Wild meadows have been planted on housing land in various sites across the city by the service.

Most of the orchards and meadows are across the whole of the city.

He is very open to ideas for improving biodiversity in the city and installing beehives where possible. The first site is Gloucester Terrace, just off Kings Road, where the service is working with Portsmouth District Bee Keepers Association to build knowledge and experience before expanding further. Key considerations for additional beehives include risk associated to the bees swarming near houses / housing blocks, ASB risk, vandalism to the hive.

Green walls absorb carbon dioxide. Climbing plants have been planted on the garages in Graffton Street and Estella Road. It is important to mitigate the high levels of air pollution in this area with measures such as these. The carbon dioxide emissions will increase when the port becomes a free port. Air pollution affects the poorest people disproportionately.

Planting has been prioritised on key trunk roads throughout the city to improve air quality. Trees and shrubs have been planted along Eastern Road.

8 Areas in the City.

Portsmouth Hill

The panel considered the following management documents:

- Biodiversity on Portsmouth Hill.
- Portsmouth Hill Management Plan Non-Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI) 2022- 2026.

- Portsdown Hill SSSI Plan 2021- 2025.

The Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer explained that he is responsible the management of Portsdown Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is around 55 ha (the size of 70 football pitches) and extends from east of Fort Widley to west of Fort Southwick. The aim is to maintain a continuous sheet of flower-rich grassland with a mix of scrub and other habitats in a mosaic. He shares the maintenance of a similar area of adjacent open space land with the Parks Grounds Maintenance Team. His management emphasis on this land is conservation management whilst parks colleagues attend to amenity issues.

A wildlife survey written in the 1970s described the area as having a rich insect and plant life, but it was a shattered relic compared to how it was a generation before. The site was then abandoned to misuse and invasive scrub encroachment before restoration began in the 1990s. Recent surveys show the site is recovering well.

Portsdown is good example of species-rich chalk grassland. It is a much-diminished habitat, very rich in biodiversity. It is an important habitat for pollinators and a great variety of plants which in turn are essential food plants for the larval stage of numerous insects, allowing many species to complete their life cycle.

The non-SSSI land contains former agricultural fields, amenity grasslands and chalk pits areas which are managed to complement the habitats on the SSSI as well as generic open space for people to enjoy. Habitat management to sites along the hill is important as they provide vital connectivity for biodiversity along the hill. Mowing regimes have been changed to cut and clear or haymaking on many areas that were formerly under amenity mowing, a process that began in the late 1990s. Grazing is used to restore a former arable site to species rich grassland.

Seeds and green hay from the flower rich SSSI have been transferred to land undergoing restoration to encourage the reversion to a desirable habitat with locally adapted plants. Trees and shrubs have been translocated from elsewhere on Portsdown to establish hedges and tree seeds sown to facilitate natural scrub and woodland regeneration.

Portsdown is an urban fringe site with associated problems including, littering, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour. Legitimate public usage is factored into the management. Attending to this is a drain on efforts to conserve the site.

Surveys show the hill is a biodiversity hotspot and compares well with similar sites, for example the National Nature reserves in the Meon Valley and adds to the offer of Portsmouth.

He engages with other agencies including Fareham Borough Council and the County Council and the Biodiversity Officer at Portsmouth Water about the managing adjacent land on Portsdown with a coordinated wildlife-sympathetic approach. Having an overarching plan for all the land including what is outside the Portsmouth boundary would have some mileage.

There is a healthy number of volunteers involved on this site, around 6,000 hrs of volunteers time a year. They are getting older, and it may be useful to encourage young people to join in. However, the number you can have working on tasks is limited to space, tools and the activity.

It should be a default that all land is managed for biodiversity and climate change mitigation unless there is a good reason for not doing so. It is important that the soil conditions on both the land and the adjacent areas are understood to provide an ecological overview of the whole area. There is good advice and case studies available, but the use of site-specific management options is necessary for the best outcome.

The Top Field at Portsdown Hill is a former arable site that is managed for conservation and public access. The soil is unproductive, thin and chalky and was chalk grassland in the 1960s. In 2010 when it was returned to the council's management, the soil conditions were evaluated, and it was found to be suitable for establishing species-rich grassland. Thus, it was eligible for Environmental Stewardship funding. Green hay and seeds from local plants were introduced, hedges and companion scrub blocks were planted in the same way. Owls, stonechats and skylarks occupy or use the site. Currently nine cattle graze the area a few weeks a year.

The blocks of scrubs provide diverse habitats. Hedges were planted along two sides that border the busy roads. The public open space does not need as much management. The wildlife complements the wildlife in adjacent sites. It would be very helpful if this approach could be incorporated into the council's policies.

If biodiversity is to be increased, it would be helpful to record the presence and abundance of at least some species and store the data on publicly viewable platform along with changes to show the work is effective. Surveying and recording should form part of the process of enriching biodiversity.

Changing management may not be popular with all. For example, long grass in areas that have been mown short for years can be interpreted as neglect and attract complaints as well as wildlife.

Utility firms and other agencies regularly approach with a requirement to maintain or install new infrastructure on Portsdown. These can threaten habitats or with suitable mitigation possibly improve the situation, provided suitable advice is given and heeded.

Milton Common and Eastney Beach

The panel considered the Milton Common management plan and the Milton Common restoration & management framework.

The Countryside Officer explained that he is responsible for other sites dotted around the city; a mosaic of habitats: dry land, shingle beach, plus fresh and saltwater areas all on the fringe of urban life. Public safety is the highest priority and many paths have been put in over the last few years.

It is just him and his team of volunteers; the Parks Service has an input but this tends to be limited to amenity areas and access issues. His budget is very limited.

Although having more paths encourages visitors to keep away from vulnerable habitat, education is key.

The sites do suffer from some youth interference.

All the sites around the city would work better if they were linked up to form corridors rather than islands. More could be done to involve private landowners with this.

Engagement with local community groups who would like to plant in an area would be best controlled by a central body liaising with the Countryside Officers. This would ensure that the impact of the proposed projects on existing green sites is understood. Their local knowledge about the flora and fauna could help ensure mistakes are not made. They were not consulted before the trees were planted on Horsea Island which were sourced from Holland rather than local nurseries. They were asked for input about the planting at Horsea Island at the time but were told that no one in the UK could supply the quantity required). These could have been infected by Dutch Elm disease. Dutch Elm is not the best example as it is already endemic in the country. Please note that the importation of any living plants brings with it the chance to introduce plant diseases which could have a detrimental effect on native species.

Generally, it is better to carry out natural regeneration of plants rather than bring in seeds. The local ecosystem is already adapted to them, and they fit into the food chain.

He feels that they work under the radar and what they do is not flashy.

Farlington Marshes

The Reserves Officer, the Wildlife Trust explained that Farlington Marshes (FM) is a peninsular approximately 120 hectares of reclaimed land in the Northwest of Langstone Harbour. It is quite a rare site for coastal grazing.

It is the most important of the three hubs in the area for overwintering wildfowl and waders. Many birds move around the three hubs during the day but all of them come to FM at some point to forage and roost undisturbed.

There are approximately 5,000 brent geese in Langstone Harbour and there were 2,000-3,000 on FM just after Christmas. Although lapwings, avocets and redshanks numbers have declined nationally, FM is a stronghold locally and has the largest number of lapwings chicks in the Solent.

People enjoy visiting the site and that connection through nature is important.

He is part of a small team that manages ten sites in the Solent area. The management of FM is the most intensive as it is a complex site. The nesting sites are protected from ravens and buzzards between late February and

June. The main form of management is grazing with 140 cows grazing in mid-summer so that the grass is the optimal length for the brent geese to eat.

Volunteers are mostly the active retired people; they are trying to recruit younger people.

The birds use a vast array of sites in the harbour, but FM is the key hub as it is the biggest and undisturbed. The brent geese also use the football pitches on Eastern Road which is ideal for them with the open ground and short grass.

Shrub control is ongoing. It is useful for attracting wildlife but most is cut on rotation.

Tipner West.

The Senior Regeneration Manager explained that this is an environmentally protected area with important intertidal and shore habitats. Any planning applications for development would have to show proof that there would be a 10% net gain for wildlife onsite and compensation land would be provided elsewhere.

If the area were to be developed, it would be very difficult to increase the biodiversity of the area by 10%. DEFRA and Natural England would assess the council's plans to ensure that the proposed measures would be effective. There is a well-established technical methodology and valuation process, known as the 'DEFRA Metric', now on version 3.0.

This is consistent between all developments applying the metric and is in widespread use as a 'standard' assessment method. This would be assessed by the ecological consultees through a planning submission.

There are numerous opportunities for a new development to encourage wildlife including installing bee towers.

The project will incorporate location-specific ecological objectives that address features within and surrounding the current site, but also offers opportunities to encourage new species and create new niches within the site.

Habitats within the site can be carefully zoned and managed for compatibility with use by people, ensuring that conflicts (which are currently widespread around Portsmouth and the Solent, notably dogs off leads and coastal birds) are managed out at the design stage so people and nature can better co-exist.

The large-scale opportunities for the creation of compensation land could be amazing. Investigations have been carried out to assess the feasibility of building a new intertidal island in the north of Portsmouth harbour. Undisturbed land like this would be very beneficial to wildlife and provide a habitat that has long been lost from Portsmouth Harbour, is in high demand by the bird species present and could be managed in the face of further climate change losses of this within-harbour habitat.

The new Horsea Island Country Park that is being developed also presents a very good opportunity to encourage wildlife to the area and represents a newer, developing area of habitat that can target the provision of more diverse habitats locally.

The intertidal mud area that is so important to wildlife will be lost to rising sea levels if no action is taken and new flood defences to protect the existing land mass and wider area are installed.

There are ecologists in the team that push developers to do the best they can for wildlife.

All the above measures will mostly benefit not just from their creation or establishment, but by being brought into planned and funded management over the long term with specific, measurable biodiversity objectives, in a way that many local habitats would only have such objectives as informal or less targeted or committed objectives. This kind of management is essential to the long-term success of any biodiversity outcomes. This needs to recognise that the current management of the wider development site does not deliver this; the nature benefits of the site are residual/incidental; the development would bring this into a formal objective approach.

The Environment Act is helpful, and the council will ensure that its emerging policies and Supplementary Planning Documents take this into account. To a certain extent, we are playing catch up as this is the first Local Plan for seven years.

The council does a lot to improve its existing assets. A balance here between noting that PCC does its best, but that the current biodiversity within the site is apparently incidental, rather than planned land use management for biodiversity in any significant sense. The development would have a much stronger focus on management for biodiversity outcomes, following construction phase disruption.

Councillor Barrett added that they are pushing the planning department to influence developers and tell them the high standards that the council expects.

In response to questions, Tristan Samuels, Director for Regeneration added that the area created in compensation would be located between the harbour and Chichester. Arun is the furthest point we are currently surveying.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the council's response to climate change because it is not the responsibility of just one directorate; all of them do their bit. The directorates have different priorities.

When the Private Finance Initiative contract was set up with Colas 17 years ago, the Key Performance Indicators focussed on roads. The parks service's priority was that green spaces were safe for people to enjoy. A cultural change is happening to bring the focus to encouraging wildlife, but it will take time. This is not for the want of trying. This is a priority for directors but one of many.

9 How other organisations manage their land.

Portsmouth Hospitals' University NHS Trust.

The Head of Property & Capital Development, Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust (the Trust) explained that:

The Trust commissioned council landscape architects to design and project manage the development of an area on the south side of the site which is now called the Garden of Life. This was an exemplar project that is well loved by staff and patients.

Following that success, the council's landscape architects' team was asked what the trust could do to increase biodiversity around the whole site. Many opportunities were identified planting trees, hedgerows, wildflowers, creating more green spaces, biodiversity, microhabitats, green walls and green roofs. These have informed a biodiversity and greening strategy for the QA hospital site.

The Trust is keen to recognise the health benefits associated with biodiversity and is considering how people use the area as it has a connection to the broader wellbeing agenda. The benefits of people having access to green spaces are significant and hospital medics have undertaken a literature review with the Public Health team to draw together evidence of this.

Discussions are taking place with the Trust Executive, the hospital charity, staff and volunteers to get them involved. Donations of seeds and bird boxes have been made and the Hospital Charity is looking to support.

An implementation plan is being drawn up for the Executive and includes both short-term and long-term projects.

The Trust recognises that greening does not respect boundaries and therefore have been talking to the Portsdown Hill Ranger about how staff could access this adjacent nature reserve more easily during their breaks.

He does not know the Grow Wymering group or have connections to St Peter & Pauls Church and Wymering Manor but the Trust is keen to consider planting fruiting trees on the site and recognises their value for biodiversity.

He is not aware of any council policies that are hindering the Trust's ambition. It recognises a number of synergies with the council particularly in relation to greening and sustainability. The relationship between the council and the trust has grown over the three years that he has been in post.

The Trust recognises its responsibilities towards its staff's wellbeing and the environment.

Public Health and medics at the Trust have published research showing the health benefits of biodiversity.

Discussions are taking place with the hospital's grounds maintenance contractors about changing the cutting regimes to improve biodiversity

including reducing the number of times greenery is cut back and the leaves swept.

The value and quality of existing trees has been assessed as part of the strategy by the council's landscape team. Some flowering cherry trees have had to be removed as they were not in great condition. Others will be planted elsewhere. The biodiversity strategy will help ensure that a mixture of trees are planted in the right locations and there is a succession, not static landscape.

Green walls look amazing but require a considerable amount of maintenance. The location must be carefully considered due to the potential fire risks. In a carpark in Liverpool, a fire took hold very quickly by racing across the green wall. The green wall that was being considered at a carpark at the hospital has been removed from the proposals.

The strategy identifies many possible measures that could be implemented around the site, but the Trust will be mindful of the ongoing cost burden. The strategy will be kept under review.

The designs for a sensory garden at the side of the new ward block (for stroke and neurophysical rehabilitation services) are being finalised now. This would include tactile paving, steps, a rail alongside planting beds and sensory borders to support patients' recovery and provide enjoyment while they stay. It is hoped to start work in Spring 2022. The Trust will be submitting a Neighbourhood CIL application to support this work.

Staff would benefit enormously from being able to access Portsdown Hill during their breaks. A gateway is being considered and it is hoped that this will open in Summer.

The trust enjoys a good working relationship with the council. St Mary's Community Hospital is managed by Solent NHS Trust.

The University of Portsmouth.

The Energy & Environment Manager at the university explained that the university's Biodiversity Action Plan was produced eight years ago by the Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It could be refreshed but the estate is mostly land-locked and so improving biodiversity and greening can be challenging.

The university is aiming to achieve BREEAM⁹ Sustainable Construction for design 'outstanding' rating for its new buildings which includes the biodiversity value of the space, the site selection, the impact of the building, the long-term eco management and other eco features. The design is assessed over the first year of the building in operation to confirm the rating.

In the park around Ravelin Sports Centre new planting includes wildflowers and herbs, 140 native trees plus bird & bat boxes and possibly beehives. The

⁹ Building research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method.

building's roof has wildflowers and solar panels. It is hoped that something similar can be included for the Victoria Building.

He works in energy, environment and waste management and has a good working relationship with the council. He would welcome working with the biodiversity team.

He was very receptive to the idea of students being involved in project work with the council including greening projects, a communication campaign or undertaking surveys. One such joint working that worked well was working with the council to improve street litter and recycling at student residences.

A section could be added to the digital student handbook about how they could manage their back gardens for wildlife (subject to approval) or contribute in other ways. Many staff also live in the city and therefore communication could also be targeted to them.

All unusable food waste at the university is sent for anaerobic digestion. All non-fresh products (tins, drinks) are given to the John Pound Centre for the 'food cycle' scheme. The university is always looking at ways to reduce food waste. Fresh food is packaged and provided to students in 'magic bags' via the 'too good to go' app at discounted prices.

Lakeside North Harbour

The panel considered the Lakeside North Harbour (LNH) Phase 1: Ecological Survey October 21 and the LNH Wildlife Pocket Map.

The LNH Asset Manager explained that the site was bought by the council in July 2019 and is an office campus with a hotel and car showroom. There are currently 55 companies leasing office space. The site is designated in the draft Local Plan for employment and potentially, where that is shown to be no longer viable, residential development. It incorporates four acres of land ready for development. It is an asset that creates an income for the council rather than a site for biodiversity. Its USP is that it is good for wellness and community. Its Corporate Social Responsibility/ Environmental, Social and Governance credentials are important for attracting companies. Campuses with blue and green space are in high demand by occupiers.

The ecological report stated that the site is a mixture of buildings, hardstanding, lake, semi-improved grassland, woodland, scrub, hedgerow and ditches with limited potential for species. The reality is that there is very little wildlife on site, mainly rabbits, bees (in ten hives) and geese. There are plans to put in a wildflower meadow, log piles, slatted compost areas, bird and bat boxes, insect hotels and more trees.

The border of the north carpark has hedgerows.

To the East, part of the development site has been bought by Guy Salmon to redevelop for a Land Rover dealership. In mitigation, 4.7 acres at the west end of the site is to be protected nature space, currently grass and scrub, is to be seeded with pale flax, managed and cut once a year.

The lake covers 19 acres and is fed by canals. An Archimedes screw pulls water to the ornamental lake on the north of the site. It is used for irrigation. The Portsmouth & District Angling Society manages the main lake, regularly monitoring salinity levels and fish stock. It is looking to introduce lilies, reeds and underwater cover that the fish can use as refuges.

The ecological report outlines what species could be introduced but the council is not necessarily looking to do that. The canals are considered too shallow and narrow for otters.

LNH is a Corporate Member of the Wildlife Trust.

These are some of the many initiatives that are organised:

- Walks in Spring and Autumn.
- Ten beehives which produce 110 pots of honey per year.
- The green waste is mostly composted.
- Signs will be introduced along the nature path informing people what animals they might see on their walk.
- Outdoor gym equipment.
- Vines to be planted in the Winter Garden - a south facing outside area surrounded on 3 sides by buildings.
- Green days where the tenants can join the landscape team in outside projects.
- They took part in the RSPB great big January birdwatch.
- Hedgehog hotels will be set up soon with two provided by the Eastleigh Men Shed Group.
- There will be tree planting to mark the Queens Green Canopy Jubilee celebrations in March.
- Presentations by the beekeeper in the schools' half term.
- The landscape contractors, Nurture, to give talks.
- The planting of a wildflower meadow on the Hillside scrubland with walks in May or June where occupiers can learn about the flora and fauna.
- Consideration is being given to applying for the Green Apple, Green Flag and Biodiversity Awards.

He reminded the panel that this is primarily an office campus which provides an income stream for the council and biodiversity is not a priority.

Many initiatives were in place before the council bought the site.

Campuses with blue and green space are in high demand by occupiers.

The day-to-day management is outsourced to Avison Young which has been commissioned to raise the profile of this campus. Nurture is the landscape contractors. It is the biggest single owned campus on the south coast.

It is not part of the public realm so linking it to green sites in the city would be difficult. It needs to be run separately.

The security of the site is an essential consideration for the occupiers and the gates are locked at night. They are mindful of possible access issues with

the travelling community. It is opened for park runs and the Victorious Festival etc.

The Director of Regeneration added that the management of LNH would comply with the council's policies for all council land. This would not cause a problem as it is already of a high standard that would be an example for others. It is grade A office space. The Civic Offices and Housing Offices are different commercial sites and are in different conditions. It is important that the council works all its assets wherever possible.

He agreed to investigate access for pedestrians from the footpaths where this had been limited by fencing during construction.

The land along the railway lines.

PFOE stated that the council would be in a strong position to liaise with Network Rail about the land along the railway lines. This corridor of land is very important to wildlife.

10 Conclusions

1. Portsmouth has a great wealth of biodiversity and is unusual for an urban authority in having 3 key areas of extremely high value habitat which are almost entirely unique in the UK:

Portsmouth Hill - one of the last areas of Chalk Down Grassland on the South Coast.

Farlington Marshes - managed like a low intensity marshland farm and nature reserve with areas of reed bed habitat, of essential value to the worldwide population of Brent Geese.

Eastney Beach (with potential expansion into the open space East of Fort Cumberland) - a surprisingly valuable and unusual area of vegetated shingle with a diverse range of native foreshore plants. The area East of Fort Cumberland is the last surviving section of foreshore scrubland on Portsmouth Island.

2. Additionally, the city's green spaces, although primarily amenity spaces, are in some cases well utilised and managed for biodiversity where possible. These number some 20 plus specific sites under the management of the City Ranger/Countryside Officer, many have specific management plans and have specific environmental challenges when balancing the needs of public amenity and biodiversity. Of particular interest are Milton Common and Hilsea Lines/Foxes Forest though many other sites have significant biodiversity enhancement potential if money, manpower and time were available. It should also be noted that the Coastal Defence works around the island have been at the cutting edge of biodiversity enhancement innovation on sea defences nationally and have enhanced Portsmouth foreshore areas with this work.

3. One anomaly in the city's green spaces is Tipner West on the site of the old firing range. This site, although subject to limited management, may arguably be among the most valuable biodiversity sites in the city, after the 'Top 3'. The shallow, sheltered bay and foreshore area on the south of the peninsula are extensively used by waders and Brent Geese traversing the Solent between feeding grounds. The grassy areas, are themselves used by the Geese for feeding. Unusual species such as the common lizard and at least one species of owl are found on the site and, due to an imported chalky outcrop of rock, there is even a population of rare bee orchids, among other natural wildflowers.
4. The above green sites in Portsmouth are all exceptionally well managed on a day-to-day level and congratulations should be given to the team at the Hampshire and Isle of Wildlife Trust responsible for Farlington Marshes, led by Chris Lycett, the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer Richard Jones, and the City Ranger, Pete Roberts for their exceptional work and expertise in managing the sites. We should especially offer the thanks of the council to the small teams of volunteers from across the city that help with the management and maintenance of these sites - especially in the area of biodiversity enhancement.
5. We are pleased to note the amount of positive action that had been taken across the city in addition to our core green sites including but not limited to, tree planting, the creation of wildflower meadows and the work to support local groups in their greening projects.
6. Throughout the review the panel has been extremely impressed with the work, initiative and enthusiasm of officers across the council working in this area. It is clear that there is wealth of expertise and experience in the council that is ready to be used to maximise diversity gains in the city. In addition to those above, we particularly note the work of Vincent Mount and the Landscape Architects team, Ashley Humphrey the Allotments Manager, Lyall Cairns, Guy Mason and the Coastal Partnership for their work on the sea defences, Doug Gray and the Grounds Maintenance Team, Zoe White the Clean & Healthy Streets Coordinator, Phillip Bentley and the Neighbourhood services team, the Green & Clean team, Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager, Simon Pearce, Arboriculture Officer and many more. Further thanks is given to all those who submitted evidence for the review and all of the fantastic individuals working and volunteering across the city in roles that make our city a greener and more biodiverse place to live.
7. On a council level, credit should be given to the members of the council across all parties for launching a variety of schemes across the city that aim to enhance biodiversity and for building on the work of the previous member, as well as acting on ideas provided by Ward Councillors. The panel is pleased to note the new Environment Act 2021 passed by parliament. This legislation aims to protect and enhance our environment and includes a range of new measures to increase biodiversity.
8. However, the panel heard repeatedly throughout the evidence gathering process that the main flaw with the current approach of the council is that

work is 'siloed' and too reactive. Biodiversity at Portsmouth City Council represents a patchwork of separate initiatives of differing value and impact. In particular, that different departments in the council rarely communicate their plans for biodiversity enhancement to one another or share ideas or best practice. Where there is cross-departmental cooperation it is often down to individual officers and not a deliberate part of the process of planning biodiversity enhancements. The Landscape Architects team do offer invaluable advice on biodiversity when schemes go through planning, but it is very rare for anyone to consult, for example the City Ranger, or the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer, both of whom are experienced ecologists, on schemes which might have species crossover with our existing site-specific management plans.

9. As a consequence, there is some work and some schemes being delivered across the city which may not achieve best value for money or deliver the biodiversity enhancement sought. It was repeatedly emphasized to us that every potential site for biodiversity enhancement is different and there must be clear plan about what the goal of any new project is, and how it fits within the wider context of the city's natural habitats and species mix. Concern was raised about not always using native species. Best success for each site, even small-scale planting, will be achieved when its specific features are considered for how they most contribute to the overall habitat mix in the city and enhancements are planned based on how the site will interact with other nearby sites.
10. This issue of siloed working is also found in City Council engagement with private sector and third-party partners across the city. There are some excellent examples of best practice, such as the work of the Landscape Architects team in partnership with Trevor Mose the Head of Property at the Queen Alexandra Hospital on the hospital's new sensory garden. Together this kind of work can bring private realm land into wider biodiversity plans and 'multiply' the gains achieved. In contrast, the significant biodiversity work at Lakeside, despite it being a council owned corporate entity, seemed to be largely planned without any communication with council officers in order to incorporate it into wider plans for the city. Similarly, there seemed to be little evidence of the council engaging with either the Navy or University to try and involve those organisations and major landowners in citywide biodiversity planning.
11. The panel also has concerns that many residents are choosing to pave over or AstroTurf both front and back gardens and may not be aware of alternatives available.
12. The specific remit of the panel was to review council policy to ensure it was promoting biodiversity as far as possible and not obstructing it in specific cases. As will be seen in our recommendations, we did not find many specific issues with existing policy, though some recommendations are made in relation to the local plan and greening strategy, rather the problems we found related to a lack of policy and lack of overreaching strategy when it came to biodiversity in the city. At times there was also a lack of communication with residents about what they can do in their area to enhance biodiversity, as well as a lack of policy to respond to proposals

put forward by residents which identify specific spaces as candidates for greening and biodiversity enhancement.

13. Many respondents to the panel therefore felt that an over-arching biodiversity strategy would assist Portsmouth City Council, residents and residents groups and third party organisations in coordinating their efforts.
14. The specific issues which triggered this review - grass cutting programs and allotment rules on rewilding were not ultimately found to be significantly problematic, and therefore only limited recommendations are made on those points. Some issues were found with Colas mowing and pruning programmes, recognising that a one-size fits all is not appropriate for every site and needs to be altered to reflect the needs of the local community.
15. Grass mowing schedules are being kept under regular review by the Parks and Maintenance team, and they are experimenting with re-wilding in trial areas, however, this is potentially one of the examples where an over-arching strategy with a clear plan to enhance biodiversity is needed, rather than simply leaving large areas to grow wild.¹⁰ Mowing and verge maintenance around roads is the responsibility of Colas, and having a more clearly defined working relationship and a future plan to move towards economically efficient biodiversity initiatives with the city contractor is among the panel's recommendations.
16. Existing allotments appear to largely be functioning well. It is the view of the panel that the range of growing activity on allotments already contributes significantly to biodiversity in the city, as well as to health, amenity and local food sourcing, among many other community benefits. The panel is concerned that the demand for Allotment land far exceeds the supply. Therefore, it is not the view of the panel that rewilding of whole area of allotments is desirable - however it is clear and there could be better education and communication around how effective the use of specific biodiversity enhancement areas can be to allotments within the allowed 25% non-cultivated area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy and Communications:

1. **A Biodiversity Strategy be developed to cover all areas of the council's operations and the whole city.** An overarching policy be drafted and enacted that sets out the gestalt Biodiversity Vision & Mission for Portsmouth, with guidelines for best practice in city areas, streets and housing areas for biodiversity enhancement. A single strategy would encourage more joint working and also enables autonomous work to contribute to a common plan for a biodiverse city. The Biodiversity Strategy should contain plans for connecting green spaces and individual

¹⁰ It is not suggested this is happening at all at present - the point is that areas of unmanaged scrubland largely need to be avoided in Portsmouth as they tend to turn to bramble or similar monocultures with little biodiversity value.

initiatives through 'green corridors' to allow wildlife to move across the city.

- 2. Give a single officer responsibility for coordinating biodiversity programmes across the council in accordance with the biodiversity strategy.** Cllr Kimberley Barratt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Green Recovery, seemed supportive of this idea and as it fits within the purpose of her portfolio we suggest that perhaps a senior strategy officer within that portfolio might be sensible choice. In future recommendations we will refer to this officer as the Biodiversity Strategy Officer.
- 3. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Liaison Group in the council comprising representative officers with responsibility for biodiversity projects across each of the different departments.** The terms of reference would include meetings held in person at least quarterly, as the panel feels this will best enhance knowledge sharing, best practice and coordinated working. We recommend that where possible, the Chief Executive attend along with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Green Recovery and opposition party spokespeople. The minutes should be shared with all Councillors.
- 4. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Public Forum to allow representatives from residents groups and third party organisations to meet and discuss ways to contribute to the city's biodiversity strategy.** This also could fall under the Climate Change and Green Recovery Portfolio and be coordinated by the Biodiversity Strategy Officer. This body would meet at least bi-annually and allow the public, volunteer groups and charities to engage with the work of the City Council.
- 5. Develop a Biodiversity Public Communications Strategy to encourage residents to take action on biodiversity at home.** This will ensure the public receive consistent advice about how to contribute to the city's Biodiversity Strategy and also should be designed to encourage wider public engagement with biodiversity enhancement. It could include a range of members such social media campaigns, online education materials on how to enhance biodiversity in forecourts, gardens and balconies (perhaps even with links included in householder first contacts such as council tax or electoral role registrations), sharing examples of resident projects on the big screen in Guildhall Square and even competitions and incentives to encourage biodiversity enhancements at home.

6. **Consider the feasibility of establishing a central biodiversity database to register, monitor and assess biodiversity in the city.**

Allotments

7. **The subdivision of plots can continue where appropriate but should not be relied on as the sole strategy to create new allotments. Due to the health, community and social benefits, the council identify new sites where possible.**
8. **Develop an online Allotment Education portal for new plot holders to provide information to allotment holders on biodiversity enhancement on allotments, the use of pesticide alternative and on re-wilding part of their plot.** The education and provided by individual allotment associations is excellent but we believe a central source of information would assist less experience plot holders. Clear guidance on the important difference between a wild, overgrown plot, and a well-managed biodiversity focused 'wild' area of well cultivated plot would also assist in plot management. As would clear guidance on the use of environment-friendly pesticide-free alternatives for managing pests on allotments. The Allotment Manager is responsible for all allotments in the city so clearly there is not time within his role to do this work but there would be value in doing the work. Experienced volunteer officers of Allotment Associations emphasised their willingness to help educate new plot holders.
9. **Pesticide use be banned on council allotments.** We feel the impact on pollinators and neighbouring plot holders is too high and therefore pesticide use should be prohibited.

Joint Working

10. **Work with Colas to create a clear plan to update the city maintenance contract in relation to the care of verges, trees, bushes and other green areas so that opportunities can be found to both enhance biodiversity and make savings.** For example, to review grass cutting, de-weeding, the use of pesticides and approach to planting and maintaining greening to ensure it priorities supporting biodiversity. Representatives of Colas were open to this but felt the current approach was rather ad hoc and could be more coordinated.
11. **Continue to involve the public, schools, tenants, outside organisations and businesses in promoting biodiversity in the city and also to explore the possibility for suitable partnerships as appropriate.**
12. **Develop a clear and simple policy approach and a line of contact for residents of council Housing who wish to pursue greening and biodiversity projects in council owned communal areas around their homes.** Housing should display this policy on information boards in apartment blocks with information for tenants and leaseholders on what

steps they may take on their balconies and shared areas. Streamlining existing policies as needed.

- 13. Take a proactive approach to encouraging large private landowners in the City such as the Navy, the NHS and the University to work closely with the city council on how they can make biodiversity enhancements on their land as part of the city strategy.**
- 14. Engage neighbouring authorities in biodiversity planning on a regional level to maximise biodiversity gains across the Solent area.**

Streets, Planters and Trees

- 15. Phase out the use of pesticides and encourage businesses, residents and organisations to do the same too.** Evidence was given that pesticide use by the council was not excessive or extensive but the panel believe a continuing ambition of reduce it to zero is desirable. The programme for doing so should be reported to the appropriate Cabinet Member on an annual basis.
- 16. Pursue and encourage more on street greening as this is one of the best actions to take to enhance urban biodiversity.**
- 17. Ensure that greening goes beyond tree coverage and includes shrubbery, hedgerows wildflowers etc. as these diverse forms of planting have considerable impact on reducing carbon emissions and supporting biodiversity.**
- 18. Planting should prioritise native wildflowers, shrubs and trees in its parks, open spaces and any greening or biodiversity projects as this will help better support local ecosystems.**
- 19. When tree planting the council should have regard to native species, biodiversity and funding the lifetime maintenance of the tree, as well as resident concerns over street placement.** Trees are an important part of the biodiversity mix but are expensive. Copses of trees and a mixture of trees and hedgerows is also needed. Regard should be had to the value of small native species, and the removal and replacement of trees in alternative locations should be subject to clear and simple policy for concerned residents. Trees with shorter lifespans can provide valuable carbon capture. The council should adopt a flexible and practical policy on tree planting.
- 20. When planting new street trees, soil or the most appropriate permeable surface should be used at the base rather than tarmac, with wildflowers planted.**
- 21. Tarmac bases around trees should be removed from around tree pits and if replaced, replaced with a tree-friendly surface or let it go fallow.**

22. **Consideration should be given to signing up to the National Tree Charter.**
23. **Establish a plan for hedge planting and restoration around the city - working in partnership with schools and community groups where appropriate.**

Funding and Support

24. **Continued support should be given to the excellent work of frontline officers using their expertise to identify and trial biodiversity projects.** Nothing in this report should be taken as a substitute for the hard work and expertise of those officers working on the ground on Portsmouth's green sites.
25. **Consider raising the budgets of the City Ranger and the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer and offering volunteer recruitment support and publicity if required.** Both of these roles operate on extremely small budgets and even small amounts of extra funding would allow them to make significant progress and trial new schemes in their areas of expertise.
26. **Consider the establishment of a support programme for residents groups wishing to set up community gardens and other gardening schemes e.g. Charles Dickens Community Orchard and Green Wymering.**

Greening Strategy and the Local Plan

27. **The renewed Greening Strategy planned for later this year should include express consideration of how greening projects should embed biodiversity enhancement as a key objective of all new schemes.** In future consideration should be given to how the Greening Strategy and the proposed Biodiversity strategy would interact and whether they should be combined into a single strategy or maintain separate but complimentary identities.
28. **The planning service should maximise ability of the new Local Plan to require biodiversity gains in new developments in line with the new Environment Act.**
29. **Include a policy in the new local plan to require developers to include flexible growing spaces in communal areas of land from residents of flats and apartments.**

Tipner West

30. **Consideration should be given to a significant reduction in housing proposed for the site, with no housing sited on the southern shore and bay area and the grassland areas of the site.** The habitat loss involved in even limited development will inevitably and irreparably harm biodiversity in that area, and it is not clear to the panel that this harm can

be mitigated or compensated. If necessary, then the city council should apply to the Secretary of State for a reduction in housing target as a result - and for a revision of the terms of the City Deal bid awarded for that area to reflect newer recent understanding of the importance of biodiversity and the damage of habitat loss.

- 31. Consider establishing a new wildlife reserve on Tipner West peninsula for the benefit and education of city residents, and the protection of wildlife in the city.**

Horsea Country Park

- 32. A biodiversity strategy be developed for Horsea Country Park (Nature Reserve) to fit in with the citywide strategy and this be disseminated to all Councillors.**

- 33. Council-owned sites in Portsmouth and Hampshire which have been procured for commercial purpose i.e. Lakeside North Harbour must still comply with both the letter and spirit of the council's policies and strategies on biodiversity and should ensure public access to areas of biodiversity on the sites.**

Future Ambitions

- 34. Consider how future plans for the city can work towards ambitious street greening with as many residential streets as possible containing green spaces and verges, as well as extensive tree planting and use of planter.** One respondent described to us the work in the German City of Freiberg to become 'Green City', making the most of its forest location. While parking and housing pressure may make this difficult in Portsmouth, the panel views this as a desirable long-term ambition, and recognises there are roads in Portsmouth where this can be pursued - contributing to green corridors in the city.

- 35. Biodiversity enhancement in the open space behind Eastney Beach at Fort Cumberland.** This area has the potential to be combined with the valuable area of shingle foreshore that forms part of the SSSI to maximise biodiversity gains and create a linked habitat of both foreshore and coastal scrubland.

- 36. Plan for the creation of a breeding and roosting island for waterfowl in Portsmouth Harbour.** These are expensive but can be a valuable way of providing habitat for birds in wetland areas and protect them from disturbance and predation.

12 BUDGETARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.

The following table highlights the budgetary and policy implications of the recommendations being presented by the panel:

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
1. A Biodiversity Strategy be developed to cover all areas of the council's operations and the whole city.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Link to existing, including Greening & Health Strategy. New policy.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. New post, funding to be identified.
2. Give a single officer responsibility for coordinating biodiversity programmes across the council in accordance with the biodiversity strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with existing cross-council programmes - Greening & Health, Carbon Management & Climate Change for example. New policy and within the existing policy framework.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. Staff time across council departments.
3. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Liaison Group in the council comprising representative officers with responsibility for biodiversity projects across each of the different departments.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with existing cross-council forums - Virtual Green Team for example. Within existing policy framework	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise. Staff time across council departments.
4. Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Public Forum to allow representatives from residents groups and third party organisations to meet and discuss ways to contribute to the city's biodiversity strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer. HNBS	Needs to be created. Housing Green & Clean Service promote to the council housing residents via HouseTalk and existing forums.	Will require additional resource

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
5. Develop a Biodiversity Public Communications Strategy to encourage residents to take action on biodiversity at home.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Align with newly established communications framework for Climate Action and Greening.	Will require additional resource with appropriate expertise.
6. Consider the feasibility of establishing a central biodiversity database to register, monitor and assess biodiversity in the city.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Existing Green Asset Register	Potential resource implications if existing databases were to expand.
7. The subdivision of plots can continue where appropriate but should not be relied on as the sole strategy to create new allotments. Due to the health, community and social benefits, the council identify new sites where possible.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Capital funding will be required to establish additional allotment sites
8. Develop an online Allotment Education portal for new plot holders to provide information to allotment holders on biodiversity enhancement on allotments, the use of pesticide alternative and on re-wilding part of their plot.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework.	Staff time.
9. Pesticide use be banned on council allotments.	CL&RS	New policy.	Staff time to administer, additional staff resource required to undertake alternative maintenance practices where pesticides are currently used.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
10. Work with Colas to create a clear plan to update the city maintenance contract in relation to the care of verges, trees, bushes and other green areas so that opportunities can be found to both enhance biodiversity and make savings.	Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme	Additional expertise would be required to provide biodiversity input.
11. Continue to involve the public, schools, tenants, outside organisations and businesses in promoting biodiversity in the city and also to explore the possibility for suitable partnerships as appropriate.	Across council (inc. CL&RS, HNB and Regeneration.	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Single point of contact for community groups across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only. Staff time.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
12. Develop a clear and simple policy approach and a line of contact for residents of council Housing who wish to pursue greening and biodiversity projects in council owned communal areas around their homes.	Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	<p>Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme</p> <p>Single point of contact for community groups across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk</p> <p>Within existing framework Housing Green & Clean Services for council housing tenants.</p>	<p>None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed.</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only.</p>
13. Take a proactive approach to encouraging large private landowners in the city such as the Navy, the NHS and the University to work closely with the city council on how they can make biodiversity enhancements on their land as part of the city strategy.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	<p>Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team</p> <p>Single point of contact for external organisations across the city greeningportsmouth@portsmouthcc.gov.uk</p>	<p>None so long as clear coordination roles and signposting pathways are agreed.</p> <p>Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only.</p>

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
14. Engage neighbouring authorities in biodiversity planning on a regional level to maximise biodiversity gains across the Solent area.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Emerging policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Defra).	Resources may be required.
15. Phase out the use of pesticides and encourage businesses, residents and organisations to do the same too.	CL+RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Within existing policy framework	Additional funding required where alternative maintenance practices are more costly, less effective (and require repeat treatment) and/or more time consuming.
16. Pursue and encourage more on street greening as this is one of the best actions to take to enhance urban biodiversity.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
17.Ensure that greening goes beyond tree coverage and includes shrubbery, hedgerows wildflowers etc. as these diverse forms of planting have considerable impact on reducing carbon emissions and supporting biodiversity.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Green Asset Register captures planting data with a view to measure impact and carbon sequestration. Within existing policy framework	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed term only. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
18.Planting should prioritise native wildflowers, shrubs and trees in its parks, open spaces and any greening or biodiversity projects as this will help better support local ecosystems.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / COLAS	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Within existing policy framework	None in short term - part of existing Green & Healthy City Coordinator role. Green & Healthy City Coordinator Role currently funded for fixed-term only. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
19. When tree planting the council should have regard to native species, biodiversity and funding the lifetime maintenance of the tree, as well as resident concerns over street placement.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team Within existing policy framework	Resource implications likely with regard lifetime maintenance for specific PCC services. Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants
20. When planting new street trees, soil or the most appropriate permeable surface should be used at the base rather than tarmac, with wildflowers planted.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Greening measures funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
21. Tarmac bases around trees should be removed from around tree pits and if replaced, replaced with a tree-friendly surface or let it go fallow.	Green & healthy street coordinator.	Greening strategy	Additional resources would need to be identified.

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
22. Consideration should be given to signing up to the National Tree Charter.	CL&RS,	Greening Strategy Application made to become Tree City of the Work through the Arbor Day foundation. Signing up to National Tree Charter on Green & Healthy City work programme Within existing policy framework	Staff time.
23. Establish a plan for hedge planting and restoration around the city - working in partnership with schools and community groups where appropriate.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Additional capital and revenue funding will be required (to offset hedge removals accepted as budget savings).
24. Continued support should be given to the excellent work of frontline officers using their expertise to identify and trial biodiversity projects.	CL&RS, HNB, Regeneration / Colas	Within existing policy framework	Staff time. Projects funded through alternative use of existing revenue budgets, or new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants.
25. Consider raising the budgets of the City Ranger and the Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer and offering volunteer recruitment support and publicity if required.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Additional capital and revenue funding will be required (to offset hedge removals accepted as budget savings)

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
26. Consider the establishment of a support programme for residents groups wishing to set up community gardens and other gardening schemes e.g. Charles Dickens Community Orchard and Green Wymering.	HNB Biodiversity Strategy Officer	Housing Green & Clean Services - building on the work of the Community Gardening role. Greening Strategy. Green & Health City work programme. Green & Healthy City Coordinator / Virtual Green Team. Within existing policy framework.	Potentially requires additional resource if community gardens expand.
27. The renewed Greening Strategy planned for later this year should include express consideration of how greening projects should embed biodiversity enhancement as a key objective of all new schemes.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.	Greening Strategy	Additional biodiversity expertise will be required to provide appropriate input.
28. The planning service should maximise ability of the new Local Plan to require biodiversity gains in new developments in line with the new Environment Act.	Regeneration Directorate: Planning Services.	Biodiversity Net Gain is already included in current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan.	No additional resource implications

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
29. Include a policy in the new local plan to require developers to include flexible growing spaces in communal areas of land from residents of flats and apartments.	Regeneration Directorate: Planning Services	Allotments, as part of Green Infrastructure provision are already encouraged in the current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan any required increase in this type of open space would be a revision to the current draft	If an increase in open space is required this will require additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs.
30. Consideration should be given to a significant reduction in housing proposed for the Tipner West site with no housing sited on the southern shore and bay area and the grassland areas of the site.	Regeneration Directorate	The future development options for the Tipner West site will be set within the emerging Local Plan. Large areas of undeveloped or grass land are not included within current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan, current 2012 Development Plan, or 2013 City Deal	If areas of Tipner West are excluded from housing delivery this will require further additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs
31. Consider establishing a new wildlife reserve on Tipner West peninsula for the benefit and education of city residents, and the protection of wildlife in the city.	Regeneration Directorate	The future development options for the Tipner West site will be set within the emerging Local Plan. A wildlife reserve is not included within current drafted 'Regulation 18' Local Plan, current 2012 Development Plan, or 2013 City Deal	If further areas of Tipner West are excluded from housing delivery this will require further additional resource (staff time, consultancy) to assess implications for wider spatial strategy and delivery of other needs

Recommendation	Action by	Policy Framework	Resource Implications
32.A biodiversity strategy be developed for Horsea Country Park (Nature Reserve) to fit in with the citywide strategy and this be disseminated to all Councillors.	HNB, CL&RS, Regeneration	Within existing framework - Waste Management & Parks Services.	None
33.Council-owned sites in Portsmouth and Hampshire which have been procured for commercial purpose i.e. Lakeside North Harbour must still comply with both the letter and spirit of the council's policies and strategies on biodiversity and should ensure public access to areas of biodiversity on the sites.	Regeneration Directorate: Property Services	All assets of the Council are managed in accordance with its adopted policies and strategies. Any changes to applicable strategies would be dependent and consequent on whatever biodiversity strategy that may arise from recommendation 1.	Any change in public access or land use within this commercial asset will likely have significant impact on the income that can be generated from it and the potential for the site to provide new development. Public access needs to be restricted to protect the commercial operations of the assets. Where public access will have a negative affect on the commercial operation of the site access will be restricted. Increasing and managing public access would most likely increase operational costs.
34.Consider how future plans for the city can work towards ambitious street greening with as many residential streets as possible containing green spaces and verges, as well	Green & Healthy Streets Coordinator	Greening Strategy Green & Healthy City work programme via Virtual Green Team	None

as extensive tree planting and use of planter.	Biodiversity Strategy Officer.		
35. Biodiversity enhancement in the open space behind Eastney Beach at Fort Cumberland.	CL&RS	Within existing policy framework	Enhancements funded through new Capital allocations, CIL or external grants
36. Plan for the creation of a breeding and roosting island for waterfowl in Portsmouth Harbour.		The waters below the mean high water level in Portsmouth Harbour are not in the control, either by ownership or regulatory oversight, of Portsmouth City Council. Development within these areas cannot therefore be included in any policy framework.	Additional resources, in officer time for partnership working, as well as any proposed capital projects and revenue implications would be required.

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Received.
<u>16 November 2021</u>	Vincent Mount, Landscape Architect	<p>Scoping document.</p> <p>Links to a range of policy documents.</p> <p>Written submissions from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Cal Corkery • Councillor Robert New • Councillor Terry Norton • Councillor Hannah Hockaday
<u>30 November</u>	<p>Trevor Mose, Head of Property & Capital Development, Portsmouth Hospitals' University NHS Trust.</p> <p>Goff Gleadle, Chair of the Cosham Allotment Association.</p>	
<u>14 December</u>	<p>Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation.</p> <p>Doug Gray, Grounds Maintenance Manager.</p> <p>Ashley Humphrey, Allotments Manager.</p>	<p>Views from Mathilde Chanvin, Portsmouth resident.</p> <p>A list of the council's urban meadow areas (attached to this report as appendix three).</p>
<u>11 January</u>	<p>Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness.</p> <p>Ian McCormack, Energy & Environment Manager, University of Portsmouth</p> <p>Zoe White, Green and Healthy Streets Co-ordinator</p> <p>Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</p>	<p>The council's Greening Strategy and subsequent update that was considered at Cabinet on 5 October 2021.</p> <p>Allotment Dirty Plot Letter.</p> <p>Portsmouth Allotments & Leisure Gardens Rules.</p> <p>Allotment notice to quit template.</p> <p>North Harbour Allotment Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Long Meadow Allotments' Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Cotswold House Residents' Association views.</p>

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Received.
18 January	<p>Site visits: Portsdown Hill with Richard Jones Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer</p> <p>Farlington Marshes with Chris Lycett, Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Officer</p> <p>Eastney Beach with Pete Roberts Hilsea Lines Ranger.</p> <p>Milton Common with Peter Roberts, Hilsea Lines Ranger.</p> <p>Tipner with Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager and Owen Peat, Associate, Ecology, WSP.</p>	
<u>25 January</u>	<p>Rachel Hudson Portsmouth Friends of the Earth.</p> <p>Andy Ames, Wilder Communities Project Officer, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust</p> <p>Dr Hannah Rumble, Portsmouth Climate Action Board</p> <p>Steve White, Operations Manager, Colas</p> <p>Simon Pearce, Arboriculture Officer.</p>	<p>Information regarding the planning regulations from the Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth.</p> <p>Eastney & Milton Allotment Association questionnaire responses.</p> <p>Views from Jane Shepherd, resident.</p> <p>Plus attached to the 25 January 2022 minutes as appendices (circulated on the day) views from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portsmouth Friends of the Earth • Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (Nature Emergency Motion) • Portsmouth Climate Action Board
1 February	<p>Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery.</p> <p>Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration Megan Carter, Senior Regeneration Manager</p> <p>Richard Jones, Portsdown Hill Countryside Officer</p> <p>Chris Lycett, Reserves Officers, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.</p>	<p>Portsdown Hill - biodiversity. Portsdown Hill Management Plan non SSS8 2022- 2026. Portsdown Hill SSSI Plan 2021- 2025.</p> <p>Milton Common Management Plan Milton Common Restoration & Management Framework Eastney Beach & Milton Common Information</p> <p>Information regarding support for schools</p> <p>The Australia Blocks residents'</p>

	<p>Pete Roberts, Ranger Simon Bateman, Lakeside Asset Manager</p> <p>Guy Mason, Coastal, Highways and Drainage Team Manager</p> <p>Lyll Cairns, Head of Coastal Partnership</p> <p>Andy Ames, Wilder Communities Project Officer, Hants & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.</p>	<p>associations - completed questionnaire</p> <p>Plus attached to the minutes, the following additional information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood defences. • Bee posts - maintenance, food sources, nesting habitat, the benefits of pollinators and the Nest Pollinator Strategy.
<p>22 March</p>	<p>Report signed off by the panel.</p>	<p>Views from T Jones, resident</p> <p>Views submitted by the Portsmouth Tree Wardens & the Charles Dickens Community Orchard.</p> <p>Views submitted by the Tree Council.</p> <p>Information regarding driveways from the Assistant Director Planning & Economic Growth.</p> <p>The Greening Strategy - Future Review & Delivery report that was considered at the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & the Green Recovery's meeting on 9 February 2022.</p> <p>Questionnaire from Horsea Lane Allotments Association.</p>

GLOSSARY

Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services	HNBS
Special Protection Area	SPA
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust	The Wildlife Trust
Allotments Association	AA
Dirty Plot Notices	DPN
Portsmouth Climate Action Board	PCAN
Portsmouth Tree Wardens	PTW
Charles Dickens Community Orchard	CDCO
Portsmouth Friends of the Earth	PFOE
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI
Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust	The Trust
Lakeside North Harbour	LNH
Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services directorate.	CL&RS

APPENDIX THREE

List of the council's urban meadow areas.

Site	Pockets	Total areas
College Pk - NE corner circle bds	2	28
Althorpe Drive - grassed areas crossing point - 4 sections	4	114
Copnor Bridge Shrub Bed 2 beds south side of the bridge	2	91
Prison Corner	1	22
Tamworth Park + 20sqm memorial planting	3	46
Hempstead Green	8	299
Portsmouth Road, Cosham	2	150
Bransbury Park 20m2 memorial planting	3	20
Zetland Field - Zetland/ Fitzherbert Rd mound	1	20
Bransbury Grds	2	110
Clarendon Gardens, Southsea	3	75
Western Prd	4	189
Pembroke Triangle - vandalised memorial	1	3
Pier Rd RAB planters	7	5
Rock Garden Frontage	5	123
Southsea Castle - Moat (Create wildflower area to left of bridge in moat).	1	60
Ladies Mile - western strip length of wall (3 colour mix cosmos with height)	1	97.5
Canoe Lake 'dig for victory' bed area 2019	1	36
St James Green	1	395
Kingston Recreation Ground - Play area (perennials)	3	0
Lake Road, Buckland	4	288
Mills Road, Stamshaw	2	108
Milton Pk (within West contract)	2	175
Queen Street, Portsea	1	245
2,399.5m		

APPENDIX FOUR

Responses to the questionnaires sent to Chairs of Allotment Associations.

In your experience what proportion of allotment holder members of your association:

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Add compost to soil (helping to increase earthworm activity and improve soil life)	Most	Most	Most
Rotate vegetable crops (to maintain nutrient balance)	Most	Most	Most
Grow a range of fruit, vegetables and herbs (to offer nectar to bees/ other insects throughout the seasons)	Most	Most	Some
Have fruit/ orchard trees on their allotment (to offer nectar to bees/ other pollinators)	Some	Most	Some
Grow companion plants (to reduce disease and increase pollination)	Some	Some	Some
Include a pond/ pond in a pot to provide shallow water (for wildlife)	Some	Some	Some

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Provide food and shelter for wildlife in autumn (e.g. leaves raked into netted container)	Some	Most	Some
Avoid the use of chemicals and pesticides	Most	Some	Some
Provide nesting boxes/ insect hotels/ bee blocks/ bird feeders	Some	Most	Some
Avoid the use of peat-based compost	Some	Most	Some
Have a log pile or bug houses (to provide a home to insects/wildlife)	Some	Most	Some
Include a maintained wild area within their allotment for wildflowers and/ or wild grasses?	Some	Most	Some

In Communal Areas.

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Use fences as frames for climbers/ ivy (to create wildlife havens)?	No	Yes	Yes

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Grow hedges around the perimeter of the site?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cut grass only when it is 5cm+ long (leaving it for more than 2 weeks in summer)?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have a maintained wild area?	No	No	No
Have a log pile?	Yes	No	Yes
Provide nesting boxes / hedgehog houses?	No	Yes	No

Thinking about your association and its allotment holder members.

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Is your Association in favour of areas of rewilding on individual plots?	No	No	No
Do you feel that there is a problem with dirty plots?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you think it would be helpful for your members to receive more information about the role they can play in increasing biodiversity on their allotment?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Would you like help/ advice/ training on identifying biodiversity opportunities?	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Eastney & Milton	Horsea Lane	Long Meadow
Are there any projects you have in mind which would enhance the biodiversity of your site?	No	Yes	No

Notes taken during the visit to countryside sites by the panel on 18 January 2022 by Councillor Judith Smyth.

In attendance Cllr. Lee Mason, Cllr. Matt Atkins, Cllr. Hannah Hockaday, Cllr. Judith Smyth, Cllr. Leo Madden (until lunch time)

- 1. Portsdown Hill** – 500 ha of which 110 ha is managed as PCC open space. Richard Jones who manages the team at Portsdown hill, took us to see three specific environments and explained the opportunities and challenges of the site. It is a SSSI and one of very few chalk grasslands left in the UK. 60 notable plants including orchids and gentians. Birds and slow worms. Infestation by scrub, holm oak, cotoneaster is removed. Annual grazing by horses or cattle helpful. Regular grass cutting and fertilisation of the soil is being reduced (e.g. top field). Neighbouring landowners could do more to improve their chalk grassland but do not affect the site adversely. Site popular with dog walkers and families. Mostly keeping to the paths. Occasional challenges of fly tipping.
- 2. Farlington Marshes** - 120ha. Chris Lycett manager employed by the RSPB met us and took us for a walk to the lake and told us about the site. Purpose of the SSSI is to maintain role as the biggest overwintering and transit site for water and wading birds. Grazing marshes have to be 'farmed' to keep them open. No 'wilding'. Flat grassland preferred by Brent geese, curlew etc. Cattle grazing in summer months. Keeping scrub at bay. Mammals discouraged as they eat eggs. Ravens eat chicks. Huge drop in Lapwing and Curlew – being built up again.
- 3. Milton common.** Peter Roberts manager of countryside services (22 sites) took us for a short walk explaining that Milton common was the city tip and still characterised by lumps and bumps from cars, machines and concrete not far below the surface. Public encouraged to keep to pathways. Contrasting grass cutting regimes clearly showed the different approaches of the parks team and countryside teams. A variety of wildlife and sea birds, species rich. New sea defences being constructed along the coast. New paths created to discourage so many people to use the coastal path where they disturb wildlife. Have to control spread of bramble scrub, not enough depth of soil to grow good trees, methane fires from time to time.
- 4. Eastney beach** - Peter Roberts explained the importance of this place. Very wide shingle bank (hence delay in need to build sea defences). There is a slow increase of vegetation among the shingle especially towards the west. Protected sea kale, sea holly, red valerian. Not much work to do apart from annual removal of holm oak seedlings, brambles and invasive species growing just below the sea wall by the road where rubbish can accumulate. Fort Cumberland area is an important remnant of coastal heathland and will need some protection when and if redevelopment of the fort is started. This is a fragile environment and could be destroyed by over

intensive use for example it is not a suitable place to locate a marine activity centre and any major extensions to the caravan park should be resisted.

5. **Tipner firing range-** Megan Carter and her colleague (ecologist from WS Atkins) met us and took us for a walk round to the eastern point. Not yet officially part of the coast path but used by dog walkers etc. The intertidal creek just south of the peninsula is very special ecologically with several layers of different organisms and needs to be protected and preserved. The intertidal area varies considerably around the site. We talked about the possible extent of housing and the development of a green marine industrial estate using deep water accessible to the north of the peninsula. Megan explained the investigations that had been done into the feasibility of building a new intertidal island in the north of Portsmouth harbour to replace the environment that would have been lost if the extended Lennox point scheme were to be built. It was acknowledged that some wildlife – hares and foxes would be lost if there were houses built on the firing range.

Comments received from Councillors, members of the public and organisations.

Hilsea

Councillor Robert New informed the panel that the Hilsea Lines and north Portsea sea defences are home to some of the city's finest bio-diversity and habitats from the tall trees of foxes forest to the rushes and coastal habitats.

Copnor

He added that Copnor is home to unique soft marsh-like settings and hidden lakes, providing further large green spaces. College Park contains many bee-friendly plantings and is a much-loved green space on the east side of the city, along with other large green spaces in nearby Baffins.

The new linear park that Penny Mordaunt MP secured funding for will be the biggest linear park of its kind and will further enhance, protect and connect our communities with the natural world. The opportunities to enhance our biodiversity with this project has huge potential, scope and scale. If Portsmouth City Council gets it right. It is my hope that they will consult with all members throughout the project life: from the current proposals to boots on the ground.

Cosham

Councillor Hannah Brent sent in her views before she joined the panel, to state that Cosham has an abundance of nature for residents to enjoy such as forest walks close by at Foxes forest / Hilsea Lines, a variety of stunning habitats at Farlington Marshes, and local parks providing not only green space for exercisers, dog walkers and children.

The ponds beneath the chalk cliffs are a rare home for protected newts. A great environment around Lakeside with the marshier environment encouraging more life.

Green areas have been enhanced in Cosham and around the city with the planting of wildflowers, and cherry trees in Cosham Park which help the pollinators and bees that humanity wouldn't survive without. These aspects are not only important for nature to thrive but for people to appreciate in the surrounding area of their homes. They also provide a vital soak away to reduce the prevalence of flooding and any loss of the green environment that is so vital impacts that and creates further risk of flooding of homes.

Drayton & Farlington

Councillor Terry Norton explained that biodiversity is one of the most precious and important things we have. In Portsmouth we tend to think of it as something that's just nice to look at, and enjoy spending time in, but it's so much more. Nature means a lot to the residents of Drayton and Farlington (the greenest ward in the city with 1.8 trees per resident) for us it provides more than scenery. Our community value the natural ecosystems around us and encourage the development of Biodiverse practices. One area of interest for the ward is bees who are vital to bio diversity. There are 130,000 plants for

example for which bees are essential to pollination. We therefore support the inclusion of wildflower meadows within our community. A resident recently stated "Bees are more important than poultry in terms of human nutrition" an interesting point."

Portsmouth Hill

Councillor Hannah Brent noted that the view of Portsmouth Hill whilst great hides a far more important gem. The unique conditions are why much of it is SSSI, with the mixed habitat providing a home for many lifeforms. It highlights how bio-diverse our wonderful city is, the carefully managed environment and mix of uses ensure a wide range of environments and therefore species. If it was all left to turn to gorse or forest this unique environment that has developed since humans first inhabited the land would be lost.

Views from T Jones, resident

I would just like to say that I think it is important to increase communication with people about the importance of trees whether these are in a back garden or in a park or on the streets. I see so many being cut down in peoples gardens, maybe because people think they have a negative impact on buildings or walls, but this may not be the case, if people knew how important trees are then maybe they would be willing to live with them more rather than cut them down.

We really need to look after and protect the trees we already have for so many reasons, including biodiversity. And its important to plant new ones and have really good after care so they survive.

Also, I see that alongside the railway lines the greenery is being cut down....and wondered why this is? This area is so important for wildlife. Is there some way the council can work with the railways to protect these habitats?

And I wanted to say I believe all spraying of pesticides should stop, I have heard that the council sprays the paths and areas of the allotments, which I believe should stop.

Information submitted by Jon Stokes, Director of Trees, Science & Research, Tree Council.

At the request of the Portsmouth Tree Wardens, I am sending you some information about how The Tree Council regards the fruit tree planting that is happening in Portsmouth.

Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the UK. It also has a relatively low number of trees per resident, something that the Portsmouth and Southsea Tree Wardens have been trying to improve over the last 20 years. The project that has been developed by the Tree Wardens and The Charles Dickens Community Orchards, is to my knowledge one of the most exciting community orchard projects in the UK, because of its aspiration to bring suitable fruit trees to residents throughout the city, which builds on the rich heritage of the city and its connections through Dickens to fruit trees.

The scale of the communities efforts are amazing – with now 60 orchards being designated and planted and over 899 fruit trees having been planted throughout the City over the last 5 years.

Speaking as part of the National Orchard Group, we know orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. The reason they are special is that fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are "early senescent". This means they get 'old' relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs. These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle. It's not all about the decay either though, as fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Orchards can have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles. And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight which makes them particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

The orchards being created in Portsmouth also allows for community engagement with a huge range of people and communities, providing not only trees for biodiversity and climate change (both of which are vital), but also developing a source of free and community-based fruit available to anyone in the city. The natural bounty that is being created, has already been used to provide free food and fruit to foodbanks like Landport Larder, North End Pantry and community cafés.

I hope this information is useful in helping you to develop your biodiversity and other strategies over the next few years, and on behalf of The Tree Council I would like to express our enthusiasm for the work that is being carried out in the city to bring people, wildlife and trees together through the exemplary use of orchards. Long may it continue and we will continue to support wherever we can.

Views from the Tree Wardens for Portsmouth & Southsea and the Charles Dickens Community Orchards.

Our groups and volunteers have been planting orchards and other trees in many different areas around the city. We have noticed a lack of wildlife corridors in some areas particularly in the North End area where it is densely populated. Some areas lack the easily accessible local park or small green areas others have. This leads to a lack of wildlife corridors. Maybe some thought could be given to finding some disused land or brownfield site in North End that could be changed into a local amenity. With wildlife at the heart of it.

On occasions we have seen the removal of large shrubs which provide a habitat to the local birds and wild animals that enables them to thrive and shelter in cold weather.

Planting fruit trees provides humans and animals alike with food and foraging opportunities, harvesting events and bringing the community together to learn about and celebrate nature. As we have seen in the Charles Dickens Centre

orchards and Ark Dickens fruiting hedge. They give free fruit for local people will help those with a diminishing amount of finances to lead a healthier lifestyle. Where they can pick what they need from local trees. Communities will then invest themselves in looking after their local trees. they can see what they will get out of it. Excess produce has been given out to the food banks and larders to help those most in need and provides an amazing source of support, which has been very appreciated.

Perhaps people could be encouraged to plant trees in their gardens to feed birds and help our pollinators. Maybe people could be encouraged to have green space on roofs to help wildlife.

Rooftop gardens in the city and growing walls will all encourage biodiversity and reduce pollution through removing particulates. There could be an encouragement of beehives on roofs that would help pay for the maintenance costs of local trees. Help the local economy and provide a healthier source of food. More importantly protect the pollinators.

Different types of habitats could be explored by introducing to some areas boggy areas or ponds creating a different habitat.

Perennial wildflowers suitable to the types of soil in our urban areas could be introduced. This would reduce mowing, energy costs and labour needed and create a more pleasant environment for local people. More wildflowers on verges please.

Fruiting hedges should be allowed to grow 50cm per year until about 5' wide and allow the fruits to be harvested by animals and people. Not cut back harshly each year by the flail machine. There is a fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens which has been growing for 12 years. It is not treated as a fruiting hedge by Colas, it is harshly cut back and is never allowed to fruit. It's just treated as a normal hedge.

Resident initiatives should be given priority and supported to encourage ownership of their local environment and community trees.

It would be good to stop tarmacking tree pits. During the last few years, we obtained permission to plant trees in tree pits and planted them. Shortly afterwards someone removed them and retarmacked. There needs to be greater communication between teams that carryout maintenance. The Charles Dickens community orchards have suffered some losses due to information not being passed from one team to another. When it should be recorded as part of the history of the area and subsequently passed on to the new team taking over. Whether it be a new contractor or otherwise.

Strimming around tree trunks should be carefully avoided, more damage is done by labourers doing this than anything else and this can set back trees many years. Greater care needs to be taken over strimming.

More native and heritage trees need to be planted in Portsmouth.

A tree nursery to grow our own native trees in Portsmouth is needed. Propagating from our rare varieties.

We need to increase the tree canopy in Portsmouth we can do this by celebrating the Queen's platinum anniversary. More wildflowers on verges to encourage butterflies and birds.

The reduction of pesticides in the city would be good and perhaps use some other chemicals that biodegrade quickly such as industrial vinegar and bicarbonate of soda. Which is far less harmful to the environment.

Great care should be taken in coming years to provide mulch for every tree planted so they can retain moisture and cope with the drier weather we are due because of climate change.

A large pot of money needs to be put aside for future maintenance of all trees in Portsmouth. We need more tree canopy cover for future generations to survive in the coming years.

The National Tree Charter has become the Charter for Trees after 800 years. The Tree Wardens and the Charles Dickens Community Orchards have signed up to this agreement. It would be good if Portsmouth City Council did this as well, declaring how the council means to go on. The Local Portsmouth Tree Charter will need to include the Tree Wardens more in what is done and how communities of interest are kept informed of things like tree removals and tree preservation orders for our very rare trees.

Gardening competitions could be reintroduced into Housing services and across the city. Which helps people to take pride in where they live, improve the environment and keep people interested in wildlife.

Ownership of small micro plots by community groups to grow things in areas that are grassed currently would be a great idea. Removing some of the tarmac in urban areas will break up the landscape and allow the rain to soak away more readily, reducing flooding risk and urban run off. Trees soak up water and pollution.

Biodiverse areas may look unmanaged because they are not trimmed and cut back as much as those neatly kept gardens some folks are used to. Perhaps some local guidance with the aid of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust and friends of the Earth could be made available to help with this.

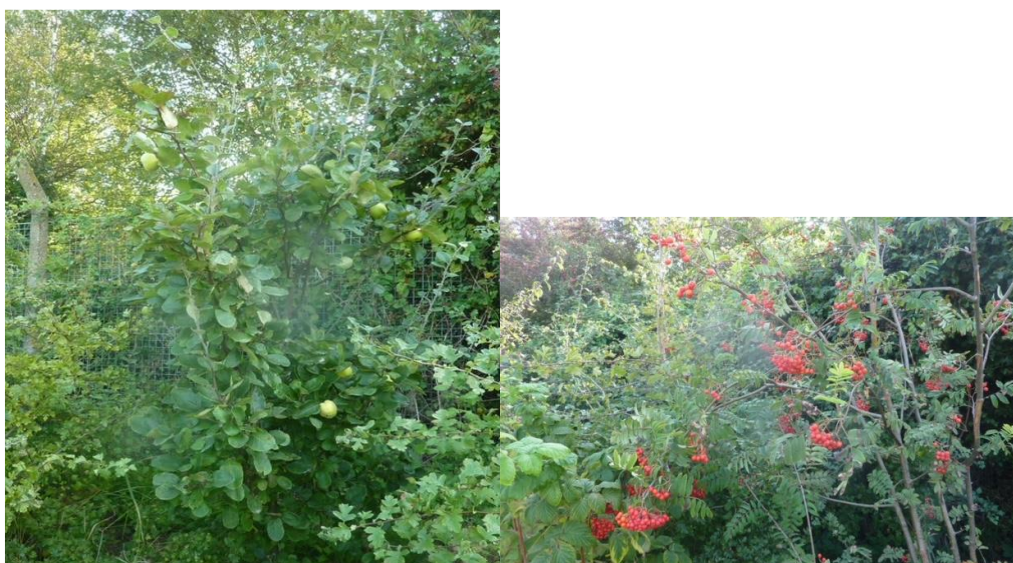
The city should make more of valuing the trees and their contributions to the environment. Giving a listing and protection for the very rare varieties like the Black poplar we have in our city (there are only 7,000 in the country). The city could introduce trees which have add biodiversity and supply food for wildlife to the city. Such as Oak trees which support a large variety of wildlife. Also by having a variety fruiting trees or hedges. We also now have some very rare fruit trees incorporated in our orchard planting such as the Bardsey apple. Larger trees should be valued more and have more protection such as (Tree protection orders) as they work harder for the environment. There could be designated community trees, orchards and fruiting hedges under these protection orders.

More could be made of the horticultural opportunities for careers in the city. Our very own National Tree Council Director of Science and Research, advisor to DEFRA lives locally. More could be specifically offered through horticultural and national training with a career path into different areas.

The new Environment Bill November 2021 comes into effect shortly, so this will mean more people having to train in these areas so that Portsmouth city council will meet its legal obligations.

Above all we need to offer opportunities and incentives for residents in both private and rented accommodation to grow more trees at home. Perhaps free trees, resources and training working with the support of schools to help inform young people of the benefits to them in the future. Problems faced by residents and community groups are funding for trees, compost, mulch and moving large items from a delivery area to the site.

I have included some pictures of the fruiting hedge in Hilsea planted by the Tree Wardens. The pictures below demonstrate the damage done by the flailing machine to the fruiting hedge.





Views from Jane Shepherd, resident.

There are green spaces and places for trees that are going unidentified. The Council has an open invitation for residents to suggest places for trees but they don't seem to have planted many and it's going at a snail's pace. For many of us it's easy to forget that we can suggest spots for trees or wilding, life gets in the way and there's no quick mechanism to feedback. My idea would be to have volunteer biodiversity scouts in each ward who can look out for opportunities and feedback to the council. They could have some basic training or info sheets, and do an audit of their patch.

Views from Mathilde Chanvin, Portsmouth

Please find my personal views about the current policies around greening in Portsmouth for the meeting held on Tuesday 14th December 2021.

I am a resident of Portsmouth since 2012 and I call this place Home. As a nature lover and an active member of various local environmental groups (Portsmouth and Southsea Wildlife Watch, Zero Waste Portsmouth, Wilder Portsmouth, and rewilding Brambles school and nursery), I have witnessed an increase / took part in amazing local actions and initiatives to improve/create green spaces and enhance biodiversity protection across the city. These initiatives, combined with the progress made by the City Council on various occasions (beautiful wildflower beds in Milton or Bransbury parks, new trees planted across the City) are to be celebrated.

There is an improvement, but I personally believe that more can be done, and especially with companies working with PCC about managing our green spaces. We are in desperate need of more green spaces in Portsmouth. We need more verges, grass, wildflower, and green corridors for bees and butterflies and other wildlife to thrive. Any action counts if we want to stop the disastrous effect of climate change on biodiversity.

I would like the panel, and especially Colas, to listen to local communities when they complain about the verges being cut in the parks and our "weeds" being cut and spread right in our front door (it happens every time in front of my house (especially on Earth Day in 2021!) although I have put a sign to leave it! – see pictures below), the grass being mown in cemeteries. I feel really concerned about the weed cutting and whether pesticides are used to get rid of the plants in our streets. Pesticides are harmful to us, wildlife (especially pollinators) and plants and I hope there is a way to stop using it all together.



My front wall with “weed growing” space and sign featured in the Wild Life magazine (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust). – March 2021



My front wall empty of grass and soil due to Colas’s intervention – April 2021. There is nothing more beautiful than a poppy growing and blossoming within the crack of a street pavement. Such a pleasure for our eyes and a fantastic pit stop for a bee. Here are some poppies flowering in Spring time in my street.



Having green bus shelters, more trees and wild plants in the streets, wildflowers beds in streets, each roundabout or across cemeteries, or letting the flowers and “weeds” grow wherever it is possible (street and allotments) would be such an improvement to make our city, my home, a better place to live, breath and walk, and for biodiversity to thrive.

I wish that Colas would just leave the weed growing if people wish to keep them thanks to signs. Local communities, groups, councillors, employers, we all need to be on board to protect the existing and increase biodiversity space across Portsmouth. Let’s work and collaborate together for a Wilder Portsmouth.

Chair of North Harbour Allotment Association.

1. We support Biodiversity in principle and practice with many plots being totally organic and peat free.
2. We have a healthy population of wildlife with a considerable number of birds, we also have resident beehives on the site which belong to the Portsmouth Bee-Keepers Association.
3. There is an abundance of other insect life on the plots and in some cases far too many blackflies and aphids.
4. We do not believe that allotments should be included in Re-wilding as there are more than enough people on the waiting list for them to be used in this manner, and there is plenty of natural re-wilding taking place when plots are not re-let promptly causing other plot holders problems.
5. We welcome the use of wildflower beds and landscaping in appropriate place large green spaces like Port Solent Green where a good number could be introduced without detriment to the overall utility of the space and most beneficially on the "Motorway Hills "to the west of the M275.
6. Consideration to regular grass cutting so that Dog Walkers can effectively clean up behind their dogs.
7. Finally, I wrote a considerable time ago about the restricted access to Port Solent Green Space for Wheelchair users and less able walkers who cannot climb over stiles and the reclamation of the area which was fenced off to enable the MOD Fence to be renewed and as far as I am aware has not been restore to the original boundary.

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Guiding principles for developing recommendations for the Pesticides scrutiny report.

We are approaching the time when the panel needs to make its recommendations and this paper is produced to achieve some general agreement about how we can approach this.

These guiding principles are over and above the Portsmouth City Council's usual approach to producing scrutiny reports including of course the need to base the recommendations on evidence heard by the panel.

Specifically, for this report it is suggested that the panel's recommendations.

1. Recognise the enormous progress made across the three departments in recent years.
2. Focus on what has worked for the city so far,
3. Distinguish the use pesticides in different situations including perhaps continuing use for knotweed and some sports facilities such as golf courses and bowling greens.
4. Avoid recommendations that are likely to incur significant increases in future council budgets. Where increases are anticipated keep them to the minimum.
5. Build on the TECS scrutiny of Biodiversity including their recommendations about leadership, accountability and reporting.
6. Bring together Biodiversity and the use of pesticides under the same leadership/strategy and actions (since they are inextricably linked)
7. Include targets for further reductions in the use of pesticides where possible.
8. Where we do not know then include recommendations for further work if necessary
9. Any other ideas from the panel?

Councillor Judith Smyth
Chair of the panel.

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