

Walworth Community Garden Network

Brief review of activity from September 2019 to September 2020 and information about funding streams.

Introduction

The Walworth Community Garden network was set up as a project of the Walworth Society in September 2017. A paid co-ordinator, Vince Brown, was originally funded by United St Saviours and the project was managed by the Walworth Society.

In August 2019 the network moved from being a project to a fully formed and constituted voluntary organisation managed by local residents for local residents. A change of paid co-ordinator took place in September 2019.

As at September 2020 the network has xxx members, representing community gardens and allotment groups.

Aims of the network.

Its aims are to:

1. Encourage community gardening groups located in the SE17, SE5 and SE1 postcodes (the “CGGs”) to get to know each other and work together, including to:
 - a. organise joint onsite training
 - b. work together to attract new volunteers
 - c. share volunteers
 - d. share resources
 - e. organise joint events
2. Provide a forum for discussion and sharing ideas
 - a. Provide a collective voice for the CGGs in pursuit of their collective interests.
 - b. Act as a focus for with the CGGs to work with other community gardens across Southwark and wider afield
 - c. Organise events to promote discussion of collective concerns of the CGGs, and a provide a focus and collective body to raise and address to concerns.
3. Work with Southwark Council and other funders to promote and support community gardening.

- a. Consult with community garden professionals and local CGGs to establish the guidance and ongoing support they need to set up and maintain community gardens in a sustainable and inclusive way.
 - b. Ensure funders recognise the need for guidance and support in setting up community gardens and the demand of training and ongoing support for members of CGGs.
 - c. Work with local community gardening professionals and the CGGs to establish a list of trusted local support agencies that can advise, set up, train and provide ongoing support to the CGGs
- 4. Promote a volunteering strategy that is inclusive across cultures, ages and abilities.
- 5. Promote the efficient and sustainable use of water in community gardens
- 6. Promote environmentally friendly, organic gardening and the efficient and sustainable use of plants, resources and water, guiding the CGGs on how to respond to climate change
- 7. Organise each year one or more Community Garden Shows
- 8. Work with other organisations to promote through community growing: healthy eating, community cohesiveness, tackle social isolation and promote inclusion across all ages and abilities, celebrate cultural diversity.

Paid co-ordinator.

WCGN has had a paid co-ordinator from before its inception!

Debbie Mitchener was appointed to the role of paid co-ordinator in September 2019, when Vince Brown resigned from the role.

This role is for two days a week, paid at £120 for a six hour day. Debbie stood back because of personal commitments over the late spring and summer of 2020. Carole Wright stepped in to cover the role. From 1st October 2020, Debbie and Carole are sharing the role, working one day a week each. This arrangement has been agreed until end December 2020. **Their employment contracts need to be updated.**

Funder from September 2019 – Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease) for 7 months, matched by funding from Lottery Awards for All from April 2020 until October/November 2020

Activities

Water Project. Funder – Southwark Cleaner, Greener, Safer fund.

This project has been ongoing for a couple of years. Funding was agreed from three Southwark Wards, Faraday, Newington and East Walworth, for projects to address and improve the water supply to community gardens and to work on drought tolerant planting and infrastructure. This project is part of a wider commitment to tackling the climate emergency in Southwark and beyond and to learn and share best practice around water and water conservation.

Brandon Estate had a leaky feeder watering arrangement installed in 2019. Surrey Square school garden had an irrigation system installed. Alberta Fruit Commons was due to have something. (Perhaps Vince, Tom or Peter etc can add some info here)

Nursery Row Garden Show - September 2019

Funder – some funding was from Southwark Neighbourhood Fund. There was possibly also funding from United St Saviours.

Stall. Flower and produce competition. Floral headdress workshop and prizes. Animal sculpture made of vegetables workshop and prizes.

Training October 2019 – March 2020

** I think there was more than this - Debbie to add

Getting ready for winter. November 2019

Funder – Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease)

Delivered twice. Camberwell Wells Triangle group and to Southwark Parents and Communities Together (PACT). The latter is a community group aimed at supporting parents in Southwark in bringing up their children. PACT has an allotment.

Bulb planting.

Funder – Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease).

Delivered on four occasions. Rochester allotments; Gibbings House community garden; Tabard community garden, BOST estate garden.

Pruning of hard fruit trees. January and February 2020

Funder – Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease)

Delivered on two occasions. Walworth Allotment Association (Fielding St); Wells Triangle group.

Seedy Sunday visit to Brighton. 2nd February 2020.

Funder – Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease) paid for the coach, Cordwainers Grow paid for the food, individual members paid for entry.

WCGN took part in a joint visit with Cordwainers Grow of Hackney, to the Seedy Sunday event in Brighton.

Distribution of compost, plant seeds, dahlia bulbs and comfrey roots. Spring 2020

Funder – Tetley and Wakefield.

These were distributed to those community garden members who had signed up for the deliveries, and to four local schools. An assembly teach-in was delivered to one school.

“Lockdown”, introduced nationally by the UK government in March 2020 to reduce

transmission of coronavirus, prevented the delivery of the assembly teach-ins planned for the other schools. Nevertheless, we received feedback that the involvement of WCGN in organising the deliveries to the schools, even without the accompanying teach-in, was greatly appreciated by the teachers and children.

Distribution of plant seeds and micro-greens. May 2020

Funder – Tetley and Wakefield

These were distributed to Southwark PACT parents and children during “lockdown”. Many of the families had little or no access to outside space, especially during “lockdown”.

Online Garden Show 12th September 2020

Funding - Lottery Awards for All and Southwark Council Neighbourhood Fund

Activities in the summer of 2020 were very limited because of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead of providing a garden focus for two local shows, which had been planned, the network put on an online garden show. Part of the purpose of this show was to explore, improve and celebrate our online presence. This was held on September 12th 2020. It featured an online live art workshop called “Gardens of the Imagination” and an online live Gardeners’ Question Time event. Both were well received, and the GQT was attended by a couple of people as far afield as Birmingham and Manchester! There was also an online competition with prizes for the best photos of floral headdress, best flower, best vegetable, best animal sculpture made from fruit and vegetables and best garden animal or insect. The panellists for GQT also acted as the judges for the competition.

Communication

New website development.

Funder – I am unsure where this is coming from until we have sight of the bank statements History. Two previous websites had been developed at very low cost, one by Chevon Hylton, a network member, and the other by a group of students from the London College of Printing; however, neither fully met the needs of the network. A website consultant was commissioned to create a website on WordPress and transfer the information from the other websites. The new website went live on xxxxx. We now have individual garden pages for each garden, a blog stream and special activities pages eg the Online Garden Show.

Other social media. The network has a WhatsApp group, a Facebook Page, a Twitter Account and an Instagram account. The WhatsApp group is very well used. The other forms of social media are primarily used to let members know about WCGN activities and WCGN meetings. These will be added to the front of the website to encourage networking between members and with other like-minded organisations.

Email communications are sent by mailchimp. Currently there are xxx recipients of this. The recipients are members of the network, stakeholders and others with an interest in the activity of the network.

Podcast.

A fortnightly podcast to discuss gardening advice was provided by Debbie for a number of weeks in the Spring of 2020. The take up was enthusiastic although very limited.

Other

Community Garden network members have liaised with each other to organise bulk buying of well rotted manure from Surrey Quays Farm to several gardens.

Community Garden network members attend each other's events – these are often communicated through the WhatsApp group. They advise each other of relevant gardening events and plant sales. This has included several members signing up for free distribution of plants at the end of major flower shows.

During the summer of 2019 the network tried out holding our monthly meetings at each others' gardens. This was very successful and would have been replicated in 2020, but the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic prevented this.

Two new Southwark Community Garden Coordinators were appointed as a direct result of WCGN lobbying. We're intending to work closely with them to strengthen our network and to address borough-wide issues such as Green Waste collection, watering schemes, community mulching (!) and community greenhouses.

Current and recent funding streams (as at October 2020).

Southwark Council Neighbourhood Fund.

Three bids to support WCGN activity at two garden shows in 2020 were successful; announced in March 2020.

£1050 agreed (£350 from three wards – Newington, Faraday and East Walworth).

The garden shows were to be part of the summer show in June 2020 at Pasley Park and the autumn fete in September 2020 at Nursery Row. At each there was to be a WCGN stall, flower and produce competitions, activities for children with prizes (eg floral headdress; animal sculpture made from fruit and veg). The restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic led to both events being cancelled. The network put on an online garden show instead. Carole put in a change of use request for the Neighbourhood Fund funding in (?July/August). Update needed.

Southwark Council Cleaner, Greener Safer fund.

This funding was agreed more than a year ago; possibly a couple of years ago. This was/is for the Watering Project and made up of three awards across three Wards - Newington, Faraday and North Walworth. We are not sure if the monies are in the WCGN bank account, or if invoices are submitted to Southwark Council.

Tetley and Wakefield.

£2000 was given in February 2020 originally for a trip to Seedy Sunday and to organise the Kinder Way to Garden event. This was altered in March 2020 to allow for money not spent on Seedy Sunday to cover training for the PACT group who could not access any of the watering project funding. A Kinder Way to Garden has not happened due to Covid but we could look at running something online.

Lottery funding – Awards for All

February 2020 £9970 to help support the coordinator role until December 2020, a contribution to 2 x Garden Shows, and some training for the network.

Elephant and Castle Fund (LendLease)

September 2019 £9850 to support a paid coordinator for 6 months, a contribution to 2 x Garden Shows and some training for the network. This funding was to last for a minimum of 6 months

There may be other sources of funding we are unaware of, and/or monies still available provided from other organisations (eg United St Saviours).

END OF REPORT