

NEFA

Growing food in cities

A report to highlight and promote the
benefits of urban agriculture in the UK

This report was prepared by Tara Garnett on behalf of the National Food Alliance and the SAFE Alliance working party on Growing Food in Cities.

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At the time of going to press, the general conclusions of the **Growing Food in Cities** report, and in particular, its recommendations, are endorsed by the following organisations:

Arid Lands Initiative Biodynamic Agricultural Association + Bioregional Development Group + Black Environmental Network + Bradford Environmental Action Trust + British Diabetic Association + British Heart Foundation + British Organic Farmers and the Organic Growers' Association + Caroline Walker Trust + Children's Society + Common Ground + Commonwork Land Trust + Community Nutrition Group + Consumer Watch + Country Landowners' Association + Diet Breakers + Friends of the Earth + Elm Farm Research Centre + Food Additives Campaign Team (FACT) + Food Commission + Genetics Forum + Global Action Plan + GMB (Britain's General Union) + Green Network + Green Party + Health Education Trust + Henry Doubleday Research Association + Horticultural Therapy + Land Heritage + Learning Through Landscapes + LETS-Link UK + McCarrison Society + National Association of Teachers of Home Economics + National Federation of City Farms + National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners + Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation + Permaculture Association + Pesticides Trust+ Public Health Alliance + Royal Society of Health + Rural Agricultural and Allied Workers' Trade Group + Soil Association + The Ecological Foundation + The Ecologist + The Land is Ours + The Poverty Alliance + Town and Country Planning Association + Vegetarian Society + Waste Watch + Willing Workers on Organic Farms + Women's Environmental Network + World Cancer Research Fund

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National Food Alliance ❖ SAFE Alliance

June 1996

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Foreword

In early 1995, the National Food Alliance and the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and the Environment (SAFE) Alliance decided to manage jointly the development of the ***Growing Food in Cities*** project. It was clear to us and to our members that the significant benefits of urban food growing were being ignored and that opportunities for developing its potential were being missed. This, we felt, was due to a lack of recognition and support for the concept in certain sectors; suspicions which were confirmed early on in the preparation of this report.

The organisations represented on the working party, many of which have been involved in urban food growing for some time, believed that it could provide an effective means of addressing a range of interconnected social, economic and environmental concerns. There was, they felt, a clear need for a report which would highlight the considerable advantages of urban food growing and explore how their own work might provide a base on which to develop future initiatives.

It would be foolish to suggest that this is not a complex issue. Constraints to growing food in cities, such as access to land and water, and the question of soil contamination, are very real and are explored here. Yet case studies throughout the report show how obstacles have been effectively overcome.

The challenge now is for local and national government, voluntary bodies, the private sector and citizens to take the ideas and recommendations contained in this report further. The goal is for more food to be grown in cities. This report vividly demonstrates that social, health, environmental and other benefits will follow.

Vicki Hird - SAFE Alliance
Jeanette Longfield - National Food Alliance

June 1996

Summary

Why grow food?

Food is central to our lives. It is a source of enjoyment as well as nourishment. But food is also at the core of many problems in society. Nearly 800 million people in the southern hemisphere are chronically malnourished¹, while in the industrialised world, many die from the effects, such as stroke and coronary heart disease, of overconsumption.

In the UK, many poor urban neighbourhoods have become food retailing deserts, where access to good food shops² and markets is rare. Parts of the countryside too are becoming desertified - economically - with farming employing only 2.2% of the population³ - and environmentally - as chemical residues contaminate waterways and destroy wildlife, and processing and distribution by road and air also generates pollution and packaging waste.

As a nation of town and city dwellers, we have lost contact with the land and with the way food is produced. Although cookery books and TV programmes are enormously popular, cooking, for many people, has become a spectator sport - reliance on processed 'convenience' food has never been greater. And whilst shops are crammed with transcontinental luxury produce, British local and regional foods and recipes are disappearing.

One way of reconnecting with the land and with our culture is by growing food.

Why in cities?

Food growing can also improve the quality and sustainability of urban living.

89% of us live in cities.⁴ At present, most cities are highly unsustainable; covering only 2% of the earth's surface, they nevertheless consume 75% of its resources.⁵ For instance, London's total **foot print** - its social, environmental and economic impact upon world resources - extends to about 125 times its surface area, to nearly 20 million hectares. Home to only 12% of Britain's population, London nevertheless requires the equivalent of the entire productive land area of Britain to sustain itself.⁶

This unequal relationship is not inevitable. Indeed, cities are potentially highly sustainable, and one aim of this report is to show that through urban food growing, the country can, in a sense, be brought to the town - to the advantage of both.

Why now?

Urban food growing has a long history; people have cultivated their cities for thousands of years. The allotment has been an urban institution for centuries in the UK while the 'Dig for Victory' campaign was crucial to the country's survival during World War II. Overseas, too, there are countless examples of urban food growing.

Now, at the cusp of the millennium, the time to promote urban growing food has never been better. The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro produced **Agenda 21**, a blueprint for sustainable development which urges everyone - from the individual to the global institution - to tackle society's problems in an integrated manner.

June 1996 saw another major UN event - the Habitat II conference on sustainable human settlements. And in November 1996, Rome will host the UN's World Food Summit. Its preparatory documents already acknowledge the contribution of urban agriculture to meeting the world's food needs.

Food and cities are both urgent and topical issues. Growing food in cities tackles them together.

The aim of this report

The ***Growing Food in Cities*** report shows, through analysis and a wide variety of case studies, that urban agriculture can, in a very practical way, yield a range of benefits. These include:

Community development: by reaffirming community identity, promoting active citizenship, combating age, gender and ethnic discrimination, preventing crime and rehabilitating offenders

Economic development: by providing skills training, creating local goods and services, and building an alternative economy

Education: by furthering formal learning at school, non-formal education in the community and helping people with special needs

Environmental improvement: by increasing biodiversity, tackling waste and reducing transport

Health: by improving people's diets, encouraging physical activity and promoting mental health

Leisure: by stimulating voluntary action, generating sustainable tourism and developing arts and crafts

Sustainable neighbourhoods: by reviving allotments and parks, and regenerating housing developments

Of course, growing food in cities is not a panacea. And projects can face difficulties with access to land, water, money, equipment, knowledge and skills. The report therefore makes a number of recommendations (a summary of these is attached) to policy makers to help ease these problems and, more positively, to encourage and support urban food growing initiatives.

Finally, for those inspired by the report, detailed sources of useful information are included.

1 Committee on World Food Security, *draft*, Food and Agriculture Organisation January 1996.

2 *Food and Low Income: a practical guide for advisers and supporters working with families and young people on low incomes*, National Food Alliance 1994

3 *Agriculture in the UK*, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1994

4 *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal* Comedia/Demos, 1995

5 Herbert Girardet, *The Gaia Atlas of Cities*, Gaia Books Ltd, 1992

6 Herbert Girardet, *Urban Growth and the Environment*, Congress Report, Hong Kong, 1995.

Recommendations

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

The Bible, Proverbs, 29.18

The recommendations summarised below are drawn from the report, which contains a mixture of general suggestions and quite detailed proposals. They are by no means comprehensive and only the more general policy recommendations are reproduced here. In essence, however, they stem from one single recommendation, that:

Policy makers at all levels, and from all sectors, should integrate into their work the promotion and support of urban food growing, including the production of fruit and vegetables, honey and livestock. By doing so, policy makers will be better able to meet their objectives, be they environmental, economic, educational, health related, or social.

1. Policy integration

Central government

❖ Through PPGs the **DoE** should, for example:

encourage local authorities to plan an integrated urban network of green spaces, including for growing food, which are accessible by public transport, and to pedestrians and cyclists.

emphasise the importance of maintaining and promoting parks and allotments.

encourage local authorities to convert local authority small holdings into lower input and organic enterprises, which could also act as a training and educational resource.

promote local food shops, markets and other local distribution and retailing outlets.

❖ The **DfEE**, in its Circulars, should recommend primary and secondary schools to make specific provision for hands-on food education, i.e. growing food, cooking and eating it.

❖ The **DH** should acknowledge the importance of food growing activities in meeting the **Health of the Nation** targets on CHD/stroke, cancer and mental illness.

❖ **MAFF** should relax seed legislation to favour small producers registering and selling seeds affordably.

❖ The **HO** should, through its Standing Orders, encourage the prison service to develop its food growing activities to improve prisoners' mental and physical health and to prepare for employment after release.

Local agencies

❖ Where appropriate **city-wide networks** already exist, food production should be integrated into their agenda. Local Agenda 21 groups could, for example, use the level of local food growing activity and the availability of suitable land for the purpose as key sustainability indicators. Where such networks do not exist, they should be established.

❖ Departments responsible for **food purchasing** and contracts should adopt and implement local sourcing policies wherever possible. To

Abbreviations

DfEE:
Department for
Education and
Employment

DoE:
Department of the
Environment

DH:
Department of
Health

DNH:
Department of
National Heritage

DTI:
Department of Trade
and Industry

HO:
Home Office

MAFF:
Ministry of
Agriculture, Fisheries
and Food

PPG:
Planning Policy
Guidance note

SRB:
Single Regeneration
Budget

comply with the 1988 Local Government Act (section 17) and the EC Procurement Directive (which forbid discrimination against contractors on the basis of location) local authorities' purchasing policies should specify local **sourcing** rather than local contractors (who may, in any case, not source locally).

- ❖ Producers of **green waste** - schools, housing estates, restaurants, markets, greengrocers, - should be encouraged to recycle waste, and appropriate facilities, such as waste collection services, should be provided. Local authorities should work with relevant organisations and groups to set up community and/or centralised composting schemes.
- ❖ **Biodiversity** should be enhanced at local level by, for example, organising 'seed and plant swapping fairs' for gardeners, by reducing chemical use on local authority owned land and creating green corridors.
- ❖ **New allotments** should comply with high environmental standards and existing sites should be encouraged to phase out unsustainable growing methods.
- ❖ Teachers should work with pupils, caterers and the local community to establish school nutrition action groups (SNAGs) to develop a **whole-school policy on food** which incorporates health and environmental considerations into food grown and eaten in schools.
- ❖ Community workers should explore the possibilities of using **food growing projects** to break down barriers between groups, encourage a sense of community identity and empowerment, and assist in the rehabilitation of young and adult offenders.

2. Funding, support and promotion

Central government

- ❖ **MAFF** should increase financial support for farms to convert to organic production and for existing organic farms, whether or not located in urban areas. Farms marketing their produce locally, thereby generating additional economic activity, should also attract grants.
- ❖ **MAFF** should alter the remit of **Food from Britain** so that, instead of promoting UK exports, its primary focus is to encourage local consumption of local UK produce.
- ❖ The **DoE**, in conjunction with the **Treasury**, should earmark revenues from landfill tax for direct use by local composting and other recycling schemes, so that Government's own waste targets can be met. The **DoE** should also make available additional funds for land to be reclaimed for food production by community groups.
- ❖ The **Treasury** should make appropriate financial provision for parks in local authorities' Standard Spending Assessment and permit savings from Compulsory Competitive Tendering to go back into the parks budget for use in food growing and other community projects.
- ❖ The **DNH** should promote urban tourism by funding community-managed green urban attractions, particularly those relating to food growing, and that are readily accessible by public transport. Additional funds to promote community development through food should be made available through the **DNH's** Voluntary and Community Division.

- ❖ The **HO**, as part of its crime prevention programme, should fund food growing projects in the community, for those at risk of offending or of re-offending.
- ❖ The **DH** should work with the **DoE** to fund urban food growing projects which make connections between environmental improvement, better nutrition, increased physical activity and mental health.

Local agencies

- ❖ Local government departments should assist and encourage community groups to organise festivals, exhibitions and competitions which **celebrate and promote local food**, food growing and food culture. Some form of accreditation scheme for those local restaurants, cafés and shops that buy local food should be considered.
- ❖ Local tourist boards should be encouraged to promote locally grown produce in hotel, bed and breakfast and other accommodation as a **regional tourist attraction**.
- ❖ Local authorities should work with local farmers' unions and community groups to provide funding, in-kind support and publicity for locally grown food **retail and distribution systems**, such as regular Farmers' Markets and local food links projects.
- ❖ Food growing initiatives linking **human and environmental health** in local authority owned or contracted catering services, should be funded by that authority.
- ❖ Community-run **food growing courses** for adults and for people with special needs should be funded and supported by relevant local agencies.
- ❖ Adequate funding to **maintain allotments**, provide them with facilities and promote them should be made available by local authorities.

3. Land and water

Central government

- ❖ The **DoE** should ensure that all land is registered and that information regarding land ownership is freely available to the public.
- ❖ The **DTI** should amend audit regulations to enable local authorities to sell or rent land to community groups for socially or environmentally beneficial purposes, even if they are not the highest bidders. It should also modify planning legislation to enable sustainable, low impact developments to be built on green belt land. To ensure that these developments do not expand beyond their original purpose, the Department should tighten up Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, binding the developer to the terms of the agreement and removing the developer's right of appeal to the Secretary of State.
- ❖ The **Environment Agency** should set limits on per capita water abstraction by water companies, set leakage targets, and penalise companies failing to comply with these limits, while ensuring that these costs are not passed on to consumers. The **DoE** should, through local authorities, provide grants to households installing greywater systems.

Local agencies

- ❖ **Land management** and use should be co-ordinated among local government departments, and local communities should be involved in decision making.
- ❖ Local communities should be involved in **managing parks** and encouraged to grow food in them, where appropriate. Local authorities should also consider providing additional facilities in parks, such as cafés and garden centres, linked to food growing.
- ❖ Existing and new **allotments** should be planned as close as possible to people's homes (the Local Government Management Board recommends a maximum distance of 200m).
- ❖ All local authority owned and **managed land** should be maintained with minimum, and ideally no, use of chemicals and other unsustainable inputs.
- ❖ As a part of **planning permission**, local authorities should require developers to clean land adjacent to their development to a standard suitable for food growing.
- ❖ Relevant local government departments should work with local academic institutions and laboratories to provide urban food growers with **soil testing** at subsidised rates.
- ❖ Where feasible, **local authority owned farms** should be divided into smaller plots to allow larger numbers of people access to food growing, either on a commercial basis or as part of a training package. New tenants should be required to manage land organically as part of the terms of the lease, and existing tenants should be encouraged (if possible, financially) to convert to more sustainable systems.

How to use this report

The report's first section begins by outlining why food growing is important and relevant to urban sustainability today. The main body of the document is divided into sections which more or less mirror the responsibilities of central and local government, and health and education authorities. The aim is to demonstrate to policy makers in each of these fields how, specifically, growing food in cities can help them to achieve their respective policy objectives. The last section of the report describes some of the practical issues, such as securing land, water, money, equipment, knowledge and skills, which food growers encounter and provides a list of useful sources of information.

One of the main virtues of urban food growing is that it integrates a great many policy objectives into a single activity. In other words, the many benefits of growing food in cities are intimately interconnected, and trying to extract particular strands may lead to some apparently arbitrary categorisations.

The contribution of urban food growing to, for example, increasing regular physical activity could be categorised as a health benefit, but also a useful feature of leisure. Equally, urban food growing's role in encouraging volunteering could be categorised as a leisure activity and as training for job skills, and so on.

Likewise with the case studies. Even though the case studies throughout the report appear in particular chapters, helping to illustrate the benefits being described for that policy area, most of the case studies actually exemplify most of the benefits in the report as a whole.

Terminology

Although not strictly accurate, for ease of expression and for want of a better alternative, the report refers to the industrialised countries as the 'North' or 'Northern countries' and to the non-industrialised or industrialising countries as the 'South' or 'Southern countries.'

The phrase 'food growing' encompasses the production of all manner of foodstuffs - including fruit and vegetable growing, livestock rearing and beekeeping - and at all levels, from commercial horticulture, to community projects, to small scale hobby gardening. It was felt that this phrase describes the range of projects covered in the report better than the more common 'agriculture' or 'farming,' both of which have different connotations.

Definitions of 'towns,' 'cities,' 'villages' and so on are notoriously variable and the subject of lengthy academic disagreement. The United Nations refers to them together as 'human settlements.' As this report is intended to encompass all centres of human activity it should, technically, be entitled **Growing Food in Human Settlements**. However, as this is somewhat unmemorable, and as the examples of projects included tend to be in large towns and cities, the report substitutes 'cities' instead.

1 Newtown Community Garden

c/o Peter Burton, 52 Manchester Rd, New Town, Reading, Berks, RG1 3QN

Tel: 0118 9266502 (Simon) or 0118 9623220 (Peter)

Contacts: Simon Mortimer or Peter Burton

A community garden project linking in with city wide Local Agenda 21

Background: In 1994 a local Agenda 21 partnership was formed between Reading Council and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to encourage participation at the local level. A series of neighbourhood GLOBE (Go Local On a Better Environment) groups were set up comprising members of Tenants' Associations, schools, environmental groups and churches, who meet regularly to discuss neighbourhood issues and concerns, define their needs and explore ways of achieving them. In Newtown, a very built up, populated area of Reading, the group decided that there was a need for a community garden.

Site: A local publican has let the group use a 3/4 acre plot of land behind his pub. Probably once a Victorian garden, the site is surrounded by high walls. A few old orchard trees and a hazel coppice still exist. Access is limited, through the pub's beer garden.

Participants: A core of about 60 people, city-wide, attend GLOBE meetings and many more participate when activities are taking place. About 30 people are involved in the community garden.

Activities: Activities began in the spring of 1995. Half the land was laid out in vegetable plots for individuals to cultivate, and the other half left as a wildlife area. To maintain interest, the group created a 'motivation border' around the allotments; an area where they started growing in a small way at once, so that the results would soon be visible while the rest of the site was being developed. In Autumn 1995 the group celebrated their first harvest with a pumpkin party, complete with soup, lanterns and a barbecue, in the beer garden.

Funding and support: WWF part fund two local authority Agenda 21 posts as well as the production of materials and publications. Newtown GLOBE receives some funds from the council and also recently won a £500 grant from British Telecom.

Benefits and problems: The garden has acted as an entry point for people to become involved in other activities of the GLOBE group. It has served to demonstrate just what can be grown in a small area and has inspired a local youth group to create its own garden outside the youth centre. Uncertainties about the long term use of the land (which belongs to the Brewery) have caused slight concern. It has also been difficult to involve people in the maintenance of the garden's communal areas.

1.1 Why grow food?

*They are sick that
surfeit with too
much, as they that
starve with nothing.
Shakespeare,
Merchant of Venice
I ii 5*

Food is at the centre of our lives, both biologically and culturally. Food is a source of enjoyment and of nourishment; but it is also at the core of many contradictions and problems in current society.

Nearly 800 million in the southern hemisphere - the South - are chronically malnourished.¹ Although poverty in the UK does not reach the depths of deprivation suffered in much of the world, nonetheless many poor communities in this country experience food poverty. People living on low incomes not only lack money to buy healthy food, but may also have no access to good food shops and markets.² Many poor neighbourhoods have become food retail deserts, avoided by supermarkets unwilling to invest in these areas of high crime and low spending ability.

Food, jobs and skills

The countryside, which many still think of as a haven from urban squalor, has also become a kind of desert. Farming occupies some 76% of the land, but in 1993 it employed only 2.2% of the population.³ The food industry as a whole, of course, employs many more people and contributes a substantial proportion of the country's wealth, as measured by conventional standards. However jobs in food manufacturing, retailing and catering tend to be unskilled, of low status and poorly paid - jobs that do little to inspire an enthusiasm for food and for careers in the food sector - not quite the engine of economic growth that some claim.

This disregard for food is endemic in the UK. Cooking is no longer a compulsory part of the educational curriculum, and often children leave school unable to cook a basic meal for themselves, let alone embark on a career in catering.⁴ As a nation of town and city dwellers, our understanding of how food is produced and prepared is being eroded - convenience foods now account for nearly 35% of the average food bill.⁵ Many people are more familiar with heavily processed corn chips than with the fresh cob. Meat has become simply a constituent of the pre-fab meal in all its hygienic glory; its links with the once breathing, moving, hairy animal are now discreetly forgotten. It is rare to see food growing where we live and where we work, even in open spaces such as parks, and traditional urban allotments are under threat.

Food, health and the environment

The BSE crisis of 1996 did, however, for the first time, alert many people to the dangers of intensive farming for animal and human health. Despite this, most people still remain largely ignorant of the environmental impact of intensive farming. Chemical residues from this type of agriculture not only turn up in food but also pollute rivers and

streams, and destroy wildlife and the habitats on which wildlife depends.

Nor is it only intensive farming which damages the environment. Modern food processing uses non-renewable energy and materials, just like any other modern industry, and generates a significant amount of waste. According to **Which?** magazine, over 150 million tonnes of plastic, paper and glass are used each year for packaging food.⁶ Today's retailing and food distribution systems, relying on motorised transport and, increasingly, air freight, exact a heavy environmental toll in terms of fossil fuel use, air pollution and damage to wildlife habitats through road building.⁷

But perhaps the best known problem linked to food is our health. Most people are now aware of the links between Britain's high fat diet and its notorious position near the top of the international league table of deaths from coronary heart disease.⁸ Increasingly, our low consumption of vegetables and fruit is also being linked to coronary heart disease and to some cancers. And although we are now eating less food than we were fifty years ago, we are growing steadily fatter.⁹ This is not only because our diets tend to be fatty and sugary, and therefore calorie dense, but also because very few of us are physically active on a regular basis. Nearly one-third of adult men and over two-thirds of women cannot sustain a walk of three miles an hour (a normal pace) on a modest slope.¹⁰

Food and culture

At the same time, never before have we been so interested in food, which seems now to have become a spectator sport - part of the leisure industry. Bookshops shelves are laden with bestselling, sleekly illustrated cookery books, and TV ratings for celebrity chef-hosted cookery programmes have soared. The tourist and heritage industries are also intimately linked to food, with food guides for almost every conceivable taste and location. And yet regional specialities and local dishes are almost an endangered species as standardised 'exotic' and 'traditional-style' meals fill the refrigerators of hotel and restaurant chains all over the country.

These contradictions are played out upon our bodies; as we lose real contact with food and with the land that produces it, so too have we lost touch with our bodies and their needs. While much of the nation is gaining weight at an alarming rate, eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are growing.¹¹

Regular contact with real food seems to have been planned out of our lives. Growing food is one of the best ways of getting back in touch with everything that food can mean to us. A real 'hands-on' activity, it can (re)educate us about food's links with the living environment, give us direct access to fresh produce and develop our practical and social skills. And food growing is adaptable to nearly everybody's circumstances; from a window box to several acres,

2

Urban Oasis

Arid Lands Initiative, Macpelagh Works, Burnley Road, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 8AU

Tel: 01422 843807

Contact: Anthony Milroy

A food growing partnership between a housing estate and an international environmental organisation

Background: Apple Tree Court, a housing estate in Salford, suffers problems typical of many inner city areas; unemployment, poverty, poor infrastructure, limited access to good, affordable food, and few green spaces. The **Arid Lands Initiative** has documented the ancient but intact urban household food production systems of Sana'a and Shibam, World Heritage Cities in Yemen. Home to the world's first high rise tower blocks, these cities have none of the accompanying problems to be found in British estates. The residents still practice intensive, sustainable agriculture which also helps knit the community together. This model of food production is in fact very similar to the traditional British orchard system common until the 18th century. Arid Lands was convinced that many social and environmental problems in British estates could be alleviated by redeveloping traditional food growing systems on derelict land. A partnership was formed between the Apple Tree Court's residents and Arid Lands, to regenerate land surrounding the estate, provide fresh produce for local people and offer meaningful employment to the community.

Site: Over one acre of land surrounding the estate.

Participants: Residents, young people on probation, local schools and the unemployed.

Activities: In 1988 tenants formed a tenants' association; this has now developed into a Tenant Managed Company (TMC), responsible for the estate's finances and maintenance. The residents also formed a credit union to exchange local skills and to administer savings and loans. They then fenced the area around the block and, with the help of young people on probation, cleared the area, planted trees and created a wildlife garden, pond, seating area and allotments. 1995 saw the first harvest; the food was given to the main workers and sold to residents for 10p/lb, the profits going into the TMC's account. Local primary schools are being given Tree Growing Kits for planting out on the estate and on their own school grounds. The residents are now planning to make use of waste heat from the building, by growing food in polytunnels on the roof and to turn the ground floor of the building into a community café and a base for a food co-op. The project's work and experiences are being documented on broadcast quality video as an awareness raising and training resource.

Funding and support: Funding has been provided by the Council (Probation and Youth and Community Training Services), the Civic Trust, the Department of the Environment, the Body Shop Foundation and Macdonalds. Local contractors have provided some in kind support such as diggers. The remaining funding is budgeted for in the TMC's accounts.

Benefits and problems: In 1993-4 the Council tried to develop the land for housing; residents protested and, with support from David Bellamy and the local media, a compromise was reached. The Council were persuaded instead to erect an extended security fence for the tenants. Now 5 or 6 other estates plan to follow Apple Tree Court's example, forming TMCs.

from conventional gardening to full-scale organic, from a few herbs and a tomato plant to bees, chickens and goats.

- 1 Committee on World Food Security, *draft*, Food and Agriculture Organisation, Rome Jan 1996.
- 2 *Food and Low Income: a practical guide for advisors and supporters working with families and young people on low incomes*, National Food Alliance 1994
- 3 *Agriculture in the UK*, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1994
- 4 Sean Stitt, Centre for Consumer Education and Research, *Schooling for Capitalism: Food Education and the National Curriculum*, John Moores' University, Liverpool, discussion paper, 1995
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 quoted in *Watch Your Waste*, Open University and Waste Watch, 1993, The Open University.
- 7 *The Food Miles Report: the dangers of long distance food transport*, SAFE Alliance, 1994
- 8 *Coronary Heart Disease Statistics*, British Heart Foundation, 1996
- 9 *Obesity: Reversing the Increasing Problem of Obesity in England*; A report from the Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Forces, Department of Health, 1995
- 10 Health Education Authority and Sports Council, *Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey: Main Findings*, HEA and Sports Council, 1992
- 11 Figures range from one in 100 at a girl's private boarding school to one in 550 at a London, Comprehensive (Eating Disorders Association, personal communication).

3

St Ann's Allotment Campaign

Technical Aid for Nottingham Communities (TANC), 16 Robin Hood Chase, St Ann's NG3 4EZ

Tel: 0115 950 9684

Contact: June Greenway

Pressure group campaigning for better management of old allotment site

Background: The St Ann's area has some of the oldest and largest allotment sites in Britain and has been running since the 1840s. The Council manages the site, but the plots are classified as non statutory - this insecurity is combined with high rents and poor management. Although the local authority has an Allotments Charter, committed to raising standards, improving security and consulting with allotment holders, little has actually been implemented. Allotment take up is now declining and there are 300 vacant sites. Four main reasons for this decline have been identified: lack of information, poor security, poor maintenance and rumours of development (which reduce motivation). Some land has already been lost to development.

In 1993, one of the allotment holders approached the Nottingham Technical Aid Centre, a City Challenge funded organisation working on social and environmental projects, for assistance. In response, the St Ann's Allotment Campaign (SAAC) was set up to campaign for improvements to the site, to increase take up of allotments, and return all plots to a cultivable state.

Site: The St Ann's allotments actually consist of three sites. Although the soil quality is poor, gardeners have, over time improved conditions and even terraced the steeper hillsides.

Participants: One member of staff from TANC and a committee of four allotment holders work in partnership with the Nottingham Garden Holders' Association (NGHA). The group is in contact with over 200 plot holders.

Activities: In 1993 SAAC published a report, *St Ann's Allotments, a Vision for the Future*, outlining the situation and presenting its recommendations; these were largely ignored. In 1994, SAAC published an update, equally thorough in its scope and outlining the many community functions which allotments serve. Since this second report was published, the Campaign secured funding from the City Council and City Challenge for fencing. An allotments working party was also set up, comprising city councillors and officials, SAAC and the NGHA. The campaign is currently fundraising to employ a full time development worker to work on the project and to establish city-wide links with other organisations.

Funding and support: The Campaign has been funded by Nottingham City Challenge through TANC. There is still a need for more money before many of the recommendations can be implemented, of which the employment of a development worker is the current priority.

Benefits and problems: The promotion of allotments faces problems typical throughout the country; lack of funding, lack of interest in and appreciation of the importance of allotments, and land use pressure. The project has, however, served to increase awareness of the issue and has been assisted in its attempts by press coverage on local radio and in local papers.

1.2 Why in cities ?

Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

**The Bible,
Zephaniah, 3.1**

Most of us in the UK now live in cities. If we are become involved in growing food, cities and towns are where it will have to be. What is more, growing food in urban areas can make an important contribution to improving the quality and sustainability of life there.

People and cities

Long before Dick Whittington set off in search of gold-paved London streets, cities have been seen as places of opportunity and excitement. Art, innovation and ideas have flourished. Fame and fortune is there to be grabbed. The social constraints placed upon an individual by family, neighbours, class and tradition can be relaxed, if not completely put away. As an old German proverb has it, **Stadtluft macht frei** - 'city air makes you free.'¹

By the turn of the century the majority of the world's population will have succumbed to the various attractions of living in cities.² According to United Nations projections by the year 2000 there will be around 45 cities with a population of 5 million or more - 34 of which will be in the South.³ In the UK 89% of people live in urban areas, on 7.7% of the land.⁴

Yet, in the last thirty years, between two-and-a-half and three million people have left Britain's cities - and the bigger the city, the faster it is emptying. This exodus has contributed to the erosion of community identity and cohesion, the destruction of the inner city and a rise in crime. It has also contributed to a wide variety of rural problems such as unemployment, environmental degradation and social tension.⁵

This flight from the city seems likely to continue. A 1992 survey by Mintel⁶ showed that 4 million people expected to leave the cities for a more rural area over the next 5 years, and over 13 million people wanted to but were unable to do so.

Some people welcome this trend, arguing that 'the cultural role assigned to cities is greatly exaggerated...For most people who live or work in cities, the cross-fertilisation and social interchange which is supposed to be the essence of urbanism simply does not occur. Most people inhabit small, sealed worlds, spending an increasing amount of time at work and at home - the latter mainly watching television. The greatest enthusiasts for urban living are all too frequently found to have a weekend home, somewhere distant and much greener.'⁷

Others, however, note that the joys of rural life are somewhat overrated. Unemployment is high, as is the fragmentation of rural communities. According to MIND, social isolation and unemployment are causing a rise in mental health problems in rural areas.⁸

Most of all though, the anti-urban argument says less about the potential of cities than it does about the actual, and unattractive position of many British cities today. Many of them **are** unattractive places to live - at least in parts - but this is not innately true of all cities.

Cities and the environment

At present, most cities are highly unsustainable. Although they only cover 2% of the earth's surface, cities consume 75% of its resources.⁹ The social, environmental and economic impact of a city, country or even an individual upon world resources has been described as the 'footprint.'¹⁰

London's total foot print extends to about 125 times its surface area of 159,000 hectares, to nearly 20 million hectares. Home to only 12% of Britain's population, London nevertheless requires the equivalent of the entire productive land area of Britain to sustain itself.¹¹

Why is this so? Partly because we use more than we need and partly because we do not use what we do need efficiently. According to the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food calculations,¹² London requires 2,400,000 tonnes of food a year, which it imports from all over the world. Every day, London disposes of 6,600 tonnes of household waste of which only some 5% is recycled,¹³ even though much of this is compostable organic matter.

In effect, in their present form, cities are like parasites, feeding upon a global hinterland which is increasingly unable to sustain them. But the relationship is not intrinsically an exploitative one. Indeed, cities are potentially highly sustainable, and one aim of this report is to show that through urban food growing, the country can, in a sense, be brought to the town - to the advantage of both. In the words of the European Union Green Paper on the Urban Environment¹⁴ 'Recreating the diverse multi-functional city of the citizen's Europe is ... a social and economic project for which 'quality of life' is not a luxury but essential.'

1 Herbert Girardet, *The Gaia Atlas of Cities*, Gaia Books Ltd 1992

2 *Earth Summit '92: the United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro 1992*, Regency Press Corporation 1992

3 United Nations *Global Outlook 2000: An Economic, Social and Environmental Perspective*, United Nations Publications 1990

4 *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal* Comedia/Demos, 1995

5 David Nicholson Lord, *Calling in the Country: Ecology, Parks and Urban Life*, Working Paper 4, Comedia/Demos, 1994

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7 *ibid.*

8 MIND, *Mental Health Statistics*, MIND, undated

9 Herbert Girardet, *op.cit.*

10 UNED UK *Living within our Means: Reducing Britain's International Agricultural Footprint*, UNED-UK September 1994.

11 Herbert Girardet, *Urban Growth and the Environment*, Congress Report, Hong Kong, 1995

12 *ibid.*

13 *Watch your Waste*, Open University and Waste Watch, The Open University 1993

14 Commission of the European Communities, *Green Paper on the Urban Environment*, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 1990

4

Wootton Primary School

Hillside, Wootton by Woodstock, Oxon OX7 1DX

Tel: 01993 811979

Contact: Ruth Hirsch

A garden twinning scheme linking an English and Thai primary school

Background: Wootton by Woodstock is a small village. In 1983, Ruth, herself a teacher by training, started a school garden to introduce children to environmental and developmental issues. The first harvest yielded so many lettuces that the group realised they could sell them. Concerned about famine in the South, the children decided to send the money abroad. Ruth's son, an agricultural development worker in Thailand, made contact with Mok Taew primary school in central Thailand which also grew produce, of necessity, for the school lunches, and an exchange was set up. For Ruth, the aim 'has always been to raise intercultural awareness and to send help where it is needed. But it has been essential throughout to stress to students that it is a reciprocal programme, and that fund raising and transfer is part of a partnership project, to avoid reinforcing the attitude of 'the rich helping the poor.'

Site: Plots on Ruth's land.

Participants: Schoolchildren from Wootton Primary School.

Activities: The children grow vegetables which they take home or sell; profits go to Mok Taew and other overseas schoolgardens. The children exchange letters (translated by Ruth's son), drawings, photographs and tapes recording the noises and songs of their countries. The letters once crossed; the Thai children had lost their first planting in a drought while the English crops were lost in a June frost. A **School Gardens International Newsletter** is also produced to which the pupils contribute. At a well attended yearly event, school produce is sold and older village residents tell tales of earlier times. In 1995, there was a Thai noodle stall (run by Ruth's daughter in law) and people signed up for Thai cookery classes. The event raised £145. As well as the group plots, children are encouraged to take on individual plots so that they learn about independence as well as co-operation.

Funding and support: In 1984, the Oxford Development Education Unit became interested and spread information about the project to other schools, several of which followed suit. However, the ODEU has now closed due to lack of funds. The garden has also received funding from private donors and the West Oxon County Council Business-Education link.

Benefits and problems: Food growing has been a valuable educational resource; for instance, the children measure the plots and learn about prices, profits and book-keeping. According to the school's Head, 'the best thing has been ...that children from a small rural school can see that there are other children in the world with different lifestyles and culture, and by communicating with them, we have brought their world a little nearer...We've learned a lot about vegetable production and how we can actually market our goods by selling them at our village shop. It has brought the young and the not-so-young of our village together...it has encouraged friendship and the fostering of goodwill across a big cultural divide.' The project has also been well covered by the media.

1.3 Why now?

**The fault is great in man or woman
Who steals a goose from off a common
But what can plead that mans's excuse
Who steals a common from a goose?**

**The Tickler
Magazine 1 Feb
1821**

Growing food in cities is not a new idea. This final section of the introduction outlines some of the history of urban food growing, both here and abroad, and outlines key contemporary developments which make its revival timely.

In the beginning

Which came first, farming or the city? Some believe that a demand for food by growing urban populations prompted agricultural improvements; others believe that agricultural advances made possible the evolution of cities. Either way, the development of the two has always been closely interconnected.

Despite Roman attempts at urbanisation, Britain was a hotch-potch of villages until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when cities began to take on commercial and political significance. Even then, 90% of people still lived off the land¹ and cities were closely linked with the rural areas. Significant amounts of food were also grown inside cities. Tower Hill in London, for instance, was one of the earliest market gardens, producing fruit (including grapes) for the London market.² This system of small scale urban food production continued through the Tudor and Stuart eras.

Allotments

The birth of the modern allotment movement however has later, and more political origins. In 1649, a group of people, led by Gerard Winstanley and subsequently known as the Diggers, invaded land at St George's Hill in Surrey, to protest against the enclosure, by rich landlords, of common land previously free to all for grazing and cultivation. Allotments were originally mooted to compensate for this loss of common land. The idea was controversial - while some saw allotments as generous assistance to the displaced poor, others felt that granting small allotments in lieu of common rights was fraudulent as it was 'impossible to compensate for the loss' of those 'ancient privileges belonging to the humble British peasant.' John Stuart Mill was firmly of this opinion; allotments were 'a contrivance to compensate the labourer for the insufficiency of his wages.....a method of making people grow their own poor rate.'³

The original allotments, then, were rural small holdings held by agricultural labourers. However, as the landless poor migrated for work to the rapidly industrialising cities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so the need arose for urban allotments. Land, in the form of market gardens and open spaces was plentiful. Moreover, there was already a tradition of 'Guinea' gardens among the middle classes who grew flowers and vegetables for recreation.⁴

In 1908, under the 'Small Holdings and Allotments Act, allotment provision was made mandatory. By 1918 there were between 1,300,000 and 1,500,000 allotments which together produced 2,000,000 tonnes of vegetables; this, despite the fact that the government did not launch a campaign until late on in the First World War as, like rationing, food growing was considered to be bad for morale.⁵

Mass unemployment in the late 1920s and 1930s once again prompted interest in food growing. Philanthropic schemes sprang up. One, started by the Society of Friends, which supplied fertilisers, seeds and other necessities to the unemployed, was so successful that the government took over its management. During the winter of 1930, 64,000 families were helped. The Sheffield Allotments for the Unemployed Scheme, also provided seeds and other inputs; 'the men are asked to group themselves into Societies, affording opportunities for mutual helpfulness and co-operation...In ...1933-4 over 117,500 men were assisted and 27,000 ...helped to new plots - nationally...this is a scheme to help men who help themselves - how substantial is that self-help is shown by the amount the men have contributed towards the cost of supplies - no less that £24,700 collected week by week by over 2000 secretaries.'⁶

Dig for Victory

At the outbreak of the second world war, the government was this time quick to promote allotment gardening. A broadcast by the Minister of Agriculture in 1939 proclaimed,

'Half a million more allotments properly worked will provide potatoes and vegetables that will feed another million adults and one and a half million children for eight months of the year, so let's get going and let 'Dig for Victory' be the matter for everyone with a garden or allotment and every man and woman capable of digging an allotment in their spare time.'

Local authorities took over parks, wastelands and garden lawns. Dig for Victory exhibitions were organised and demonstration plots set up. Millions of leaflets on vegetable growing were distributed, while radio talks proclaimed its virtues. To keep up morale, there were prizes for the best compost heap or vegetables,⁷ while subsidies on fertilisers were offered too. Even vicars were urged to encourage food growing in their sermons. Donors in the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia sent in seed supplies. Many pen friends were actually formed in this way - an early form of overseas exchange.⁸

During the War more than 50% of manual workers kept an allotment or a garden. Domestic

5

Crenshaw High School

5010 11th Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90043, USA

Tel: 001 213 295 4842

Contact: Food from the Hood

High school food growing and ethical business enterprise

Background: After the 1992 Los Angeles riots, students at Crenshaw met to discuss how they could help their community. They decided to restore an unused site and donate the organic food grown to the needy. With the help of the science teacher and a volunteer business consultant they formed a company, Food from the Hood. Their aims were to:

- ❖ Offer employment opportunities to young people
- ❖ Use the company as a means to give back to the community
- ❖ Show what young adults can accomplish and contribute to society
- ❖ Prove that businesses can be socially responsible and profitable
- ❖ Use experience gained to prepare for the future

Site: An overgrown garden behind the school football field.

Participants: Interested students at the school

Activities: In December 1992 the company harvested its first crop and donated it all to Helpers for the Homeless and the Hungry - a local area food bank. In July 1993, the Company attended the local organic Farmers' Market, where it sold \$150 of produce in 30 minutes. From here they decided to develop and market their own brand name salad dressing. They contacted the organisation Rebuild LA for advice, who introduced the company to two local businesses willing to help. A few months later, a leading salad dressing producer rang up and offered to help. With this assistance the Company put in place financial projections, a marketing plan and distribution strategy. 25% of all produce still goes to feed the needy. During the past 2 years, Food from the Hood has contributed holiday meals to feed 585 people.

Funding and support: Rebuild LA invested \$50,000 in the project and others have also invested.

Benefits and problems: Profits from the project have helped fund college places for the student owners. The company also helps to provide after school tutoring, college counselling and preparations for exams. Although originally established as a company which would provide jobs for youth, Food from the Hood is now helping create jobs for adults as well and tends to work with companies located in the deprived areas of Los Angeles. An additional benefit has been that the project has proved an important educational resource for the school.

hen keepers were producing about a quarter of the country's eggs, while pig keeping and pig clubs were extremely popular. In 1944, 300,000 acres of allotments and gardens were under crops, producing 1.3 million tons of food - 10% of all the food produced in Britain, or around half the nation's fruit and vegetable needs. The National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners, originally formed in 1930 and comprising 300 affiliated societies, had grown to 4000 by the end of the War.⁹

The post war period

After the War, statutory and temporary land was lost to housing, schools, hospitals and industries. The impetus, too, to grow food waned. It could not shake off its associations with wartime deprivation, while advances in living standards meant that people neither needed nor wanted the 'drudgery' of growing their own.

In 1964, the government commissioned an Inquiry into allotments policy in England and Wales. The Commission, chaired by Professor Harry Thorpe, presenting its findings in 1969, observed that the allotment offered,

'healthy physical recreation for people of all age groups and occupations. It has considerable therapeutic value in terms of mental health, especially for those living in a crowded urban environment; it affords relaxation from the stresses of modern life and yet is creative. It involves the use of numerous mental stimuli, powers of observation and planning, appraisals of beauty in form, scent and colour, the love of nature and the mystique of growing things.'¹⁰

The Thorpe Report produced 44 major recommendations, emphasising that existing legislation was vague, obsolete and incomprehensible and that an entirely new Act was needed. As the Report remarked 'An allotments authority must refer to the 1908 Act to learn of its obligations, and to the Acts of 1922 and 1950 to discover their extent; it must turn back to 1908 to understand how it may acquire the land to fulfil those obligations, and on again to the 1925 Act to find the rules relating to the disposal of such land.' Allotment holders in general were agreed that a new Act was needed - as they are today - but not one of Thorpe's recommendations has since been acted upon by any government.¹¹

Rebirth

But the 1970s brought positive changes. Ecological awareness, combined with high food prices and the

spread of vacant sites (a result of rocketing land prices), led to an interest in self-sufficiency. A 1970s study showed that 'in England and Wales the local authority waiting lists had gone up by a staggering 1600%.¹²

The 1990s are also witnessing a resurgence of interest in food growing, not just on allotments, of which there are half a million, but in gardens, schools, derelict land and window boxes. No longer are allotments seen as old-fashioned, or a patronising gesture to the poor. On the contrary, urban food growing has realigned itself with the old 'Digger' philosophy; it can be a way of challenging the prevailing, unsustainable system, of attaining - in that clichéd yet appropriate term - empowerment.

Overseas

Urban farming ignores national as well as historical boundaries. It is widespread not only in other industrialised countries, mainly in the northern hemisphere, but in the largely non-industrial South. Innovative ideas to support urban food growing projects can be found everywhere, and indeed links between projects in the North and in the South could reverse the current imbalance where the North 'helps' and 'advises' the South. In this and many other respects, the South has as much, if not more, to offer as the North.

The South

Urban agriculture in the South has grown rapidly since the 1970s - a positive outcome of an unfortunate situation. The consequences of economic 'structural adjustment,' combined variously with rapid urbanisation, poor agricultural policies, inequitable access to food, civil strife, drought, increasing populations and the almost total absence of state welfare, has forced people to survive as best they can. Urban food production is one such survival mechanism.

Around the world 800 million people engage in urban agriculture.¹³ The figures range from 10% in some large cities in North America to as many as 80% in some smaller Siberian and Asian cities.¹⁴

In Kathmandu, for instance, 37% of food producers met all their household vegetable needs and 11% all their animal produce needs from their own efforts while in Hong Kong, vegetables sufficient to meet 45% of local demand are produced on 5-6% of the total land area.¹⁵ The production systems adopted vary widely; one United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) survey identified over forty, including aquaculture, horticulture, livestock, agroforestry, silkworms, and medicinal and culinary herbs.¹⁶ A recently published book by the UNDP provides hundreds of fascinating examples of urban farming in the South.¹⁷

6**Byron Resource Centre**

Tindall Centre, Bierton Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1HU

Tel: 01296 393363 x 266

Contact: Lee Roach

A food growing project by people with mental health problems.

Background: The Tindall Centre is part of the NHS and caters for people with mental health problems. The Centre offers clients a variety of activities, such as conservation work. In 1993 the Centre started an organic allotments project using two Council allotments.

The site: The project now cultivates six allotments rented from the Council.

Participants: About sixteen clients are involved, of mixed ages and gender.

Activities: Clients work on the site one day a week under the supervision of two instructors. In 1995 the group harvested ten large sacks of potatoes, crates of onions and runner beans and more. The group members took some of the produce home but donated much of it to the local Age Concern luncheon club, who were very appreciative and sent biscuits and a thank you card signed by everyone, to the group.

Funding and support: The project is funded by the NHS trust. Two staff are employed.

Benefits and problems: The learning of new skills is part of the treatment programme and prepares them for living in the community. The clients enjoy working on the site - as Lee Roach says 'they wouldn't be coming week after week if they weren't.' In particular, the clients value the chance to give to others and to contribute to the wider community. There are currently plans to set up a sheltered workscheme with a local charity.

However, urban farmers in the South face obstacles just as they do here. Research and support is usually non-existent. Access problems to land, water, fertiliser, credit, and markets combine with a lack of organisation among urban farmers to compound the difficulty.¹⁸ In the name of 'progress,' some governments discourage or even ban urban food growing. It is ironic that industrialising countries are seeking to shake off their 'primitive' ways, just as a resurgence of food growing is taking place in the industrial and post-industrial world.

The North

Twelve countries, including Britain, are affiliated to the International Office of Allotment and Leisure Societies (Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux), which represents 230,000 members. In contrast with Britain, European allotments are a focus for family activity and many plots have small chalets where families may spend their summer holidays. Allotment holders are also becoming increasingly aware of their links with environmental movement and there are moves towards organic gardening and involvement in school gardening activities. In recognition of the important role it plays, the International Office receives funding from the European Union.

Today in the United States of America, community gardening is also extremely popular. A report by the US Community Gardening Association notes: 'The popularity of community gardening over the last decade was for the most part a response to rising food costs. Many gardeners had a short term goal: food production for the family. Today's community gardens are more diverse and are successful public amenities, many made beautiful by ornamental plantings and public facilities of various kinds. Participants have developed a stronger bond to the land.' The report goes on to argue that, with three out of four households in urban areas expressing an interest in community gardening, increased support for such projects is clearly warranted.¹⁹

The current international context

Agenda 21 is the blueprint for sustainable development which emerged from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. At its heart lies the belief that 'integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future.'²⁰

In June 1996 the world's governments met at the **Habitat II** conference in Istanbul to 'commit

the world's leaders to making the world's cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, equitable and sustainable.' As a contribution to that conference, the UNDP commissioned and published a 300 page book on urban food growing, entitled **Urban Agriculture: Food Jobs and Sustainable Cities**.²¹

And in Rome in November 1996, the United Nations **World Food Summit** will take place to discuss ways of addressing global food and agriculture problems, including by 'promot(ing) better dietary intake and improv(ing) the quantity, quality and variety of local food supplies through gardens, *urban agriculture*...'.²²

In Europe

European environmental, social and economic policies are beginning to reflect Agenda 21 thinking, while the Commission's URBAN initiative promotes the idea of cities as diverse, vibrant, and environmentally sustainable centres of humanity. Local governments throughout Europe have participated in the European Sustainable Towns and Cities Network and the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Healthy Cities Network, part of WHO's **Health for All by 2000** initiative.

The United Kingdom

Following from Agenda 21, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development was set up to review progress on its implementation. Government signatories (including the UK) prepare a national sustainable development report each year. The UK Government has also produced its environment White Paper **This Common Inheritance**, an Environmental Health Action Plan, and has launched the now independent **Going for Green** initiative to promote environmental awareness. Government's health promotion policy, as represented in the White Paper, **The Health of the Nation**, sets targets to reduce a number of diet-related diseases, and to improve mental health, and government has also recently funded the Health Education Authority to promote regular physical activity - of which gardening is a component. Over 50% of local authorities have, in consultation with local communities, produced local Agenda 21 plans²³ and some are promoting gardening as part of that plan.

At citizen level

Membership of green groups in Britain is estimated at around five million, an increase of two-thirds since the late 1980s and approximately 8-10 times the combined membership of the three main political parties.²⁴ Environmental issues took up

7

Westthorn Allotment Association/Cuthelton Lilybank Employment

Group 57 Macduff Street, Glasgow G31 4TG

Tel: 0141 554 7401

Contact: Jim Lister

A project planning to provide a local food co-op with surplus allotment produce.

Background: The Cuthelton Lilybank area is in a deprived part of Glasgow. Jim Lister, the community worker, is involved with a number of community groups including tenants of a local allotment site. Many plot holders grow more food than they can eat and wanted to do something with the surplus. Following individual and group discussions, more formal committee type meetings and visits to other projects, the group decided to provide the local, newly developing food co-op with surplus produce.

Site: A 65 plot allotment which has been tenanted for 60 years.

Participants: Over 50 plot holders, most of whom are male, unemployed, retired or on very low incomes and who live within 2 miles of the allotment. The majority are over 40.

Activities: The Adult Training Centre (which provides horticultural activities for people with learning difficulties), funded by the local Further Education college, is running evening training classes for plot holders. These have been very popular and demand has outstripped supply. The plot holders want to develop a demonstration allotment on a piece of derelict land adjoining the site, which can be visited by local schools, and a garden for the visually impaired. They are also hoping to plant some of the land to native Scottish woodland trees. These would then be sold on to schools and community organisations for planting. With the assistance of the City Council parks department, the Westthorn Plots Association has reclaimed approximately one hectare of derelict land adjacent to the plots. This is being prepared for use as a tree nursery and demonstration plot.

The local food co-op has recently opened in several venues once a week and has over 200 members. It supplies herbs, spices and pulses, more 'conventional' familiar food and fruit and vegetables (bought in from the market). The allotment holders will be supplementing these vegetables bought in and will be paid in kind with seeds and equipment. Co-op volunteers have received training in food handling. LETS members have also made contact with the group.

Funding and support: £1,500 from Glasgow City Council and the Strathclyde Regional Council has been donated for the co-op. Other sums, ranging from £200 to £1750 have been donated by the local church, a trade union, and the Glasgow co-operative wholesale society. A local youth project loans the co-op a minibus.

Benefits and problems: The plot holders have, over time, built up a co-operative relationship with the community worker which has been vital in setting up this project. Until recently the site suffered from vandalism but a City Council funded secure storage site (which also doubles up as a meeting place), has reduced its incidence. The disposal of rubbish is currently a problem as there is no skip on site. The co-op cum allotment project is still in its early days but the group has already established a good range of contacts.

34% of MP's mail in 1993, compared with 3% in 1987.²⁵

Even with this brief and incomplete summary, it is clear that at international, national and local level the policy statements and public awareness already exist to support initiatives which tackle environmental, health, social and economic issues in an integrated and coherent manner. The task is to turn these aims into actions and urban food growing can be one way of doing so. Food growing is not **the** answer. But it can be an important part of the solution.

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3 quoted in Crouch and Ward, *The Allotment, Its Landscape and Culture*, Mushroom Bookshop 1994

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5 *ibid.*

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7 Carlisle City Council, exhibition material on World War II to tie in with the 1995 VE Day celebrations. Contact Carlisle City Council for more information

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13 United Nations Development Programme, *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*, publication series for Habitat II, volume one, UNDP, 1996

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8

Bradford Allotments Action Group (BAAG)

131 Lonsdale Road, Bradford BD3 0AP

Tel: 01274 743365

Contact: Roland Arnison or Steven O'Keeffe

An Allotments Action Group campaigning for allotments in Bradford

Background: The BAAG was formed in 1994 to campaign against the Council's 'rationalisation' of allotment sites as part of its UDP. Their aims are to:

- ❖ Promote allotment use on existing sites and campaign for more new allotments
- ❖ Campaign for more funding for allotments and for improvements on existing sites
- ❖ Break the vicious cycle of: lack of official support - reduced tenancy - dereliction and vandalism - low morale and prestige - lack of interest - lack of official support
- ❖ Support existing tenants and community projects on allotments
- ❖ Promote more food growing in Bradford generally

Site: Allotments throughout Bradford

Participants: Around 100 people are members, a small core of which are activists.

Activities: Most of the work centres on the run down inner city allotments which are most caught up in the vicious cycle (above) and threatened with closure. Work has focused on campaigning, building confidence amongst allotment tenants, presenting an upbeat image of allotments, and helping community groups start allotment projects. In November 1995 the AAG and Community Service workers focused efforts on an especially visible but otherwise typical low tenancy inner city allotment site: they cut back privet hedges, generally tidied up the site, and leafleted 1000 local households to advertise the plots. A tenant also put up signs at each entrance identifying and advertising the site. Since then, most of the derelict plots have been tenanted (including by two group projects), there is a livelier atmosphere on site and there is talk of setting up a self-management committee.

Funding and support: BAAG received a grant from the local health authority and a £50 start up grant from the Bradford Environmental Action Trust (see **Sources of useful information**).

Benefits and problems: The AAG has managed to persuade the Council to end its 'rationalisation' process and has demonstrated the rewards of promoting allotments. Dereliction, vandalism and the existing council allotment strategy are all challenges which the AAG is continuing to address. Funding and more activists would speed the process of change greatly.

2.1 Community development

Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans.

John Lennon

Affirming identity and active citizenship

Chapter 23 of Agenda 21 states that, 'One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public decision making ...This includes the need of individuals, groups and organisations to participate in ..those [decisions] which potentially affect the communities in which they live and work.'¹

Community development is the phrase generally used to cover this democratic process. According to the Home Office's Voluntary Services Unit² the term 'covers a range of community based activities, including self-help, community action, and community planning. Community development can be a means of achieving the objectives of a wide variety of Government and local authority programmes....It also has the potential to play a significant part in the regeneration of inner cities, where concern has already been expressed about the failure of some initiatives to involve local people and reduce their dependence on statutory and other services.'

Food growing projects are a very practical form of urban community development - a way of involving people in an activity which can make a visible difference to the quality of city life. Often, the perceived 'sameness' of the urban environment can lead to a sense of placelessness and social isolation. Food growing projects can act as a focus for the community to come together, generate a sense of 'can-do', and also help create a sense of local distinctiveness - a sense that each particular place, however apparently ordinary, is unique and has value.³

Food growing has always had its sociable aspects; some allotment associations have social events such as an annual Dinner and Dances⁴ while others, such as the Uplands Allotment Association in Birmingham,⁵ even have a clubhouse bar. Food growing projects can provide a good excuse for a celebration - see cases 1, 19, 33). Food growers also value the opportunity to give away produce, and swap seeds, news and advice. These social interactions can create a sense of belonging and instill pride in local identity. They are also a way for people to find out about other services and activities in the area.

This combination of community empowerment, attachment to the locality and a sense of 'ownership' can stimulate more involvement in local issues and lead to effective action to defend and improve community amenities (see cases 3, 8).

Combating discrimination

Those from ethnic minorities are more likely to be on low pay or unemployed than their white counterparts.⁶ People with disabilities are discriminated against in the work place; around 40%

are unemployed as opposed to 9%, in 1992, for non disabled people.⁷ Women's hourly work rates, are still, on average, only 80% of men's⁸ and there is also growing evidence of discrimination against older people. Groups facing discrimination in employment are also those most likely to suffer from society's prejudices in general, and from decaying urban infrastructure and crime.

Food growing can be a way for people not only to regain pride in their identity and develop a positive self-image, but also to promote that positive image to others. A focus on the common experience of food can also be a powerful way of breaking down barriers between people.

Ethnic groups

By growing food from their own culture, many people of ethnic origin can begin to reclaim and revalue their cultural identity. The Black Environment Network promotes 'multicultural' gardens with a range of plants reflecting the cultures of a particular community.⁹ Ashram Acres (see case 29) has taken the idea one step further and has been growing plants which not only reflect the participants' diverse origins but which they, and others, can eat. Other projects specifically involving ethnic groups include cases 28, 32, 35, 38.

Such projects need care since, for some, food growing (and all physical labour) can be seen as demeaning. Done sensitively, however, food growing is a way for people to regain confidence in their abilities and pride in their culture. Food growing projects can also link up with food fairs or tie in with traditional celebrations, such as Diwali and Id.

The elderly

Food growing is an area where the elderly are often more skilled than younger people. Nearly two thirds of allotment holders are over the age of fifty.¹⁰ For many elderly people, gardening is a way of getting out, meeting the neighbours and taking some exercise. And food growing projects, such as Newcastle's Drift Permaculture Project (see case 9) can also be a way for older gardeners to share their experience with younger people, so ensuring that these skills do not die out, and helping to break down age barriers.

This idea has a precedent. In the 1970s, Lewisham Council in London¹¹ ran a successful project which paired elderly, experienced allotment holders with young people. One additional benefit of the scheme was that vandalism was reduced (see also below).

Women

In less industrialised countries household vegetable production is almost exclusively a female concern,

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Drift Permaculture Project, John Marley Centre, Muscott Grove, off Wickham View, Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 6TT

Tel: 0191 200 4735

Contact: Ed Tyler

Background: The idea of developing a community garden on the grounds of a local college, the John Marley Centre (part of Newcastle College), was developed in 1994 by Ed Tyler, a local permaculture activist. The aims were to:

- ❖ Provide a focus for gardening activities in Newcastle and to inspire other projects
- ❖ Demonstrate permaculture principles
- ❖ Involve children, those with special needs, the elderly and others
- ❖ Act as a training facility, providing courses and events
- ❖ Work with the adjacent Drift Garden Centre which can provide low cost plants and seeds.
- ❖ Build partnerships with local community organisations, playgroups, local schools, Newcastle College, Mental Health Matters, the local authority and special needs charities
- ❖ Link in with recycling activities, LETS schemes, box schemes etc.
- ❖ Link up with the Centre's kitchen so that children learn to cook the food they grow

Site: The 1/2 acre site acts as a focus, but activities are starting up all over Newcastle.

Participants: These include local unemployed people, supervised students with learning difficulties, the local Allotments Association and primary school children. A management committee largely consisting of unemployed people has been formed.

Activities: Fruit trees have been planted and a living hedge of nutting and fruiting species laid. A greenhouse has been bought to be used by school children as an outdoor classroom. There are two beehives on the site. Projects connected to the Drift site have also started up. A development worker is working on gardening activities with Bengali women, and the group has visited a similar project in Bradford. Chickens are being kept on a nearby allotment plot as a way of stimulating interest and involvement among older allotment holders. The South Tyneside Groundwork Trust has also set up a similar project in the Jarrow area of Gateshead. In 1995 Ed held two 'Garden in the City' courses and is hoping to hold a Permaculture Design Course in 1996.

Funding and support: £9000 was donated by Newcastle City Challenge, £2000 by BT Environment Week and £2500 by Barclays Age Resource, a Barclays fund managed by Age Concern; this last is awarded to develop processes whereby older people can share their skills with younger ones.

Problems and benefits: Nearly 1000 children have taken part in activities on site. The project is highly committed to involving elderly people in the project as a way of creating intergenerational exchange. This has proved difficult, and the project is working to develop ways of achieving this more effectively in the future.

while in many parts of Europe, vegetable growing is a family activity involving men and women.¹² However, in the UK, the allotment has traditionally been a male domain, although this is slowly changing.¹³ One major difference between traditional allotment gardening and group food growing projects is that women tend to be more involved in the latter, and have often been responsible for initiating the project in the first place (see cases 4, 15, 19, 24, 27). By giving women experience at the beginning of the food chain - growing it - rather than at the end - cooking it - food growing projects can help broaden women's awareness of their actual and potential abilities.

People with disabilities

Many projects, (see cases 9, 10, 26, 30) have involved physically disabled people in their food growing activities with great success, and a variety of tools designed for wheel chair users and others are available (see under Horticultural Therapy in **Sources of useful information**). Food growing focuses on what people **can** do, rather than on what they cannot, and for some, the training and experience gained through involvement in projects can lead onto employment. Disabled people who may simply continue to grow food for a hobby, can, like everyone else, benefit from the sense of achievement and satisfaction it can bring.

The **Health** section also examines some of ways in which food growing can help people with mental health difficulties achieve independence and interact with 'normal' sections of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ In its various schemes to support community development projects (including the **Make a Difference Initiative**), the Voluntary and Community Division of the Department for National Heritage should seek out and fund food growing projects, particularly those which involve groups facing discrimination.

Local agencies

- ❖ Where appropriate city-wide networks already exist, food production should be integrated into their agenda. Local Agenda 21 groups could, for example, use the level of local food growing activity and the availability of suitable land for the purpose as key sustainability indicators. Where such networks do not exist, they should be established.
- ❖ Community workers - whether from local authority, health, or elsewhere - should

explore the possibilities of using food growing projects as a way of breaking down barriers between groups and stimulating a sense of community identity and empowerment.

Preventing crime and rehabilitating offenders

In 1992, the cost of crime was £13 billion and, in 1994, the cost of youth crime was £7 billion.¹⁴ To reduce the financial and, more important, social costs of crime, it is widely acknowledged that prevention is better than cure, but also that 'cure' - in the form of rehabilitation - is also essential.

A research team from King's College, London, recently concluded that one of the most powerful factors in curbing crime and vandalism on problem housing estates was the presence of a garden.¹⁵ Schools (see cases 15, 37) have also reported a decrease in vandalism and an improvement in behaviour when children participate in greening the school grounds.

Where primary prevention is too late, food growing can play a valuable role in helping to prevent reoffending. Few people realise that the prison service is already the third largest farmer in the country, and nearly self sufficient in food. The prison service owns 5,800 ha of land - 60% of which is agriculturally productive. Around 2,000 prisoners work on the prison farms and gardens to produce all the bacon, pork and preserves used in prison kitchens, around 80% of the vegetables and about 70% of the milk.¹⁶ At present, the food is produced using chemical inputs and the livestock is intensively reared.

The purpose of prison farms - like other prison enterprises - is essentially commercial although 'purposeful work and training' is also part of the intention.¹⁷ And although food growing is not seen, officially, as having a therapeutic role for many prisoners it undoubtedly does have one¹⁸ (see case 11). Given that 5,000 prisoners are referred for treatment for mental illness each year,¹⁹ there is real potential for linking up the farming work that prisons already do with the needs of the mentally ill.

Food growing can also stimulate links between inmates and the community. The Home Office acknowledges that, 'Working for the community helps prisoners to develop a sense of social responsibility and to maintain contact with the world outside. It allows them the opportunity to improve their social skills and develop their self-confidence in preparation for release.'²⁰ Thus, prisoners may be involved in local environmental projects, or work with the elderly and the disabled. Some prison farms with commercial livestock enterprises have rare breed units, which are open to visits from local school children. Prison gardens also compete

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Victoria Horticultural Centre

Victoria School, 12 Lindsay Road, Branksome Park, Poole, Dorset BH13 6AS

Tel: 01202 761473 or 760682

Contact: John Pearce

Horticultural training project for physically disabled young people

Background: In April 1984 the staff and pupils of Victoria school for physically disabled children decided to plan a garden area. The idea was to create a garden which met the needs of a variable client group who might be mobile, wheelchair bound or very unsteady and which improved the site's appearance. The garden, covering an area of 120'x 50', took about a year to create. Parents provided physical labour, in kind services and donations. A few sponsors provided large sums of money. Pupils also contributed to the design of the site. A variety of fruit trees were grown, soft fruit cages erected, vegetable plots laid and a greenhouse built. Using special tools, all the children were fully involved in the creation of the garden.

In 1988 a horticulturalist was brought in to manage the garden. The project was so successful that the school decided to expand its horticultural activities. Following several years of reorganisation, in 1993, a Horticulture Centre was created, separate from but affiliated with the school, to provide training for those wishing to go on to open employment or to provide an enjoyable hobby for those who remain unemployed.

Site: All activities take place on the school grounds; Victoria School, the Victoria Horticulture Centre and Carmel House, (an old monastery which has been turned into a further education centre) share the site.

Participants: Pupils attending the training centre.

Activities: The horticulture centre trains students for level one NVQs. Although not strictly organic there is a separate organic garden where the students are assessed. The Centre propagates plants for sale to the community.

Funding and support: Victoria School is maintained by the Shaftesbury Society, a charitable trust with a Christian focus.

Benefits and problems: Although fruit and vegetable production are not a major part of the school's activities, the project does demonstrate the advantages of horticultural activities. The horticultural training centre has been a means by which the pupils have gained confidence, and learned social skills through meeting and selling to the public. The school's Head does however warn that 'it is important that we keep the needs of our client group always in mind when developing new ideas. It is very easy to become either too commercially orientated or go along the path of automation which may be to the detriment of our special needs young people.'

annually at the Chelsea and the Hampton Court Flower Shows - and often pick up gold medals.

In prisons, therefore, there is less need to **establish** food growing projects and more to build upon what already exists. For example, produce could be cooked and sold in a community café, thereby increasing contact with the outside community and extending prisoners' opportunities for learning new skills such as cooking, budgeting, serving and managing, and even training for NVQs. Organically grown food could be an especially effective way of attracting visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Home Office, as part of its crime prevention programme should fund food growing projects in the community, for young people and adults, at risk of offending or reoffending.

- ❖ The Home Office should, in its Standing Orders, also encourage the prison service to develop its existing food growing activities to improve the mental and physical health of prisoners, and, through training and community links, to prepare for employment after release. Research into rates of reoffending among those involved or not involved in food growing would be useful, as would research into the potential for organic production methods on prison farms.

Local agencies

- ❖ Community workers should be encouraged to develop or make links with existing food growing projects, to assist in the rehabilitation of young and adult offenders.

1 *Earth Summit '92: The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro 1992*, Regency Press Corporation 1992

2 *Community Development: Role of VSU*, paper G, Voluntary Services Unit, March 1992 (now the Department of National Heritage's Voluntary and Community Division)

3 Common Ground; this organisation organises and promotes an annual Apple Day in which local apple trees and apple varieties are celebrated by the community (see *Sources of useful information*)

4 Crouch and Ward, *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture*, Mushroom Bookshop, 1994

5 For address and other details, contact the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (see *Sources of useful information*)

6 Kaushika Amin, *Poverty in Black and White: Deprivation and Ethnic Minorities*, Child Poverty Action Group, 1992

7 Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, *Disability and Discrimination in Employment*, RADAR

December 1993

8 *New Earnings Survey*, HMSO, 1994

9 See *Sources of useful Information*

10 1993 Survey, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

11 Pete Riley *Allotments Campaign Guide*, Friends of the Earth, 1979

12 Crouch and Ward, op.cit.

13 National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, op.cit.

14 Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, *Purposeful Leisure as an Alternative to Crime and Punishment*, Policy Position Statement no 4, ILAM, October 1994

15 David Nicholson Lord, *Calling in the Country: Ecology, Parks and Urban Life*, working paper 4, Comedia/Demos 1995

16 *Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts*, 1993/4, HMSO, 1994

17 *ibid.*

18 prison farms manager, HMS Leyhill, personal communication

19 MIND information: *Prisons*, Mind, undated

20 Prison Service, op.cit.

11**HMP Leyhill**

Wooton under Edge, Gloucester GL12 8BT

Tel: 01454 260 681.

Contact: Jeff Goundrill.

Prison horticultural enterprise producing salad crops for use and distribution

Background: Leyhill is an open prison for 120 lifers and 220 offenders nearing the end of their sentence, which tries to provide a transition between prison and ordinary outside life. As part of its programme of activities the prison runs a commercial horticultural enterprise

Site: The prison has three acres of greenhouses in addition to 200 acres of farm land.

Participants: Prisoners who choose to take on farm work, work 8 hour days and weekends if they want.

Activities: Prisoners grow salad crops and mushrooms; these are used not only in Leyhill's kitchens but are distributed to other prisons. No chemicals are used in the greenhouses and pests are managed using biological controls. The farm land is used for the grazing of heifers. The prisoners also work in the 'food factory' preparing and packaging vegetables and receive basic food hygiene training. A visitor's centre has recently been opened with a farm shop, café and museum showing old farm machinery. There is also a 10 acre arboretum containing some of the rarest tree species in the country. Admission is free and it has proved very popular; on average the prison sees around 200-300 visitors every weekend. This has also been a useful way of integrating prisoners into 'normal' life.

Funding and support: The farm work is funded as part of the service's prison enterprises.

Benefits and problems: Although the horticultural activities are intended as a purely commercial enterprise, Jeff Goundrill, the farm manager finds that for many prisoners, the chance to get out and think in the open air is often very therapeutic. It also provides useful training. At one stage the prison experimented with giving inmates their own plots. This did not work as there were (unsurprisingly...) problems of vandalism and theft.

2.2 Economic development

You ask me what it is I do. Well actually, you know, I'm partly a liaison man and partly P.R.O. Essentially I integrate the current export drive And basically I'm viable from ten o'clock till five.

**John Betjeman,
Executive**

Training for jobs and for living

Much of the contemporary debate on the need to train the British workforce has focused on the high technology end of the jobs market. However, in this uncertain age, where job flexibility is difficult to disentangle from employment insecurity, it is perhaps equally important to make sure that more basic skills are retained.

Indeed, the skills associated with urban food growing, and related enterprises are not necessarily so basic. Organic growing techniques, for example, can make use of leading edge scientific research. And if any of the produce is sold - processed or not - then the people involved will use a whole range of sales and marketing skills of varying degrees of sophistication. Many urban food growing projects offer participants the opportunity to obtain qualifications such as NVQs (cases 10, 12, 26, 30, 31, 36).

In many food growing projects, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely where training ends, and economically viable - or 'real' - jobs begin, but this, in fact, is one of their strengths. The Government's consultation document, **Lifetime Learning** points out that 'All education and training develops self-reliance, flexibility and breadth, in particular through fostering competence in core skills.' It also notes of Employee Development Schemes - where employers invest in wider, transferable (rather than job-related) skills for their employees - that 'there is a significant pay-off both for employers and employees. The learning encourages more thoughtful activity in the workplace. It allows a greater insight into what employees are capable of achieving. Most importantly, it gives them confidence to do more, to innovate, and to ask more informed questions.'² Food growing schemes could be an ideal way of achieving these benefits.

Creating local goods and services

Although no reliable figures are available it is likely that very little of the food consumed in a given area of the country has been grown or processed there. Nationally, for example, in 1993 while the UK exported £390 million of fruit and vegetables it imported £3,459 million.³ The 1995 Rural White Paper⁴ acknowledges the impact this has had on the farming community, by stating that farmers must now 'look to diversify into new products and into non-agricultural activities to supplement their incomes.'

In addition, the number of food shops in the UK has collapsed - over 44,000 (31.2% of the total) closed between 1976-87. By 1988, according to Government statistics, 2% of stores accounted for 90% of sales.⁵ Part of the reason for these developments is the growth of very large, out-of-

town supermarkets. To retain constant supplies of a very wide range of fresh and processed produce, supermarkets need large suppliers who can supply all their stores at short notice. Small, local suppliers may lack the experience or capacity to supply the volumes required.⁶

Thus whilst most towns and cities will be host to large food companies of various types, most of the raw materials and products are imported from other parts of the country (and the world) and the resulting products (and profits) are then exported out of the area. This can leave the local economy dangerously dependent on forces - supplies, prices, markets, transport networks etc. - outside local control.

Growing food in cities is part of a process where local people can regain some control over the local food economy. Indeed, Government's support for small scale business enterprises favours this more locally based, community oriented approach to economic development.

One well developed and unjustly neglected institution producing and selling local food is the Women's Institute Co-operative Market. Established in 1919, there are now over 500 markets in England, Wales and the Channel Islands supplying home produced garden, dairy, kitchen and craft products to the general public. These co-operatives are self-financing and anyone (not just WI members) with 5p to invest can become a shareholder and producer. Markets are usually held for a few hours once a week in cities, as well as in more rural areas. More details are available from WI Country Markets Ltd (see **Sources of useful information**).

Another established institution is the urban fringe farm. Many local authorities own smallholdings on the urban fringe which they lease out for farming or farm themselves. In London alone, the boroughs of Havering, Hillingdon, Harrow, Bromley, Enfield and Sutton all have urban fringe farms. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, at present, their potential to contribute to the local food economy is greatly underdeveloped. There is, for example, often pressure to sell off the land for cash or to use it for housing, and the farms may suffer from vandalism. Tenants may also operate other businesses on the land such as skip rental or car breakage companies, which add to the air of neglect and so encourage more vandalism.

However, these urban fringe farms and other local authority-owned land can be run as sustainable farming demonstration sites, providing long term training in food growing as well as running weekend gardening courses, a farm shop, a garden centre for visitors and school visits. Produce can be used to supply local food co-operatives, markets, hospitals, community centres and schools, creating a real sense of the borough or area as a socio-economic entity. These farms may even generate demand for local ancillary industries

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Ruskin Mill

Further Education Course Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, GL6 0LA

Tel: 01453 832571

Contact: Aonghus Gordon

Organic project involving young people with disturbed behaviour

Background: A further education course for young adults and adolescents with disturbed behaviour and related learning difficulties. The course aims to instil in pupils a sense of social responsibility and to prepare them for independent living. It offers a range of activities and therapies including speech, painting and movement therapies, and massage. GCSEs are available in English, maths, photography and art. Other activities include jewellery making, blacksmithing, basket work, greenwood work, textiles and weaving. Food activities are integral to this framework and a way in which 'disaffected young people can take part, and take pride, in every aspect of food production from growing and rearing to harvesting and marketing, from preparing and presenting to eating and celebrating the end result.'

Site: The project is located on the grounds of Ruskin Mill.

Participants: The course provides places for 40 students for up to four years, all of which participate in the food related activities.

Activities: The students cultivate the organic market garden and farm, and look after the sheep and cows. The sheep and lamb fleeces are used by the students for felt making and the animal skins for tanning, and they are developing one of the country's first organic trout farms (the school has five ponds). The students are also involved in the activities of the vegetable shop which sells a mixture of own-grown and outside produce including organic vegetables and fruit, milk, bread, eggs, cheese, yoghurt, honey and meat. Students work in the shop and learn skills such as displaying produce, dealing with the finances and interacting with customers. The students also learn to cook and contribute to the college's newsletter. During the course of these activities, students are encouraged to develop and implement their own ideas

Funding and support: The students are funded by the Further Education Funding Council and Social Services. A few apply, and pay, privately.

Benefits and problems: The students learn a wide range of life skills within a friendly and supportive environment. Food growing activities, concern for farm animals and for the land on which they live encourages a concern for right relationships between people, as well as for the healthy future of the planet. These notions are new to most of the young people who come to Ruskin Mill and many are inspired and challenged by them. It is the old order of cynical disregard for animals, people and the planet that they can rebel against.

supplying, for example, locally composted material and seeds for local varieties.

Environmentally sustainable policies could also be applied to rented out land. At present most local authorities do not specify any environmental standards except on designated conservation land. Initially, it may be difficult to do so - many tenants have long standing leases and it would be difficult to impose standards suddenly without paying compensation. However under the new Tenancies Act (1995), leases will be on a shorter term basis and there is scope here for introducing environmental standards linked to local economic development.

On average, this type of farm land is parcelled into small holdings of around 100 acres. However, dividing the land into smaller holdings would have several advantages. It would reduce the need for mechanisation and increase that for human labour, giving more people the opportunity to operate a farm (and there is enormous demand among those wishing to live sustainable lifestyles). It could also increase yields, sustainably. Time and again research has shown that small farmers and gardeners are more productive than large scale farmers.⁷ It is, of course, vital not to subdivide the land to the point where it can no longer sustain a livelihood.

Urban organic farms will also be able to exploit their geographical advantage and grow high value crops such as salads, which are perishable and require sophisticated (and expensive) transportation techniques if they are to travel. Moreover, farmers choosing to move on to larger rural land holdings will take training and experience in organic farming with them. Cities could, ironically, be a way of taking sustainable agriculture back into the countryside.

It should be stressed that urban farming is not a threat to rural farming. Cities alone cannot provide all our food needs. By meeting some of them though, rural farmers are freer to concentrate less on yields and more on farming sustainably. Food growing in cities can also raise consumer awareness and encourage a shift in favour of locally grown produce, which may help the rural economy.

Food grown in cities **and** in the rural hinterland can be sold not only through small shops, but also through a wide variety of 'local food links' such as farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and box schemes (see **Glossary**). These are growing in popularity and it is now estimated that such schemes reach over 35,000 households, involving over a third of the UK's organic producers.⁸ In the United States, such ideas have been current for some time - indeed, under the federal 1976 Farmer-to- Consumer Direct Marketing Act, State extension services have a mandate to promote the expansion and development of direct marketing; \$2 million has been allocated to this task. Farmers selling at these

markets are also exempt from certain standard pack and labelling laws. As a result of such measures, farmers' markets have grown in number from 1,200 in 1980 to nearly 2,000 in 1993⁹ Some markets, such as the Reading Terminal Farmers' Market in Philadelphia, are specifically aimed at low income groups and prices are very low.¹⁰ These small retail outlets not only employ more people than the highly 'efficient' supermarkets but they also contribute to the reinvigoration of the town and city shopping centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) should increase financial support for farms to convert to organic production and for existing organic farms, whether or not located in urban areas. Farms marketing their produce locally, thereby generating additional economic activity, should also attract grants.
- ❖ MAFF should alter the remit of **Food from Britain** so that, instead of promoting exports of UK produce, its primary focus is to encourage local consumption of local UK produce.
- ❖ The Department of the Environment (DoE) should encourage local authorities, in its planning policy guidance notes, to convert local authority small holdings into lower input and organic enterprises, and to promote local food shops, markets and other local distribution and retailing outlets. The DoE should also consider imposing legislation, similar to the 1976 US Farmer-to- Consumer Direct Marketing Act to make the provision and promotion of farmers' markets mandatory. Cheap loans or grants, and information, should also be provided for direct marketing schemes.
- ❖ The Department for Education and Employment should promote local authority owned urban farms as a source of education and training for adults and children.

Local agencies

- ❖ Where feasible, local authority owned farms should be divided into smaller plots to allow larger numbers of people to have access to food growing experience, either on a commercial basis or as part of a training package.
- ❖ New tenants should be required to manage land organically as part of the terms of the

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Sandwell Food Co-ops

Unit 8, Brook Street Business Park, Brook Street, Tipton DY4 9DD

Tel: 0121 520 6900

Contact: Linda Gomilla

A community food co-op starting to grow the fruit and vegetables it supplies.

Background: Started in 1993, Sandwell food co-ops are a network of 31 different outlets supplying cheap, fresh fruit and vegetables to hundreds of local residents who could not otherwise afford, or have access to them. The co-ops also supply fruit to 16 school tuckshops. The Co-op recently received funding to develop a series of organic community gardens and allotments, employing local people and supplying the co-ops with a large part of their produce.

Site: Four possible two hectare sites have been identified for the community allotments project; one of which is a disused graveyard (most of the bodies have been exhumed....).

Participants: Current individual membership of the food co-ops stands at 567, in addition to which a range of organisations - the YMCA, luncheon clubs and community cafés - are clients. The allotments scheme has involved a range of participants including food policy advisers, Sandwell Health Authority, Sandwell Healthcare Trust, BTCV and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. As with the food co-ops, it is likely that the project will rely, at least initially, on volunteer support.

Activities: The Co-op commissioned the Soil Association and the Centre for Land Based Studies to conduct a feasibility study in 1995/6. One special needs group, New Horizons, is likely to take on one of the allotment sites and is donating greenhouses for it. Two of the projects are likely to be partly or wholly Asian-based.

Funding and support: The Co-op has been fortunate in receiving a great deal of support, both financial and otherwise, from the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and from the Health Authority, which has donated £10,000 to the community allotments project. The Co-op currently employs two workers and has recently received £58,000 for a full time worker and a mobile van-shop. It is also assisted by two full time volunteers.

Benefits and problems: The food growing projects are still at the planning stage. However, there has been enormous community support for the idea, and judging by the success of the food-coops, the outlook looks very promising. The Sandwell food co-op is an example of a project which is firmly rooted in community needs and community action, but which also enjoys a great deal of support from the local authority and health authority. This co-operation, combined with adequate funding and a great deal of favourable publicity, has contributed to its success.

lease, and local authorities should also encourage, and if possible provide grants for, existing tenants to convert to more sustainable systems.

- ❖ Local research and educational establishments should, in partnership with local food producers and processors, conduct an audit of food imports to and exports from the area.
- ❖ Departments responsible for food purchasing and contracts should adopt and implement local sourcing policies wherever possible. In order to comply with the 1988 Local Government Act (section 17) and the EC Procurement Directive, which forbid discrimination against contractors on the basis of location, local authorities' purchasing policies should specify local **sourcing** rather than local contractors (who may, in any case, not source locally).
- ❖ Local authorities should work with local farmers' unions and community groups to provide funding, in-kind support and publicity for locally grown food retail and distribution systems, such as regular farmers' markets and local food links projects. Some form of accreditation scheme for those local restaurants, cafés and shops etc. that buy local food should be considered.

Building an alternative economy

A recent European Commission White Paper draws attention to the dangers of a strictly growth-oriented approach to economic development. It supports the idea of increasing employment (instead of capital) intensity and warns that 'Extrapolating current ...consumption and production patterns to the entire world would require about 10 times the existing resources, which illustrates the scope for possible distribution tensions at global level if current tendencies are not curbed....An excessive emphasis on growth, and failure to follow through with employment intensification, could therefore have the perverse effect of reducing the rate of growth and increasing unemployment.'¹¹

Indeed, some economists question the definition of growth *per se* :

'economic growth, as calculated by economists today, is not a measure of increasing well being or of increasing value in anything other than in a purely artificial sense. On the one

hand it fails to record well-being and value created by informal economic activity; so that, for example, if increasing numbers of people grow more of their food for themselves and buy less of it from the shops, the statistics will record a decline in the value of economic activity, even though well-being will probably improve. On the other hand, it includes as gains the monetary value of many activities that should properly be regarded as costs, so that, for example, if increasing numbers of accidents and misfortunes call forth an increased level of rescue, repair and medical activity...the statistics will record an increase in the value of economic activity, and therefore of well-being.'¹²

These paradoxes are also being played out in the employment market. While the employed are overworked, unemployment increases. Even among the employed there is an increasing divide between those engaged in fulfilling, well paid work and those doing casual, low paid, menial jobs. The costs to our health and the economy are significant - in 1991, 18% of the 517 million working days lost to sickness absence were caused by mental illness - at a cost to UK industry of about £6200 million. It is not surprising, then, that a 1993 British Social Attitudes Survey shows that 58% of the 18-24 age group and 57% of the 25-34 age group were not prepared to let their commitment to work interfere with their lives.¹³ For many people, what they do in their leisure time is of more value to them than what work they do.

However, leisure is not necessarily any more fulfilling than work; it is the quality of work or leisure that counts rather than whether the activity is defined as work or leisure.

Some people have managed to achieve a third, and more satisfying alternative, ignoring definitions of work and non-work and concentrating instead upon purposeful activity, whether it is paid or not. Volunteering is one such, highly popular activity (see **Leisure**). Many of the most effective projects encountered during the research for this report were run by dedicated people working for free, or very little, or who were involved in alternative economic relationships such as LETS, co-operative or credit union projects (see cases 2, 13, 14, 20 and **Glossary**). Policy makers are beginning to recognise the social and economic value of such work. For instance one United Nations declaration states that 'Much unremunerated productive work, such as caring for children and older persons, **producing and preparing food for the family**, protecting the environment and providing voluntary assistance to vulnerable and

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Brixton LETS

10 Hamers House, Ewen Crescent, London SW2 2PE

Tel: 0181 674 2117

Contact: Andy Keen

A project to turn a walled vicarage garden and churchyard into a community allotment.

Background: In 1994 Brixton LETS was contacted by the BTCV's Brighter Brixton Project, who, with City Challenge funding, wanted to improve the environment while contributing to the local economy at the same time. The idea was to grow vegetables in the local vicarage garden for exchange on Bricks (the local currency), and link the LETS scheme with the already existing organic vegetable co-op.

Site: The space for growing vegetables is limited to about half the Vicarage's largish back garden, the rest being taken up by the bog garden and very wide paths to allow for wheel-chair access in the future. The Church itself is huge, poorly attended and in a state of disrepair.

Participants: There is a core of about ten committed participants, and on an average work day, six or seven turn up. The organic vegetable co-op supplies around 70 people.

Activities: Work days have taken place on the second Saturday of every month with BTCV providing much welcomed tea and biscuits. Summer 1995 saw the first harvest of carrots, onions, beans, (French and runner), salads, spinach, courgettes, tomatoes, herbs and a single potato in a very unsuccessful tyre-tower. In December 1995, fruit trees and bushes including apple, pear, plum, hobnut, blackcurrant and raspberry were planted. The project also provides studio space for two LETS artists, who have moved into vacant rooms at the back of the church and are paying rent in Bricks.

Funding and support: City Challenge provided funds for tools, plants and training in organic gardening and permaculture. These, in turn, are paid in Bricks. The scheme also won an Urban Life Award. The Church's vicar has, unfortunately, shown little interest in the project.

Benefits and problems: Because of limited space the project cannot provide for anyone outside the working group. However, in the words of Andy Keen, 'It is a thriving project - each worker is following their own interest (e.g. permaculture, wildlife gardening, conservation), while also acting as part of a team. On workdays there is a tremendous diversity of activity, controlled chaos, and a very strong feeling of real progress. The result is a garden which reflects that diversity, good for wildlife, productive for humans, and a little patch of beauty right in the middle of the Angel Town Estate, an inner city environment which is almost as brutal as its public image.' The project workers hope to turn the Church and surrounding land into a small City Farm with a community composting scheme and space for community activities and education. However they fear that the Church authorities are likely to sell the place off for development.

disadvantaged individuals is of great social importance.....Efforts are needed to broaden the very conception of productive work.’¹⁴

The idea of an alternative, food growing, volunteer-based economy may raise some ideological eyebrows. Will food growing be a way of ‘getting the poor to grow their own poor rate’ as John Stuart Mill, back in the nineteenth century, feared of the allotments movement? However, many food growers, rich and poor, see the activity not as a substitute for, but an alternative to traditional employment and welfare. Many of the projects described in this report may not be ‘profitable’ in conventional terms. However, in a broader sense - in terms of their social and environmental benefits - they are extremely successful.

1 *Lifetime Learning: a consultation document*, Department for Education and Employment, the Welsh Office, the Scottish Office, 1995

2 *ibid.*

3 HM Customs and Excise, 1994: this figure includes all fruit and vegetable produce, including dried, canned, and frozen produce and juices.

4 *White Paper on Rural England*, summary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, & Department of the Environment, 1995

5 Hugh Raven and Tim Lang with Caroline Dumonteil, *Off Our Trolleys? Food Retailing and the Hypermarket Economy*, Institute for Public Policy Research, 1995

6 *ibid.*

7 *Farmer First: Farmer innovation and agricultural research*, eds. Robert Chambers, Arnold Pacey and Lori Ann Thrupp, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1989

8 Presentation by Eric Booth of the Soil Association, quoted in *The Great Vegetable Challenge* conference pack; conference hosted by the Guild of Food Writers, in May 1996

9 Harriet Festing, *Should Farmers market direct to consumers? America says yes*, Food Industry Perspectives, discussion paper series no 6, Wye College, June 1994

10 Reading Terminal Farmer’s Market Trust, *Community Farmers’ Market Program Summary Report: Tasker Homes Demonstration Project*, RTFMT, undated (for details of obtaining this see *Sources of useful information*)

11 *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century*, Commission of the European Communities, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1993

12 James Robertson, *Future Work*, Gower Publishing Co. Ltd, 1985

13 Ray Pahl, *Finding Time to Live*, Demos Quarterly issue 5, Demos, 1995

14 United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen March 1995 para 46 - emphasis added.

15**Brookfield First School**

Redcar Road, Greengates, Bradford, BD10 0DP

Tel: 01274 611326

Contact: Chris Puchalka or Mrs J Hardman (head)

A school food growing and cookery project

Background: In 1995 the school held a very popular Environment Day which Mark Fisher, a keen local grower attended. Following its success, the science teacher, Chris Puchalka felt that food growing could be a way of linking environmental with much needed health education.

The site: Brookfield School is in a deprived area of Bradford. Although the grounds are large they are regularly vandalised and any flowers grown are usually stolen. It was hoped that vandals might not notice vegetables.

Participants: All the children are involved, many of whom are completely ignorant of where food comes from, eat processed convenience food at home and have little knowledge of basic hygiene. Chris, herself a keen gardener, has been supported by the Head and other teachers.

Activities: The children have grown potatoes, curly kale and herbs and have made potato cakes and boiled curly kale. At the school harvest festival the school sold bags of potatoes to parents. The children are also growing chillies indoors and have planted a herb 'smellery.'

Funding and support: The school is local authority maintained and has had minimal amounts to spend. Tools were borrowed from Springfields (see case 36). The school has also received a small amount of funding to buy tools and seeds.

Benefits and problems: The children have enjoyed growing and cooking food enormously - particularly digging up potatoes - and the project has involved parents in the school's activities. Many children have said that they want their parents to cook some of the food that they tasted in class, and it is hoped that in this way the project may help improve their diets. Vandalism has been reduced.

2.3 Education

It takes a whole village to educate a child.

African proverb

Learning at school

The 1988 Education Reform Act requires the curriculum of each school to be 'balanced and broadly based' to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils....and of society,' and to prepare pupils 'for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.' Schools must provide education in a number of core subjects (see below) which are expected to occupy about four fifths of the teaching week. Schools have discretion over the remaining, non-statutory parts of the curriculum. A number of cross curricular themes are also identified (see below), which aim to broaden pupils' development. These should be integrated into the core curricular subjects and may also form part of any extra-curricular activities that the school provides.

The core curriculum

The following paragraphs sketch out a few (by no means comprehensive) ways in which gardening can and already does (see cases 4, 19, 34, 36, 39) contribute directly to core subject teaching, and at the same time incorporate cross-curricular themes such as environmental, health and personal and social education.

- ❖ **Maths:** Planning the layout of a plot involves measuring, working out surface area and allocating fractions of the area to specific produce. If the resulting produce is sold, weighing, pricing, estimating supply and demand, calculating profit and loss, book keeping, and computer work may also be needed.
- ❖ **English:** Skills can include learning a new vocabulary, recording observations, writing up diaries, contributing to a school newsletter, writing advertisements to promote the produce, and creative writing.
- ❖ **Science:** Assessing the school grounds' suitability for food growing provides an opportunity for pupils to use microscopes, and draw maps, diagrams, plans and tables. Pupils can explore subjects such as soil structure, pollution and biodiversity. Studying the life cycles of plants and animals means learning about water, light and nutrients, and can lead onto discussion of human nutrition and biology.
- ❖ **Geography:** Food growing provides an opportunity for pupils to learn about the geographical origin of various foods, the global social, economic and environmental issues surrounding food growing, using an atlas, and the effects of weather systems, soil

types and other geographical features upon agriculture.

- ❖ **History:** The history of particular foods can be linked to local, national and international historical developments.
- ❖ **Design and Technology:** Designing the layout of beds (some schools enter their designs at Royal Horticultural Shows), and designing and making irrigation systems, cold frames or paths, can be added to more traditional techniques such as cooking, painting and drawing.
- ❖ **Modern foreign language:** Learning new terminology can stimulate interest in foreign languages, particularly if the school is twinned with a foreign school.
- ❖ **Information technology:** Computers can be used in plot layout, school grounds audits, typing newsletters and keeping accounts.
- ❖ **Physical Education:** The exercise involved in food growing can be a useful addition to the requirements of the PE curriculum.

In short, school grounds - particularly when used for food growing, are a source of enormous educational potential.¹ In May 1995, over 600 schools celebrated School Grounds Day, and children took part in activities ranging from maypole dancing to tree surveys, willow sculpture making and story-telling trails.² Unfortunately, just as the value of school grounds is being recognised, their existence may be threatened. An act has recently been passed to abolish those parts of the School Building Premises Regulations (see **Glossary**) which protect school grounds against development. Schools short of cash may be under severe pressure to sell land for revenue.

Cross curricular themes

The cross curricular themes recommended by the Department for Education and Employment include environmental and health education. Food growing has an important role to play in these areas, as cases 4, 16, 17, 18 and 24 show.

- ❖ **Environmental education:** The UK Government has acknowledged the crucial role that education plays for sustainability.³ The government's **eco-schools** initiative launched as part of its **Going For Green** initiative, (in partnership with the Tidy Britain Group) promotes green issues in schools. The 'hands-on' approach entailed in food growing demonstrates vividly the links

16**Edwalton Primary School**

Wellin Lane, Nottingham NG12 4AS

Tel: 0115 923 2728**Contact:** Stephen Ball (Head)**Primary school involving children in animal keeping**

Background: Edwalton is situated in a mixed social and ethnic area on the edge of Nottingham. The school has been keeping animals since the early 1970s. When Steven Ball, the present Head (himself a goat keeper) came in 1974, the project was expanded. The school sees food growing as a way of contributing to the school's ethos of academic excellence, happiness, self esteem, esteem of others and responsibility.

Site: Three acre site (approximately).

Participants: There are a little over 300 children in the school, some with special needs. All the children are involved.

Activities: The schoolchildren are responsible for looking after sheep, hens, goats, rabbits, ducks, doves and classroom animals. Each week, three children (ages 10 and 11) take the week off school and devote the time to looking after the animals. This rota continues into the weekend and school holidays. Children can also have allotments and are fully involved in decision making. When the children decided that they wanted to keep sheep, the children were responsible for contacting farmers, finding out how much land a sheep needed and pricing fencing. Once a week the school council, consisting of one boy and girl representative from each Year, meet to discuss school issues. The school also uses the nearby council owned four acre woodland as an outdoor classroom.

Funding and support: The project generates its own income to pay for vet bills, animal feed and other needs. To do this, the children organise discos, cake sales and toy sales to raise funds as well as earning money by selling eggs (to staff and parents) and fleece (to the Wool Marketing Board and a local weaver). The project also receives some money from the Parent's Association.

Benefits and problems: In the Head's view, the project improves children's behaviour in the classroom and playground and gives them a sense of responsibility. It helps to involve the children with special needs in school activities and is also of use in teaching the national curriculum. The children are enthusiastic about the project, although some are upset when the animals are sent off for slaughter, or when foxes break into the animal cages. As a result, there are quite a few vegetarians in the school and several children have gone on to become vets. The school has received considerable media coverage - from Channel 4, BBC 1 and 2 and Radio 4 - which has helped to maintain motivation even under (frequent) financial pressure.

between what we eat, our survival and the environment. Involving teachers in practical environmental projects like food growing can add weight and credibility to classroom environmental teaching (see case 34). Those schools with limited, or unsuitable school grounds, can link up with local community food growing projects, or rent an allotment - a useful way of encouraging connections between the school and its neighbourhood. Many city farms⁴ provide teaching packs which link the farm's activities quite specifically with the formal curriculum (see cases 26, 30).

- ❖ **Health education:** Since 1993 the UK government has been committed to the concept of healthy schools by joining the European Network of Health Promoting Schools and funding a number of pilot projects.⁵ There is great potential here for integrating food growing with health promotion. Food grown on the school grounds can be cooked in school and linked to teaching on healthy eating. Growing and cooking activities could also link in with school food policies on school meals, tuck shops and vending machines. A School Nutrition Action Group⁶ (see **Glossary**) might set in place a 'buy local' or a 'buy organic' policy for school dinners, or simply hold occasional 'organic school meal days'. The school grounds are unlikely to yield enough food for a whole meal, but they can be an important part of a sustainable, health promoting school approach.⁷

The informal curriculum

Children between the ages of five and eighteen spend only 20% of their waking hours in classrooms.⁸ Some of the remaining 80% is spent in the school grounds; in fact, up to a third of the primary school day is spent outside the classroom. This time, sometimes referred to as the **informal curriculum**, provides essential opportunities for children to develop socially and intellectually. Growing food in schools can add significantly to these opportunities:

- ❖ **Behaviour:** The Elton Report⁹ found that 'where pupils are provided with a pleasant environment they respect it, and where they have contributed to it, they treat it as their own.... this sense of participating in the ownership of a school plays an important part in the ways pupils behave.' Growing food in school grounds can help children learn social skills such as sharing and co-operation, can generate self-esteem, and reduce bullying, accidents and vandalism.

(see cases 15, 16, 17, 24, 37). As one child put it, 'If you want to have a garden, you've got to do it for yourself....It doesn't matter what you do, so long as everybody loved it, it wouldn't matter if it turned out to be a rubbish garden.'¹⁰

- ❖ **Community:** Well-used and well-kept school grounds can also encourage parents to play a greater part in school life, and can improve the school's image in the neighbourhood. Many members of the community are often experienced gardeners, and may be willing to share their knowledge with the school. This can help create links across generational, class and ethnic barriers and may help reduce prejudice, conflict and vandalism. Produce can be donated to day care centres and other community groups, or sold to parents in aid of charity.
- ❖ **Creativity:** School gardens can be a useful way of stimulating creative play. According to the National Play Information Centre, play 'is a serious activity for children and interweaves their whole development, motivating learning and discovery in the most basic hands-on way.'¹¹ Research shows¹² that children value the natural environment because it allows them to explore places with 'millions of bits'. A school garden is an ideal way of providing children with the natural environment they value, and in which they can experience its sensations through touch, smell, taste, sight and sound. Supervised play activities can also take place after school. One mother at a South London primary school runs an after school gardening group. The 'green gang' grow a range of vegetables and herbs which they take home or sell at school fairs.¹³

At the moment, perhaps partly because school gardens are so amenable to play, most examples of food growing are found in primary schools (see cases 4, 15, 16, 24, 34 although secondary school projects are 17, 37). However, it is important that food growing is recognised as a useful part of the syllabus for older children as well. If this does not happen there is a danger that food growing will remain a low-status, fringe subject, suitable for young children but not really taken seriously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department for Education and Employment should repeal the Act to abolish parts of the School Building Premises Regulations, so that the school grounds in

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Bentley Wood High School

Bridges Road, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 3NA

Tel: 0181 954 3623

Contact: John Jowers

A secondary school growing food as part of its school grounds development

Background: Bentley Wood is a local authority controlled girls' school in the London Borough of Harrow. John Jowers, the teacher responsible for the school's cross curricular Personal and Social Health Education (PSHE) programme and Year Head for classes 10 and 11 (15 and 16 year olds) decided to develop the school grounds as part of PSHE.

Site: The school, unusually, has 27 acres of land.

Participants: The girls are a wide ethnic mix, with a lot of Asians, both Hindu and Muslim. John Jowers is a keen allotment grower and the girls are used to him bringing cabbages into school classes. There are plans to involve parents more in the future.

Activities: In 1994 the pupils in classes 10 and 11 carried out a survey of the school grounds and, having developed a questionnaire, asked other pupils, staff and parents what they wanted for the school grounds. A series of suggestions were made and are being implemented. With the assistance of a tree surgeon friend of John Jowers, the girls have conducted a tree survey, tagged the trees, and cleared away dead wood. An allotments area has been dug and the children are growing vegetables, some of which are used in the home economics classes. An apple orchard is being planned and the organic or non-organic debate is currently being fiercely debated by the girls. More and more lessons are taking place outside.

Funding and support: The project spent around £1,200 in 1994; funding came from the school itself, from British Telecom, Living Earth and the local authority. The project is also bidding for funding from the Parent Teacher Association and there are plans to hire out the land for personal development courses to other schools and organisations. Marconi Defence Systems has helped the girls model computer images of the grounds and of the projected plans. This in turn might help the project generate more funds.

Benefits and problems: Support for the project has been enormous. The school is fortunate in having an enthusiastic teacher and a Head committed to a broad approach to learning. The other staff are very excited by the plans, and are kept in touch with regular updates. The girls are fully involved in the project and like the idea of being 'pioneers'.

which food can be grown continues to be protected.

- ❖ The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) should, in its Circulars, encourage primary and secondary schools to make specific provision for **hands on** food education i.e. growing food, cooking and eating it.

Local agencies

- ❖ Teachers should work with local community groups and individuals (including parents) with expertise in food growing, not only for the additional knowledge and skills they can bring, but also because of the value of school-community links **per se**.
- ❖ Schools should consider establishing a school nutrition action group (SNAG) to develop and implement a whole school policy on food which incorporates health and environmental considerations into food grown and eaten in schools.

Acquiring skills beyond school

Food growing also holds educational potential for those who have left school. City farms, in addition to providing an outlet for bored young people who would otherwise, apparently, be at home 'biting' their 'toenails' (**sic** - see case 26), are a valuable and well-established source of adult as well as school education. Increasingly city farms, and other independent organisations (see **Sources of useful information**) are providing gardening courses to the community, as well as training in basic literacy and numeracy, and for qualifications such as NVQs (see also **Economic Development**).

Helping people with special needs

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that there is adequate provision' for those with special needs, a definition which covers physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health problems. Many special needs schools already incorporate food growing into their curriculum. For people with learning and/or physical disabilities, horticulture can be not only a fulfilling past time but also a route to employment, whether in sheltered workplaces or in the open market (see case 10). City farms (see cases 26, 30) and other projects (see cases 9, 12, 31, 36) offer training up to NVQ levels for those with disabilities or other needs. The **Health** section

describes in more detail the role of food growing for those with mental health problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local agencies

- ❖ Local education authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils and other relevant agencies should support community-run food growing courses for adults and for people with special needs by providing funds and/or facilities such as premises and equipment.

1 Adams, E. *Learning Through Landscapes: The Final Report*, Learning Through Landscapes, 1990

2 *E-Scape: Learning Through Landscapes Newsletter*, Learning Through Landscapes, October 1995

3 *United Kingdom Report to the Commission on Sustainable Development 1996*.

4 See National Federation of City Farms in *Sources of useful information*

5 *The European Network of Health Promoting Schools*, Council of Europe, Commission of the European Communities, World Health Organisation (Europe), May 1993. Information available from the Health Education Authority.

6 SNAG News, published by the Health Education Trust

7 European Network of Health Promoting Schools op.cit.

8 John Abbott, *Learning Makes Sense; Recreating education for a changing future*, Education 2000, 1994

9 *Discipline in Schools: Report of the Committee of Enquiry chaired by Lord Elton*, HMSO, 1989

10 quoted in Wendy Titman, *Special Places Special People: The hidden curriculum of school grounds*, Learning Through Landscapes and World Wide Fund for Nature, 1994.

11 National Play information Centre, *The Value of Play*, NPIC, May 1992

12 Wendy Titman, op.cit.

13 personal communication

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GreenThumb Community Gardening Programme

49 Chambers Street, Room 1020, New York, NY 10007, USA

Contact: Jane Weissman

Tel: 001 212 788 7059

City of New York sponsored community gardening programme

Background: GreenThumb (GT) began in 1978 with no budget and one part-time worker in response to the growing number of requests for permission to garden on city owned property. It is now the largest municipally run community gardening project in the US.

Site: GT leases over 1000 plots (free) comprising around 125 acres.

Participants: GT employs 8 staff who work with local people and train them in gardening techniques. There are over 700 GreenThumb community groups in the city.

Activities: GT licenses city owned vacant property to neighbourhood groups for community vegetable and flower gardens, often incorporating play and sitting areas. Groups attend workshops in design, construction and planting and are given tools, materials to build fences, raised beds, picnic tables and benches, and ornamental and fruit trees, shrubs, seeds and bulbs. It also runs a number of programmes including:

Land Reclamation Project: annually treats 250 acres of land by seeding with grasses, clovers and wildflowers, fertilizing and mowing it (started 1982)

Urban Orchard Programme: nearly 2,000 apple, peach, plum, cherry and pear trees and thousands of grape vines and berries planted (started 1984)

Artists in the Gardens: 17 sculptures and 10 murals have been installed through joint efforts by local artists and neighbourhood residents (started 1985)

Education in the Gardens: gardening groups are provided with educational material and encouraged to invite school groups and local children into their gardens. Schools are encouraged to establish their own gardens (started 1988)

Project ReSeed: a workshop series for teachers focusing on using gardens to teach urban environmental issues. The **PlayScape Project** is developing three demonstration play areas in existing gardens for neighbourhood children. These will enable staff to design a workshop and resource manual to help other gardeners establish their own PlayScapes (started 1995).

There is also an annual **GreenThumb GrowTogether** which brings together over 500 people to exchange information and choose from over 40 workshops to attend. GT also holds a yearly Harvest Fair with garden tours, competitions and workshops. GT also issues two newsletters, **The Thumb Print** and **EIG News**, fact sheets, planning manuals and various publications.

Funding and support: New York Parks and Recreation department funds GT from its Community Development Block Grants. The Sanitation Department cleans old dumping grounds for use.

Benefits and problems: Green Thumb gardeners produce around \$100,000 of fruit and vegetables a year. The gardens provide people, who are often from farming backgrounds, the opportunity to grow plants again while providing a focus for neighbourhood activities.

2.4 Environment

*At Christmas I no
more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in
May's new-fangled
mirth;
But like of each
thing that in season
grows*

*Shakespeare, Love's
Labours Lost I I 105*

Increasing biodiversity

By signing up to Agenda 21, the Government has promised to 'Take effective economic, social and other appropriate incentive measures to encourage the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources, including the promotion of sustainable production systems, such as traditional methods of agriculture, agroforestry, range and wildlife management, which use, maintain, or increase biodiversity.'¹ As an EU member state, it has also promised, in compliance with EC Regulation 2078/92 (Agri-Environment Policy) to co-finance 'ways of using agricultural land which are compatible with protection and improvement of the environment, the countryside, the landscape, natural resources, the soil and genetic diversity.' (Article 1, para c.)

These, and other similar measures, are necessary because our current food production system has been responsible for a serious reduction in biodiversity. The **Countryside Survey** of 1990² revealed that over 12 years the average number of plant species in arable fields has fallen by 29%. Wildlife too is under threat and even cultivated crops are becoming more uniform. Desired varieties are those which respond well to chemicals, which transport and store well and which meet cosmetic standards of size and colour. There are, for example, 2000 varieties of apple in the National Collection of the UK but today just nine dominate our commercial orchards.³

Government legislation has, in fact, contributed to this loss of variety. The 1964 Plant, Seeds and Varieties Act was introduced to eliminate synonyms (one variety masquerading under several names) and to control consistency of varieties. While, in theory, this is helpful, the tests to allow varieties onto the register are very expensive. Vegetable varieties can cost between £210 and £580 to register, while potatoes cost £620. Worse, if the variety passes the test a further £245 must be paid, plus £150 each year to keep the variety on the register. If the profits from a variety are too small and the annual fee is not paid, then the variety is dropped from the register. Thus only varieties with a big market tend to be farmed.

Growing food in cities can help restore some of this lost biodiversity. Growing and saving seeds of 'heirloom' vegetable varieties is one way of preserving those which are no longer commercially viable. The Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) gives seeds away to members of their Heritage Seed Library, in exchange for a small annual membership fee. HDRA also has a network of Seed Guardians, maintains a Seed Swap Register, and runs a very successful 'Adopt-a-Veg' campaign.⁴

Urban food growing is also a valuable way of preserving local varieties which are not particularly rare. For instance the St Ann's Allotment in Nottingham (case 3) is home to the Radford Beauty

and Nottingham Pippin apples, and the Nottingham cob, all of which are local to the area. Another way in which urban food growers have encouraged biodiversity is by growing a broad range of edible crops. Many grow salads and fruits for eating that are not found in shops or, in some cases, not normally considered to be food. These 'weeds' add diversity to the diet as well as to the environment.

Ironically, the urban environment is often already richer in flora and fauna than rural farm land; beehives in cities actually produce more honey than those in the country because cities are home to more trees and flowers than most parts of the modern countryside.⁵ Indeed the largest concentration of beekeepers is in cities.

Organic systems encourage wildlife, since attracting natural predators is essential when controlling pests with minimum or no use of chemicals. There are now wildlife plots on some allotment sites which are well loved by allotment holders and their children, and a useful breeding ground for beneficial insects and micro-organisms. Parks, containing food growing plots (see **Sustainable Neighbourhoods** and case 33), could be managed organically to provide a home for diverse species. Linear arrangements of organically managed allotments and gardens can create green 'corridors' to draw wildlife into the heart of the city. The Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance note 13 recommends cycle routes that 'serve the dual purpose of providing linear parks in urban areas;' there is potential here for planting fruit trees which yield food and provide a habitat for many species.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ MAFF should relax seed registration to favour small producers registering and selling seeds affordably.

Local agencies

- ❖ Local research and educational establishments should, in partnership with local food producers and processors, conduct a survey of local varieties and make recommendations on how best to preserve them.
- ❖ Biodiversity could be supported and celebrated at local level by, for example, organising festivals and 'seed and plant swapping fairs,' for gardeners, and by encouraging wildlife through reducing chemical use on all local authority land and creating 'green' corridors.

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Peasants' Collective

Cecil Avenue Allotments, Cecil Avenue, Bradford BD7. 3LZ

Tel: 01274 503799

Contact: Julia Pearson

Communal allotments project growing organic food for a community cafe

Background: The Peasants' Collective is a group formed from the *One in Twelve Club*, a social and political centre started in 1981 and collectively owned by the membership. The Club has a community café providing cheap, mainly vegan, meals. In 1995, a group of members decided to work together on a community allotment to provide organic produce for the cafe and for cheap sale to Club members.

Site: Three allotments

Participants: A core of eight or nine people with occasional others, some with previous gardening skills and some without.

Activities: Having rented the plots from the Council the group held a work day in January 1995 to clear the very neglected plots and plant a variety of vegetables. Group effort was maintained strongly through the spring although it flagged over the summer. The plots have provided food for five lunch sessions feeding 10-12 people each time and one harvest festival meal for 40. Vegetables are also sold on to members. The group has also cleared an empty plot near the road and dug a wildlife pond.

Funding and support: In 1995, under £100 was spent and more than double that earned. Tools have been donated by individuals or bought at car boot sales. Most of the seeds were given by other allotment holders and friends. The meals and vegetable sales have also brought in income. British Telecom provided extra funding for the pond. The Council allotments officer is supportive of the community project

Benefits and problems: Relations between the Collective and individual gardeners (many of them organic) are good. The group is also supported by the Bradford Environmental Action Trust, the Allotments Action Group and other food growers in Bradford. The group is working to improve the organisation of the group so that people are motivated to work as individuals and do not neglect the plot. One proposal is to ask people to 'adopt a veg;' people will take on responsibility for their chosen vegetable (although no-one will be blamed for mishaps). People may decide to work as a small group or can ask for a care-taker when they are absent. Water has also been a problem, particularly over the dry summer of 1995 and watering rotas will be worked out. The group has bought and erected a polytunnel.

Tackling waste

British households produce 20 million tonnes of waste a year, some 50% of which could be recycled. At present, only 5% of it is, even though the Government has set a recycling target of 25% by the year 2000.⁶ Discarded food and its packaging makes up much of this waste - over 150 million tonnes of plastic, paper and glass are used each year for packaging food.⁷

Waste reduction requires three different approaches: **reducing** the amount of waste generated; **reusing** what can be reused and **recycling** the remainder. Urban food growing can tackle waste in all three ways.

It can **reduce** packaging. Some packaging is merely cosmetic but food manufacturers are often justified in pointing out that much of it is essential if its contents are to reach their destination safely and undamaged. Local food growing, by reducing the need to store and transport the food, reduces the need for packaging.

Food growing sites can be the honoured repositories of much **reused** household waste. On the average allotment, old carpets, bits of polythene, offcuts of wood and glass, rubber tyres and old clothing are all used to productive and eccentric effect. This imaginative and thrifty resourcefulness makes an essential contribution to the allotment's particular 'landscape and culture.'⁸

Food growing also makes use of **recycled** matter. Organic waste accounts for 20% of household waste - around 4 million tonnes a year - and can be a highly polluting form of landfill as it generates methane emissions. When composted however, it makes an excellent garden fertiliser.⁹ Currently only 0.5% of household waste is composted.¹⁰ The Government's **White Paper on Waste**¹¹ has set targets on composting for England and Wales. These are:

- ❖ 40% of households with a garden to carry out home composting by the year 2000
- ❖ all waste disposal companies to cost and consider the potential for establishing central composting schemes for garden waste from commercial sources by the year 2000
- ❖ one million tonnes of organic waste to be composted by the year 2000
- ❖ 40% of the total market requirements for soil improvers and growing media in the UK to be supplied by non-peat materials within the next 10 years.

The Elm Farm Research Centre, the newly established Composting Association, and others (see **Sources of useful information**) are working with several local authorities to encourage centralised composting of

green waste from parks and households. The resulting compost can then be sold cheaply to gardeners. Composting schemes can also be adapted for community food growing; indeed some projects already use horse manure donated by local stables. One food growing project in Bradford (see Bradford Environmental Action Trust, **Sources of useful information**) even uses lion and elephant dung from the local zoo.....

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of the Environment, in conjunction with the Treasury, should earmark revenues from landfill tax for direct use by local authority recycling schemes, so that Government's own waste targets can be met. The DoE should also make available additional funds for land to be reclaimed for food production by community groups.

Local agencies

- ❖ Producers of green waste - schools, housing estates, restaurants, markets, greengrocers, and so on - should be encouraged to recycle waste, and appropriate facilities, such as waste collection services, should be provided.
- ❖ Local authorities should work with voluntary organisations and community groups to develop community and/or centralised composting schemes

Reducing transport

There are over 23 million vehicles on British roads, driving over 300 billion km a year.¹² They are a major source of pollution, producing 35% of hydrocarbon, 25% of carbon dioxide, 49% of nitrogen oxide and 91% of carbon monoxide emissions.¹³ Around a quarter of transport is food related¹⁴ - 12% of the nation's fuel consumption is spent on transporting and packaging food. Food is often driven hundreds of miles just to be packaged, before being returned and sold very near to its place of origin.¹⁵ Increasingly fresh fruit and vegetables are air freighted from abroad; a heavily polluting and energy intensive process.

The number of shopping trips also increased by 28% between 1975/6 and 1989/90 while the distance travelled for shopping grew by over 60%, according to the National Travel Survey. Over ¾ of total mileage for shopping is now by car; the one-stop weekly supermarket shop requires a car and out of town supermarket siting increases the travelling distance. The House of Commons Environment

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Becontree Organic Growers (BOG)

44 Gale Street, Dagenham, Essex RM9 4NH

Tel: 0181 592 8941**Contact:** Barry Watson**Permaculture project in the East End of London**

Background: In 1992 a group of local people came together to revitalise a derelict, rubble-strewn site with the aim of implementing local Agenda 21 principles by:

- ❖ Improving and conserving the local environment through permaculture
- ❖ Producing fresh, affordable organic food locally
- ❖ Reusing and recycling resources
- ❖ Saving energy through solar heating, grey water recycling and water catchment tanks
- ❖ Monitoring and studying the local environment and serving as an educational resource
- ❖ Setting up community building projects
- ❖ Regenerating a sense of local community through collective involvement
- ❖ Developing the local economy through LETS, local outlets, and investment gardening.

Site: The 3 acre site is on the grounds of a small church which was destroyed during an air-raid in 1944 and adjoins an underused Council allotment site. It has no official owner.

Participants: These include the BTCV, Scouts, students, schools and the unemployed. One man has been feeding his family from his allotment for 21 years and keeps 5 bee hives. But involvement has been limited by uncertainty surrounding BOG's future (see below).

Activities: BOG has raised vegetable beds, wildlife and woodland areas, wheelchair accessible paths, and a pond. Food grown so far has been used by members of the group, any excess being given away. It also has its own LETS system which uses honey as a 'currency.'

Funding and support: Funding is minimal; individuals have contributed as have local firms. Local gardening contractors have donated grass clippings and leaves and a waste disposal company delivers a skip of horse manure once a week (the old horseshoes mixed in will also be used). Students from the University of East London conducted a site survey while Barking College students have produced promotional leaflets, posters and a model of the planned site.

Benefits and problems: Some problems have been solved. Fencing has deterred vandals and will in future be replaced by hedges. Although there is no water on site, deep mulches have helped retain moisture even during the dry summer of 1995; a well may be sunk in the future. Fly tipping has also been a problem but may lessen as the site develops. The main question concerns the project's future; the Council is currently objecting to BOG's use of the land; this has prevented BOG from applying for future funding. Since the site has no Public Liability Insurance, the extent to which community groups can become involved has been limited.

If and when BOG's future becomes more secure, plans for the site include a fruit tree maze, a sitting area, a vine 'dragon', hedges demonstrating a variety of regional laying techniques, and two lorry containers providing space for meetings, honey extraction, plant potting and toilet facilities. As production increases, BOG plans to start up **investment gardening**, in which investors 'invest' with money or labour, and then receive a share of the harvest according to the extent of their investment. Everyone involved will share in the risks.

select committee acknowledges the problem, advising that 'the task now at hand is to regenerate and sustain the nation's shopping heritage' through 'reducing reliance on the car in the long term.'¹⁶

The Royal Commission on Environment and Pollution has also made a series of recommendations aimed at reducing transport.¹⁷ In May 1996 the Government responded with a Green Paper¹⁸ which takes on board some of the recommendations the Royal Commission made and notes that 'there is increasing evidence that congestion and pollution can act as disincentives to many kinds of economic activity'. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)13 also argues for 'Better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, **linked to locational policies which promote local activity**.'¹⁹

Food growing in cities can contribute to reducing transport, and its associated environmental problems, in a number of ways.

First, food produced locally reduces the travel required both to distribute and to purchase food. The availability of fresh, cheap produce may also help reduce demand for unseasonal, overseas fruit and vegetables imported at high environmental cost. Local employment, either paid or voluntary, in local food projects also lessens the need to travel (see **Economic development**).

Local food production can also revive a sense of community, by making the neighbourhood a more agreeable place to be. Greener surroundings and the development of links between local people mean that people feel less need to travel to socialise. A 'virtuous cycle' can be created; less transport means less pollution and less need to use land for car parks and roads, leaving more land available to grow food locally, so further reducing transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government:

- ❖ The Department of the Environment and the Department of Transport should implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on transport.

Local agencies

- ❖ See recommendations on local sourcing in **Economic Development**

1 Chapter 15, *Earth Summit '92: The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, Regency Press 1992

2 *Countryside Survey, 1990, Main Report*, Department of the Environment, 1993

3 Hugh Raven and Tim Lang with Caroline Dumonteil, *Off our trolleys? Food retailing and the hypermarket economy*, Institute for Public Policy Research, 1995

4 For more information contact the Henry Doubleday Research Association (address in *Sources of useful*

information)

5 National Federation of City Farms (see *Sources of useful information*)

6 *Watch Your Waste*, Open University and Waste Watch, The Open University, 1993

7 quoted in *ibid*. Although *Watch your Waste* does not make it clear, this figure presumably includes the packaging waste produced by institutions and businesses, not just households

8 David Crouch and Colin Ward, *The Allotment: its Landscape and Culture* Mushroom Bookshop, 1994

9 *Watch Your Waste* op.cit.

10 *Making Waste Work: A Strategy for Sustainable Development in England and Wales*, Department of the Environment/Welsh Office, 1995

11 *ibid*.

12 National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, *Motor Vehicle Pollution*, information leaflet, NSCA, August 1995

13 *ibid*.

14 *A Feast Too Far*, SAFE Alliance, 1995

15 *The Food Miles Report: The dangers of long distance food transport*, SAFE Alliance, 1994

16 Hugh Raven and Tim Lang with Caroline Dumonteil, op.cit.

17 *Transport and the Environment*, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, 1995

18 *Transport: The Way Forward*, HMSO 1996

19 para 4.12 [emphasis added]

21

Elder Stubbs Allotment Site

45 Hurst St, Oxford OX4 1HA

Tel: 01865 725051**Contact:** John Purves**Allotments site fostering a strong community and environmental spirit**

Background: The Elder Stubbs Allotments are owned by a charitable trust, established in 1852 to provide local allotments and to raise money from plot rents for local widows and orphans. However until a few years ago, the site had fallen into disrepair. One of the Trustees decided to improve the site and bring it back into full production.

Site: The main site covers nine acres, has 96 plots and is fully tenanted (about 130 people use it including **Restore** - see case 31). A smaller adjacent site is currently being developed as an orchard and amenity area.

Participants: John Purves is clerk to the Trust, rents a couple of plots himself, and has been successfully improving the site in the last few years. Numerous volunteers are also involved.

Activities: To improve the looks of the site and attract new tenants, John establish a secure hedge around the site and a wildlife garden on part of the site. The latter includes a deep pond, and 600 native trees paid for by a very successful sponsor-a-tree scheme. Labour came from tenants, local volunteers, BTCV and paid contractors. The arrival of the Restore project at Elder Stubbs in 1989 improved the site significantly. A notice board at the allotments, and adverts in local community centres drew in new tenants, and various festivals and art projects at the site raised its profile and popularity. Throughout, John has promoted an organic approach and now most tenants on the allotments cultivate their plots organically.

The site has minimal communal facilities. There is however a small trading shed where cheap organic fertilizers and seeds are sold. They also have a shared mower and strimmer. Future plans include reclaiming the adjacent site, using the same approach. A few derelict plots may be sold off to raise money to build a toilet block. The tenants are also planning to develop a box scheme (see Local Food Links in **Glossary**) in partnership with Restore and the local LETS (see **Glossary**).

Funding and support: Existing tenants have loaned money and sponsored trees, and grants have been donated. Much of the work has relied upon voluntary labour.

Benefits and problems: The benefits include a friendly and supportive atmosphere in which people grow their own fresh food, and long term security for the site. Vandalism and organised theft have been problems but less so now that there are more tenants on site. Better security is reducing the incidence of theft while vandalism has been dealt with by making good the damage as soon as possible (very important for morale), and by identifying the culprits and having a very strong word with them.....

2.5 Health

*O excellent! I love
long life better than
figs. Shakespeare,
Anthony and
Cleopatra 1 ii 34*

*Taste your legs, sir;
put them to motion.
Shakespeare,
Twelfth Night III I 88*

Improving diets

As a nation, we suffer high rates of diet-related diseases. We eat too much fatty, sugary food, not enough nutrient dense foods such as fruit and vegetables, or staples like bread and potatoes. In recognition of the links between diet and health the Government's **Health of the Nation** report sets dietary targets which aim to reduce rates of coronary heart disease (CHD), stroke, blood pressure and obesity.

CHD rates are now falling, albeit slowly. However a recent report on obesity¹ shows that the population is actually becoming steadily fatter. Currently around 13% of men and 16% of women are obese; but by 2005 almost a quarter of women will be obese if present trends are not reversed. The proportion of fat in our diets remains at around 40% of our total calorie (energy) intake, far from the Government's target of 35%. And although scientists are agreed that we should eat at least five portions of vegetables and fruit a day, in fact we eat only around two portions.

Rich people eat better, and are less likely to die from diet-related illnesses, than poor people. The richest 20% eat 20% more fresh green vegetables, 70% more fresh fruit, 72% more fish and over 400% more fruit juice than do the poorest 20%.² Twice as many women in social classes 4 and 5 were obese as in social classes 1 and 2.³

Research indicates that ignorance is not the reason why poor people have poorer diets.⁴ Fatty, sugary foods are often not only cheaper in terms of calories per pence, but are often ready to eat and so save on fuel costs. At the same time, it may not be worth 'risking' the expense of healthier foods the family might not know, like or eat. And with limited public transport and few nearby supermarkets or markets, those on housing estates are often restricted to using local shops which stock a limited range of products and which exploit their near monopoly status by charging very high prices.

Food growing in cities can and does help improve people's diets by providing access to fruit and vegetables, particularly to those on low incomes, as health authorities in Sheffield and Swindon (see cases 25, 25) have found. For many food growers unhappy about eating food sprayed with chemicals, but unable to afford or find organic produce, growing their own is the only solution. To cook traditional recipes many ethnic groups may require 'exotic' produce which is either prohibitively expensive or simply unavailable; again, growing one's own is a way around this problem (see cases 29, 32, 35).

Another advantage of food growing is that it is about positive action now, rather than self denial for long term benefit. There is great potential for introducing food growing to established healthy eating initiatives such as cookery clubs, School Nutrition Action Groups (see **Education** and

Glossary), luncheon clubs for the elderly, and food fairs, and for using food growing to reach groups, such as young people and men, who are often resistant to traditional healthy eating messages. Even very simple activities, such as herb growing, could help to stimulate an interest in food and its nutritional qualities.

Encouraging physical activity

As a nation, we are very unfit. The **Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey**,⁵ showed that, of a representative sample studied:

- ❖ only 8% were vigorously active at the level which encouraged a reduction in CHD risk
- ❖ nearly one-third of adult men and over two-thirds of adult women cannot sustain a walk of 3mph on a modest (5%) slope; even walking at that normal pace on level ground would be demanding for over half the women and one-third of men aged 55 to 74.
- ❖ while 80% thought most people needed to take more exercise to keep fit, 75% thought they did enough themselves, even when their activity levels were very low.

The benefits of regular physical activity are numerous. The Department of Health points out⁶ that exercise can reduce the incidence of strokes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and osteoporosis (in post-menopausal women). It is an important factor in preventing weight gain, and aiding weight loss and may reduce the risk of cancer.⁷

But for many of us, physical activity is now a form of leisure, not of work; 70% of all vigorous exercise comes in leisure time, and is freely chosen rather than unavoidable.⁸ As such, like most other forms of recreation, it requires access to amenities, money and time - none of which is available to all. It also requires motivation, which may be lacking for many people. Indeed, it may be the association between physical activity and (often competitive) sport, rather than physical activity *per se* which puts people off. Indeed, 38% of women and 24% of men said that they do not exercise because they do not consider themselves the 'sporty type'.⁹

Moreover, many people may feel that the benefits of exercise only come with vigorous physical activity. It is now acknowledged¹⁰ that regular, moderate activity is also beneficial and this may present a more attractive option to many people. The Department of Health's **Active for Life** campaign¹¹ recommends that we take moderate exercise for thirty minutes a day, five times a week, and has given the Health Education Authority (HEA) £9 million (to be spent over three years) to promote this message. The HEA is keen to promote physical activity as part of everyday life, and as part of local Agenda 21, and

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Growth Unlimited

71 Park Avenue North, London N8 7RS

Tel: 0181 340 4893**Contact:** Chris Shirley-Smith**Camden wide project to green the borough through gardening**

Background: *Growth Unlimited* (GU) was established in 1984 by the Community Development Unit of Voluntary Action Camden (VAC), aiming to put the many plots of derelict and vacant land in the borough to use. A community worker was employed to support and promote community activities and a Committee set up with representatives from voluntary, community and academic organisations, VAC and Camden Council.

Participants: GU employed two full time workers and a Gardener in the Community. It brought together participants from a wide range of backgrounds, particularly local residents, schools and young offenders, and also offered occasional student placements.

Activities: GU initiated a series of small community gardens, nature reserves and play spaces which were designed, managed and maintained by local community groups. Springing from this came the idea of *Camden Greenways*, the development of a series of green routes through the borough via tiny parks and gardens, well-kept window boxes and interesting, colourful streets. At the first 'window box weekend' held in 1986, volunteers filled and distributed boxes to residents on the route, a jazz band played, and community groups provided refreshments. Since then, the window boxes have not only been kept going but residents have also added their own. A variety of derelict sites were improved, a local artist worked with local people on a mosaic and a mural, and a video was produced by local people. GU also promoted the growing of miniature vegetables in containers on inner city estates.

The impetus was kept going by the establishment of a North London Community Gardens network which produced a regular newsletter, *Sprouts*, and ran events such as open days and musicals with local groups. A Horticulture Course was established for people with learning difficulties and eight people were trained. The Camden Greening Forum was also launched, drawing together a wide range of local groups and putting on an annual Green fair. In 1989 the Kings Cross County and Flower Show was started to celebrate what local gardeners were already doing. From 1990, a *Gardener in the Community* was employed to travel around on a colourful milkfloat visiting projects, carrying plants and materials and offering gardening advice and support to local people. GU also worked to develop links overseas and the project worker visited urban projects in eight European countries - a source of many ideas.

Funding and support: This came mainly from Camden Council and amounted to £56,000 a year. The *Gardener in the Community* was funded by Charitable Trusts and the private sector. GU supported groups with start up funds, lent tools, and promoted links with funders.

Benefits and problems: In 1993 GU set up Groundwork Camden which subsequently abandoned the scheme. However, the Camden Greening Forum, flower show and community gardens successfully continue. Many of the issues raised by GU have since been taken on board by Camden Council as mainstream policy - such as New Parks byelaws, dog control and greater community involvement in open spaces.

some of the 48 projects it funds are gardening schemes (see case 27). The HEA also promotes gardening in the television advertisements which accompany the campaign.

In fact, gardening is already a popular form of moderate physical activity. A recent Mintel survey¹² showed that 56% of adults spend around 2 hours a week gardening, and one in ten adults are very keen, spending at least 7 hours a week in the garden.

Food growing could also build upon one already popular concept - 'exercise on prescription' - where GPs 'prescribe' exercise at local leisure centres to their patients. In the same way, GPs could work with the local authority to 'prescribe' gardening. The bending and straightening, digging and carrying required exercise the whole body.

The regular physical activity involved in gardening may be an important element of maintaining health and mobility among older people. A survey of allotment holders¹³ showed that a quarter of them have had their gardens for over twenty years, and that nearly a third of gardeners are aged over 65. Many gardeners were positive about the benefits of gardening, mentioning eating fresh produce (67%), health and exercise (64%) or mental relaxation (54%). One person commented: 'My husband suffers from osteo-arthritis and has two replacement hips....I am certain that without our plots my husband would be chairbound.'¹⁴ During the research for this report contact was also made with two, extraordinary, octogenarian gardeners.

Promoting mental health

Six million people are diagnosed as mentally ill each year.¹⁵ The commonest problems are anxiety and depression, which account for 80% of mental illnesses; at any given point in time, over 20% of us will have some depressive symptoms.¹⁶ In 1991, 4,628 people killed themselves in the UK,¹⁷ a figure which MIND considers to be an underestimate. Socially disadvantaged groups are more likely to suffer from mental health, as are urban dwellers in general.¹⁸

Government has acknowledged the seriousness of the problem and the **Health of the Nation** targets on mental health are to:

- ❖ improve the health and social functioning of mentally ill people
- ❖ reduce the overall suicide rate by 15% by the year 2000
- ❖ reduce the suicide rate of severely mentally ill people by at least 33% by the year 2000

Government also recognises the contribution of physical activity, such as gardening, to improving mental health; 'Increasing levels of physical activity, particularly undertaken with others or in groups, has

the potential to contribute to the targets on mental illness by relieving stress, reducing social isolation and improving self-esteem and confidence.'¹⁹

Gardening has long been recognised as an important way of dealing with stress. For some gardeners, food growing is valuable time to be with friends and escape personal and work problems. For others the opportunity to be alone is often an essential way of coping with the pressures of daily life in a complex society.²⁰

In the Republic of Ireland, care was given to 'troubled people' by monks way back in the 14th century, through their involvement in monastery gardens.²¹ The Friends' Hospital in Philadelphia, USA, first opened a horticultural therapeutic unit in 1817, which is still running. In the UK, by the mid nineteenth century, local authorities were noticing that the well-being of patients involved in gardening work in the grounds was better than that of their richer co-residents who were incarcerated indoors, largely in seclusion and looked after by servants. Indeed, in its 1856 regulations, the Dorset County Asylum actually obliged inmates to be involved in outdoor work.²²

Horticulture continued to be used as a form of therapy in Britain until the 1960s when the then Minister of Health decided that the NHS should not be in the business of running farms, and closed them down. However, a more formal type of horticultural activity on hospital grounds took its place instead. In 1986/7, over 7,000 people with mental health problems were involved in horticulture,²³ though hospital closures have since reduced their numbers.

Gardening can be therapeutic for a number of reasons. The charity, Horticultural Therapy, (see **Sources of Useful Information**) argues that gardening therapy meets quite specific government criteria for mental health promotion.²⁴ These are:

Community presence: Too often, mentally ill people are segregated, kept away from everyday settings. The advantage of many horticultural projects is that they are in public places; a volunteer working on such a project in the middle of Battersea park²⁵ commented that, after four years, he still had no idea what his fellow gardeners' difficulties were - if any. Such integration helps lessen the stigma attached to people who are 'different'.

Community participation: Gardening requires some form of co-operation, while providing the opportunity for individuals to form more private friendships.

Choice: Horticulture offers a choice of how to work - alone, with a friend, or as part of a team - and what to do. Even small decisions - such as what to plant, or where - can help people attain a sense of independence.

23**Heart of our City project, (HOOC)**

Sheffield Health, Fulwood House, 5 Old Fulwood Road, Sheffield S10 3TG

Tel: 0114 271 1100

Contact: Freda Thompson or Martine Standish

Heart of our City healthy eating project

Background: HOOC was established in 1990 as a health authority-local authority partnership to reduce rates of coronary heart disease and improve dietary health in the most deprived areas of the city.

Site: The project area covered the South West of Sheffield

Participants: Communities in the project area.

Activities: Activities have included shopping basket surveys, working with local retailers to promote the availability of healthy, affordable food, and healthy cooking and eating skills development (bread making video and demonstrations at community events, fairs and festivals). In 1995, joint work with Green City Action, a local environment group, to hold a local health and environment festival, led to the development of a community forum in the area. HOOC was an active participant in local and city wide activity designed to promote local food production and access to health promoting gardening. The project came to an end in March 1996, when funding ran out, but details can be obtained from Martine (address above).

Funding and support: the project was supported by a range of sponsors, including the Health Education Authority and the local Health Authority.

Benefits and problems: The project has made a real contribution to the communities involved and lack of funding is putting an end to a very valuable project.

Competence: The opportunity to perform meaningful activities leads to a sense of satisfaction and of self worth. Gardening requires competence, in simple routines such as scattering seeds, or in complex tasks like pruning or plot design, as does cooking the produce grown. Indeed, many horticultural projects throughout the UK provide training for employment, both in sheltered and in commercial work places.

Respect: Horticultural projects provide a situation where respect for self, others and all forms of life can be learned. The officer at the Battersea project above remarked that even those clients with a history of violent behaviour rarely act in this way in the garden.

Cases 6, 12, 31 illustrate the therapeutic value of food growing activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of Health (DH) should acknowledge the importance of food growing activities in meeting the **Health of the Nation** targets on CHD/stroke, cancer and mental illness. The DH should work with the Department of the Environment to promote and fund food growing projects which make connections between environmental improvement, and physical and mental health.
- ❖ The DH should work with the Health Education Authority (through its National Catering Initiative), with MAFF and the DoE to promote healthy and environmentally sustainable catering in public institutions such as hospitals (for schools see **Education**, and for prisons see **Community development**), by funding innovative schemes which promote gardening in hospital grounds alongside healthy catering.

Local agencies

- ❖ Experimental initiatives in local authority owned or contracted catering services, for example, in homes for the elderly, care facilities and nurseries should be funded to explore the potential for raising the quality of the environment and human health.

1 *Obesity: Reversing the Increasing Problem of Obesity in England*; A report from the Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Forces, Department of Health, 1995
 2 Suzi Leather in *Your Food: Whose Choice*, edited by the National Consumer Council, HMSO, London 1992

3 *Health of the Nation* op.cit.

4 *Food and Low Income: a practical guide for advisors and supporters working with families and young people on low incomes*, National Food Alliance, 1994

5 Health Education Authority and Sports Council, *Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey: Main Findings*, HEA and Sports Council, 1992

6 *More People, More Active, More Often*, Department of Health, May 1995

7 *Oncology in Practice*, CIBA-Geigy in association with the European School of Oncology, Basle, Switzerland March 1995

8 *The Sporting Life: Sport, Health and Recreation in Urban Parks*, Michael Collins, working paper 1, Comedia/Demos, 1994.

9 *Allied Dunbar* op.cit.

10 *More People, More Active, More Often*, op.cit.

11 *Moving On: International perspectives on promoting physical activity* eds. Killoran, Fentem and Caspersen, Health Education Authority, 1994

12 *Leisure Time*, Mintel, 1995

13 *1993 Survey*, National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

14 personal communication

15 MIND Information: Mental Health Statistics, MIND, undated: deaths are due to suicides, drug and alcohol abuse and chronic dementia

16 *ibid.*

17 *ibid.*

18 *ibid.*

19 *More People, More Active, More Often*, op.cit.

20 Crouch and Ward, *The Allotment: Its landscape and Culture*, Mushroom Bookshop 1994

21 Alison Ryan, *Gardening, Mental Health and Community Care*, Horticulture Therapy 1995

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 *Services for people with learning disabilities, and challenging behaviour or mental health needs* Professor J L Mansell HMSO 1993

25 Alison Ryan, op.cit.

24

St Benedict's School

St Benedict's Road, Small Heath, Birmingham B10 9DP

Tel: 0121 772 0087

Contact: Rosemary Harvey (Head)

A school gardening project linking environmental awareness with healthy eating.

Background: St Benedict's is a school in inner city Birmingham. It has 500 pupils aged 4 to 7, most of which are of Asian origin. In the early 1980s the Head, who has a strong interest in environmental and health education and in a hands-on approach to learning, started a gardening project in the school grounds, with the aim of linking food growing and cooking to the school curriculum.

Site: Food growing takes place in the school playground. Most of the tarmac was dug up and put down to planting or wildlife areas.

Participants: All the children participate and parents, many of whom come from farming backgrounds, are very enthusiastic, although they have not given as much practical assistance as hoped. A gardener is employed for any heavy gardening work required.

Activities: The children grow potatoes, onions, runner beans, carrots, radishes, cabbages, lettuces etc. Attempts to grow Asian vegetables on the school stage have been unsuccessful due to a lack of light, although they valiantly persevere. There is also an after-school gardening club, and a cookery club where the children cook the produce grown (for instance cress sandwiches and vegetable soup). As the children can eat unhealthily at home, the Head thinks it essential to encourage healthy eating and cooking skills.

Parental involvement is vital too. Since 1989, weekly parents' workshops have been held (which the children often attend) to discuss issues such as the school curriculum, behaviour and health. Healthy eating discussions have recently focused on healthy lunchboxes, with some success. The school tuck shop stocks fruit and milk instead of sweets and chocolates. The school gardening project is thus one part of a holistic approach to health, the environment and learning.

Funding and support: The Head has raised funds from the Natwest Bank, Learning Through Landscapes (see **Sources of useful information**) and school funding events and has recently been awarded funding through the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB).

Benefits and problems: Food growing is closely linked to the curriculum and makes the subjects more interesting and relevant to the children. The gardening and cooking activities have helped develop the children's often limited vocabulary. They have also promoted discussions comparing cultural eating habits, and have improved children's behaviour and sense of responsibility. Lack of time, due to the national curriculum, is a problem. With the SRB funding, the school will convert an old bicycle shed into an interactive environmental area which will mean that even in poor weather the children can continue their gardening projects.

2.6 Leisure

To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilisation and at present very few people have reached that level.

Bertrand Russell

Promoting volunteering

Leisure covers a range of activities; as the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management¹ points out, it is 'an ever-changing concept that reflects current social and economic conditions and aspirations, adapting in response to consumer demand and expectations.' According to the Henley Centre for Social Forecasting, 'self-development' is becoming 'an increasingly important consumer motivation.' This has potentially huge implications for leisure policy makers who will have to plan for an increased demand for fitness provision, for opportunities to continue some form of education throughout one's life and for doing some form of voluntary service.²

In the UK, as elsewhere, our leisure activities depend heavily upon the market economy, which provides the leisure products and services we have come to require.³ In 1995 we spent around £110 billion on leisure and this figure is growing steadily.⁴ While on the one hand, the leisure and heritage industries have created 3 million jobs,⁵ on the other, those on low incomes and the unemployed who may not be able to 'buy' leisure, may have to do without. Organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and Common Ground are concerned at the extent to which the heritage industry is living off the past in an essentially unproductive fashion. It is conceivable that by concentrating unduly upon the past, our own present will not itself leave any positive legacy to the future.

More positively, voluntary work and purposeful leisure is playing an increasing part in many people's lives. In the UK today around 23 million people take part in voluntary work each year⁶ and 15% of the population do voluntary work at least once a week.⁷ In recognition of its social and economic importance, the Government's **Make a Difference Initiative** has allocated modest sums to promote volunteering, particularly among young people.

Urban food growing can promote volunteering in two ways. It can stimulate those who do not currently volunteer to do so. Second, it can encourage those who already volunteer to broaden the focus of their voluntary work.

For instance, food growing could be adopted by the immense range of voluntary groups already active in the community on other issues. Such groups include Community Service Volunteers, Settlements and Social Action Centres, Volunteer Bureaux, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Technical Aid Centres, Church and religious groups, Women's Institutes, ethnic support groups, mother and baby groups, cookery clubs, residents' associations, parent-teacher associations, environmental groups, clubs for the elderly and youth groups, to name but a very very few. For these sections of the community, food growing would not only be an end in itself but could also further their various aims, be they social, economic or environmental.

At present, the benefits system does not make it easy for people to volunteer. People receiving a Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support may volunteer, but must be actively seeking work and available for work at 48

hours notice. Those receiving Incapacity Benefit can do up to 16 hours voluntary work, but no more. In recognition of these problems the UK Government's report, **Make a Difference: An Outline Volunteering Strategy for the UK** recommends that 'A review should be undertaken to examine whether any change is necessary to benefits regulations, so as to ensure that volunteering does not adversely affect people's entitlement to benefit.' (R31).⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ Government should accept and implement the recommendations of its report **Make a Difference** to encourage more volunteering.

Local agencies

- ❖ Local agencies should work with local volunteer bureaux and others to promote volunteering, particularly in food-related activities. Relevant agencies should also support volunteering by providing funding, in-kind support and assistance where necessary.

Generating sustainable tourism

In 1991-2, 46% of mileage travelled in Britain was for leisure. A 1992 report for the Countryside Commission suggests that traffic on rural roads will increase by between 127% and 267% by 2025 - and more in some areas.⁹ Moreover, traffic calming measures in towns and cities might actually encourage more car owners and their vehicles to move out of the cities, either permanently, or for holidays.

Cities are often crowded, polluted, violent and ugly places in which to live; in contrast, the English countryside is a metaphor for tradition, tranquillity and beauty, and is heavily marketed as such by the heritage industry. Instead of the often vandalised urban green spaces, the countryside offers a range of amenities such as car parking, toilets, interpretation centres, activities, cafés and gift shops.

Tourism is now the most popular form of non-agricultural diversification for farmers. According to a 1991 Exeter University study, 24% of farms in England and Wales now have at least one tourism enterprise. Some 400,000 jobs in rural areas now rely on spending by visitors. The Centre for Rural Economy has called ours a 'post-productionist' countryside.¹⁰

Ironically, the increased popularity of the countryside has given rise to some of the very problems - overcrowding, pollution, vandalism - from which it was supposedly providing an escape. The UK government acknowledges that tourism in the countryside can create a number of social and environmental problems, by encouraging people to use their cars, creating overcrowding at popular sites, stimulating insensitive,

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Thamesdown Gold Card Nutrition Initiative

Borough of Thamesdown Civic Offices, Euclid Street, Swindon, Wilts SN1 2JH

Tel: 01793 526161 x 3432

Contact: Mr CG Thomas, Horticultural officer

A project to promote healthy diets and exercise among low income groups

Background: Since 1988 Swindon's Health Promotion Unit and Thamesdown Recreation services have been running a **Gold Card** scheme so that those on benefits can use leisure facilities at reduced prices. The idea for an allotments project arose out of this, in Spring 1995, as a means of increasing access of people on low incomes to fruit and vegetables, encouraging physical activity and making use of the many empty allotments in Swindon. Initially, however, there were obstacles to overcome:

- ❖ The initial costs of buying tools and equipment may be prohibitive
- ❖ Gardening knowledge is often lacking
- ❖ Knowledge of how to cook the produce once it is grown may also be lacking.

Site: Four quarter sized allotments; with four further plots lying vacant.

Participants: Three plots are cultivated by people on low income (eligible for a Gold Card). The fourth plot is used by students with learning difficulties from a nearby school.

Activities: The plots were cleared of weeds, fertilised and prepared for planting complete with runner bean wigwams and wind break fencing. The participants were leased the allotments free of charge and were provided with a range of seeds and equipment. Council officers have been available to offer advice on gardening and nutritionists have helped with cookery advice. After the success of the first year, four new quarter size allotments were prepared and the plots advertised in the locality but they have not yet been filled.

Funding and support: The project was funded by the Health Promotion Unit and Recreation Services. Seven local garden centres also contributed to the project.

Benefits and problems: The plot holders are keen and motivated and say that they now eat more, and a greater variety of vegetables than before. One woman has even got a job as a result of the project; she had applied for a post at the local supermarket but was turned down. A few months later the supermarket rang her up and offered her the job, having seen her on TV. The scheme has helped boost people's confidence and has encouraged them to think more about healthy eating. However the scheme has not expanded as was hoped - the four other prepared plots have still not been filled. This is mainly because there is no development worker working full-time to promote and manage the project.

unsustainable developments and creating tensions with the local community.¹¹

Rural tourism also expresses the UK's social inequalities. The majority of regular visitors to the country are rural or suburban, white, home-owners, well-educated, and employed in non-manual employment. In contrast, those who do not visit regularly, or at all, come predominantly from ethnic minority groups or inner-city areas, and are more likely to be single women/single mothers, elderly people without cars, disabled people, the unemployed, or young.¹²

It is therefore all the more important that attention be paid to improving the quality of urban green spaces, not only to relieve pressure on the countryside but also because, for as many as 40% of the urban population urban green areas may be their main or only access to the natural environment.¹³

Food growing in cities can not only green the urban environment but also stimulate the growth of urban tourism and the local economy. Some city farms and community gardens, for example, already attract huge numbers of visitors (see cases 26, 30, 32). There is also growing consumer interest in good bed-and-breakfast accommodation which offers guests home or locally grown produce.¹⁴ Enormous potential exists for tapping this demand. Food growing could link in with existing food or environment fairs (see case 23). Cities could also plan a whole infrastructure of food- and-garden-related activities (see cases 18, 22.), including green walks through the town, demonstration gardens (perhaps showing gardening fashions throughout the ages, or from different cultures), annual plant festivals or crafts fairs, exhibitions and community cafés-cum-garden centres in the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department for National Heritage should promote urban tourism by funding community-managed 'green' urban attractions, particularly those relating to food growing, accessible by public transport.
- ❖ The Department of the Environment, in its Planning Policy Guidance notes, should encourage local authorities to plan an integrated network of urban green spaces, including for growing food, which are accessible by public transport and by pedestrians and cyclists.

Local Agencies

- ❖ Local government departments should assist and encourage community groups to organise festivals, exhibitions and competitions which celebrate and promote local food, food growing and food culture. Some form of accreditation scheme for those local

restaurants, cafés and shops that buy local food should be considered.

- ❖ Local tourist boards should be encouraged to promote locally grown produce in hotel, bed and breakfast and other accommodation as a regional tourist attraction.

Developing arts and crafts

Gardening is a creative activity. It makes something out of nothing; out of soil springs lunch. Food growers find a thousand uses for abandoned supermarket trolleys and reconstruct the Crystal Palace out of bits of old window. Pig sties are made out of old glass bottles and Wendy House garden sheds from upturned boats (see case 35). There are herb spirals and grape 'dragons,' edible mazes and 'smelleries' of scented herbs (see case 20), windchimes and wind harps hung from trees.

For food growers, working with the complex environmental cycles played out year by year demands subtlety, patience and acuity. Gardening is a way of creating a sense of locality, and of one's place in that locality (see **Community development**). It is also a way of expressing and celebrating the individual, the quirky and the wonky. In so doing, food growing can become the focus for a multitude of arts and cultural activities.

As well as the more traditional harvest festivals, flower, fruit and vegetable shows and tasting sessions, community artists can (and do - see cases 36) work with local people on the allotment site to create sculptures out of wood and stone or recycled materials. Children can help make play equipment for the site; a way of encouraging them to generate their own creative play. Craftsmen and women can teach people skills such as coppicing, hedge laying and basketry. There is room too for open-air painting or drama classes on or near the plot- even for staging plays and concerts, as London's Regent's Park and Kenwood House successfully do.

1 Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, *Introduction to ILAM*, ILAM, undated

2 quoted in Ken Worpole *Towns for People* Oxford University Press 1992

3 J Robertson, *Future Work*, Gower Publishing Ltd, 1985

4 Institute of Leisure & Amenity Management, *A Guide to the Leisure Industry - Some Key Facts*, ILAM, fact sheet 95/8

5 *ibid.*

6 Volunteer Centre UK, *An Introduction*, Volunteer Centre, 1994

7 Ken Worpole, *op.cit.*

8 *Make a Difference : An Outline Volunteering Strategy for the UK*, Home Office 1995

9 *Leisure Landscapes: Leisure, Culture, and the English Countryside: Challenges and Conflicts*, Council for the Protection of Rural England, May 1994

10 *ibid.*

11 *Tourism and the Environment: Maintaining the Balance*, Department of the Environment, 1991

12 Council for the Protection of Rural England, *op.cit.*

13 *More People, More Active, More Often*, Department of Health, 1995

14 *Food Programme*, Radio 4, May 1996 broadcasts

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Meanwood Valley Urban Farm

Sugarwell Road, Meanwood, Leeds, LS7 2QG

Tel: 0113 262 9759

Contact: Sue Reddington

City Farm adjacent to a Leeds Housing Estate

Background: the Farm was set up in 1980 to provide training for young people, the unemployed and the disabled in horticulture, animal welfare and other skills, and to offer an opportunity for contact with the natural environment and a focal point for the local community.

Site: 13.75 acres of Council land, two miles from the city centre and next to housing estates.

Participants: Eight full time and three part time staff. In 1995 nearly 16,000 children and teachers participated in pre-booked activities co-ordinated by the Farm's Education Team.

Activities: The farm has a symbol-holding organic market garden and keeps a range of animals including poultry, goats and bees, (some of which are rare breeds) which are accredited to the RSPCA's Freedom Food Scheme. It also has a café, a shop through which farm produce is sold and a visitor's environmental centre. It produces an environmental education pack and holds courses for children on subjects such as rubbish, wool and spinning and the food chain. It also runs an enormously popular environmental youth club which the police have helped to develop, by taking young people out on trips to help break down barriers and address crime and drug issues. The farm also runs a playscheme for children from low income homes to benefit from activities during the summer holidays.

The farm, in partnership with Leeds Chamber Training services, runs a 40 place training scheme for the long term unemployed, preparing students for NVQ Level 1 Agriculture and Commercial Horticulture, Wordpower and Numberpower (literacy and numeracy courses). The farm also has a partnership with Social Services and MENCAP's Pathway Employment Services for people with learning disabilities. In 1993, the farm won the Leeds TEC Training Award - the first voluntary organisation in Leeds to win.

Funding and support: The farm has been funded by Leeds City Council's Leisure Services, Community Care and Training departments, from charitable trusts, the private sector and, to a small extent, from sales of produce.

Benefits and problems: The Farm offers training opportunities which help individuals recognise their value in society, and provides a place for people to go. A quote from the farm's newsletter illustrates this: "I am Dean, aged 14 and live next to the Farm. I think the Farm is very important to our Estate, it has helped us to understand about animals and given us things to do when we are bored. If it wasn't for the Farm giving us odd jobs we would be at home biting our toe nails. The Farm has gone to a lot of trouble to organise for football players to come and give there (sic) autographs and famous people come to the Farm. The Farm organises fairs and has improved rapidly and the Farm plants trees, which I like." There are some problems with vandalism and theft but these are minor considering the Farm's location. Another problem is that produce, being organic, is rather more expensive and tends to be bought by middle class people who drive in, rather than by the local community.

2.7 Sustainable neighbourhoods

This was one of my prayers: for a parcel of land not so very large, which should have a garden and a spring of ever flowing water near the house, and a bit of woodland as well as these.

Horace 65 BC

Reviving allotments

For many people, an allotment is perhaps the best known way of growing food in cities. They are, of course, designed precisely for that purpose and yet, even though interest in food growing is high and, arguably, rising¹ allotment provision and take-up vary dramatically. In some local authorities allotments are well-maintained and popular, with waiting lists for their use. In others they are neglected, apparently unwanted and threatened with conversion to other, non-food growing uses.

The introduction (see **Why now?**) noted that allotment law was out of date, complex and in need of reform. Certainly, the principles behind the recommendations elsewhere in this report, which urge policy makers to maintain and create a range of urban food growing spaces, apply with even more force to these ancient and invaluable amenities. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (see **Sources of useful information**) has a range of detailed proposals to support and develop the potential of allotments and is, itself, in need of support.

As well as the steady erosion by central government of legal protection for allotments, local authorities' budget for allotment provision is extremely low. Nonetheless, some councils do recognise their importance and are working to improve them. For instance, in 1990 Hackney council, at the residents' suggestions, spent £50,000 on transforming derelict garages behind their homes into 19 plots. Birmingham and Bristol also have good reputations for allotment provision and some of the examples (see cases 3 and 8) in this report are testament to the tenacity of local people in hanging onto their allotments. Their efforts should persuade central and local government to reassess their policy towards allotments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of the Environment should issue a Planning Policy Guidance note to local authorities emphasising the importance of maintaining and promoting allotments. Relevant legislation may also need to be amended and additional funds made available.

Local agencies

- ❖ Existing allotments should be protected by the local authority and by the local community. This is more likely if they are:
 - as close as possible to people's homes (the Local Government Management Board recommends a maximum distance of 200m)²

- well-maintained, even if not currently let
- provided with adequate facilities, such as water supplies, toilets, skips, lockable storage, secure fencing and so on
- vigorously promoted to the community
- ❖ New allotments might be created if there are allotments officers or trained gardeners appointed to visit sites, offer information and advice, particularly to new gardeners, promote and/or develop services such as free or low cost seeds and compost, and loan tools.
- ❖ New allotments should comply with high environmental standards and existing sites be encouraged, with the consent of plot holders, to phase out unsustainable growing methods.

Diversifying parks

The benefits of the public park are various; they provide green 'lungs' in an often polluted environment, encourage people to walk instead of drive, stimulate a sense of community pride in the locality and increase the attraction of the area for would-be investors, to name just a few.

Government policy has recently acknowledged, in its **Planning Policy Guidance note 17: Sport and Recreation**, that 'Use of land for open space is not less important than other uses.' And in March 1995, in recognition of the importance of parks and of the work of organisations such as Comedia, Demos and the Landscape Institute, (see **Sources of useful information**) the Department of the Environment held a conference to launch a new report, **People, Parks and Cities**³ documenting examples of best practice in parks management.

Despite public popularity, and inclusion in central government policy documents, it seems that lack of funds is leading to a decline in public parks. The Planning Exchange report to Glasgow City Council and the Development Agency concludes that in most cities expenditure on parks and open space has remained static or is declining.⁴ Of the funding that is available, 50% of is spent on the provision of sports pitches - a facility which is used by only 6% of the population.⁵ The 1995 budget cut Royal Parks spending by 6.5%; cuts planned for 1996 and 1997 will cut spending by a further 9%. Compulsory Competitive Tendering has led to cheaper grounds maintenance, but the savings are often not put back into the Parks budget. A survey by the London Boroughs Association in 1994 found that 'most boroughs stated that where savings had been made, they were normally released to the centre' - not back to the parks budget. Contractors rarely employ full

27**Healthy Gardening Group**

Sheffield City Council, Town Hall Chambers, Barkers Pool, Sheffield S1 1EN

Tel: 0114 273 4645

Contact: Valerie Cotter

City wide gardening action and support group

Background: The Group was set up in early 1995 as part of Sheffield's Health for All project, **Healthy Sheffield**, and with the involvement of Sheffield's Health Promotion unit, in response to increasing interest in gardening and local Agenda 21 issues. It aims to support and link projects and to promote the issue in the local authority and the community.

Site: Meeting rooms at the town hall.

Participants: A city-wide group comprising local authority and health authority representatives, environmental and allotments groups, a housing co-op and individuals.

Activities: The group recently secured funding for its GROW (Gardening, Resources, Opportunities and Wherewithal) project. GROW employed a researcher to compile a Gardening Directory, containing over 70 local entries - on everything from seed exchange to shredders, from compost to tool exchanges, courses and individuals who can help. It has also been funded to promote gardening to young women from ethnic minority communities as part of the Health Education Authority's **Active for Life** initiative, and hopes to launch a small grants scheme in 1996/7. A gardening strategy for the city, looking at local food production, is due out later in the 1996. The project also plans to work with local markets on developing retail outlets for locally produced food.

Funding and support: In 1995 the group received £1,000 from the Health Promotion unit and £500 from the Healthy Sheffield Development Programme

Benefits and problems: The Group is still at an early stage and meetings are not always as frequent as might be liked. However the project is an excellent example of a city wide, holistic approach to food growing.

time parks attendants, and this too has contributed to much of the vandalism and dereliction evident in British parks.

Lack of adequate funding is compounded by the absence of a statutory requirement to provide park land; what is more, parks maintenance is not included in Central Government's Standard Spending Assessment (see **Glossary**) for local authorities. Only 30% of local authorities have any kind of management plan for their parks despite the fact that, according to a Department of the Environment survey, **Making the Best Better**, 70% of respondents put parks, gardens and open spaces top of the list of London's main attractions⁶

There is real potential for parks to be used for food growing, as they were in the First and Second World Wars (see **Why now?**). Underused areas of parks can be turned over to food growing projects; this would add interest to what can be monotonous, flat open spaces. Members of the community taking on 'pocket parks' (see **Glossary**) could be encouraged to grow their own food. In one area of Manchester a local youth group has planted a community orchard and has recently taken on an allotment in the park too. (See case 33) Parks food growing projects have also proved a valuable educational resource (case 34).

One aim of a park is to provide aesthetic pleasure; if a food growing plot is perceived as ugly there is likely to be resistance to the idea. One possibility might be to involve the community in designing an ornamental food allotment (see also **Leisure**) containing varieties of edible plants such as ornamental cabbages, (although these are more decorative than edible), as well as pumpkins, courgettes, chives and other plants which produce very attractive flowers. Planting flowers among the vegetables is, in any case, important for organic gardening since some species attract natural predators which keep down pests; they may also, like nasturiums, (which sell at high prices in the smarter supermarkets) be edible. Another possibility is to grow 'exotic' and eye-catching vegetables, such as aubergines and chillis (although these would require a greenhouse - which could itself be a visitor attraction) and plant fruit and nut trees instead of ornamental varieties.

Vandalism can be a problem, but no more so than for any other trees and plants, and involving young people in their management may lower the incidence of vandalism (see case 33). One frequently voiced concern, that people might 'steal' the vegetables and fruit, is in fact a non-problem. They are there for the taking. In Bangalore, 25% of trees are fruit trees while Stockholm and Prague are full of apple, plum and pear trees.⁷ Local authorities could also help promote biodiversity in parks through organic-only policies and by promoting the use of non-commercial heritage varieties (see **Environmental improvement**).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of the Environment should amend legislation to make adequate parks provision and maintenance statutory, and issue a Planning Policy Guidance note to encourage food growing in parks
- ❖ The Treasury should make appropriate financial provision for parks in local authorities' Standard Spending Assessment and permit savings from Compulsory Competitive Tendering to go back into the parks budget for use in food growing and other community projects.

Local agencies

- ❖ Local communities should be involved in managing local parks and should be encouraged, where appropriate, to grow food in them
- ❖ Local authorities should provide basic safety and maintenance facilities in all parks, and consider additional facilities such as cafés and garden centres, linked to food growing.

Regenerating housing developments

Food is already grown in thousands of back gardens in the UK - for most people the most readily accessible land. The Local Government Management Board (LGMB)⁸ recommends for rear gardens that new 'Developments should provide the opportunity for a proportion of residents to grow food.' For people with no garden, one option is 'sharecropping' - using a neighbour's garden in return for a donation of some of the produce. Food can also be grown in window boxes, on balconies, up walls and on rooftops.

However, although the UK population is not increasing rapidly, the number of households is, as people choose to live in smaller groupings or separately. On present projections, the number of households in the UK will increase by 14% to 26 million by 2012.⁹ On the face of it then, it would appear that the need for land for food growing is in direct conflict with the need for new housing. Nonetheless, sustainable housing - even high density housing - can, with careful and imaginative planning, be compatible with food growing.

Thus, although the LGMB recommends a net density of 100 people or 40-50 dwellings per hectare, it also points to the existence of 'a range of activities and uses which require accommodation, not often recognised in the planning of conventional housing schemes: allotments, play areas, areas for communal events and celebrations, overspill

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Sanderson Kayser steelworks project

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Town Hall, Sheffield S1 2HH

Tel: 0114 279 7164

Contact: Yunus Ahmed

Community market gardens project on the grounds of a heavy industrial plant

Background: The steel works is currently in the process of upgrading and greening its facilities. After consultation with the Council, the site plans now incorporate a covered market garden using waste heat from the steelworks, to supply produce for local shops and restaurants. Vacant outhouses will also house community businesses and workshops.

Site: The steelworks is located in a deprived inner city area. Two and a half acres of the four acre site will be used for production.

Participants: The project is a partnership between the City Council, Sheffield Development Corporation, the Attercliffe Community Development Trust and a community group, the Lower Don Valley Forum. The project will provide employment and training for Asian workers living in the area and will specialise in 'exotic' vegetables for the local market.

Activities: The project is still at the planning stage. Land reclamation is an essential first step.

Funding and support: The project has received some funding from English Partnerships to carry out a feasibility study.

Benefits and problems: Although the project has been slow to develop it has immense potential. There is particular concern to ensure that appropriate community development support is provided and that local people get a chance to pilot production on a small scale, before taking over a large commercial enterprise.

parking...nature conservation areas etc.’¹⁰ At present there is a great deal of housing land which could be used for food growing and which, according to permaculturalist Bill Mollison, is inappropriately used, ‘It is now probable that the lawn cultures of affluent nations use more water, fertiliser, fossil fuels, biocides and person-hours than either the gardens or the formal broadscale agriculture of that country, or indeed any agricultural resource in the third world. Of the lawns developed today, perhaps 13% have any use as recreation, sport, or as rest areas. Most lawns are purely cosmetic in function.’¹¹

At present, most of the land surrounding existing private and local authority housing estates is lawned over. But cases 2 and 35 illustrate the creative ways in which residents have used this area for allotments and orchards. Creativity is also needed to integrate food growing with new housing developments on or near the urban fringe.

Although the green belt serves a very important function some planners are beginning to question its sanctity. Indeed, the LGMB¹² argues that the green belt can inadvertently increase urban sprawl. Unable to contain the development within town centres without encroaching a little upon the urban fringe, developers may simply place the development in a new, roomier part of the country, so attracting a host of further developments such as shops, and other amenities. The LGMB therefore calls for ‘a more subtle approach...recognising the varied and often competing demands on open land, establishing zones reflecting different priorities, and moving from **belt** to **wedges**’ (which are more favourable to wildlife).

At present, planning law makes no distinction between developments that complement and enrich the environment and those which do not. There is a case to be made for modifying planning law to allow for low impact, sustainable development on green belt land. Fears that this might create a rash of ever expanding housing could be dispelled by tightening up Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (see **Glossary**). Clusters of such developments, growing a proportion of their own food, and possibly even generating their own energy, can enrich the environment while reducing pressure on green spaces in cities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of the Environment (DoE) should issue a Planning Policy Guidance note to advise local authorities to make provision of land for food growing a criterion for granting planning permission to developers.
- ❖ The DoE should modify planning legislation to enable sustainable, low impact developments to be built on green belt land. To ensure that these developments do not

expand beyond their original purpose, the Department should tighten up Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning act, binding the developer to the terms of the agreement and removing the developer’s right of appeal to the Secretary of State.

Local agencies

- ❖ All local authority owned and managed land, but particularly land near housing, should be maintained with minimum, and ideally no use of chemicals and other unsustainable inputs.
- ❖ Local authorities should provide information, advice and equipment to support the food growing initiatives of Tenant Managed Companies and residents’ associations on housing estates.

1 Crouch and Ward, *The Allotment, Its Landscape and Culture*, Mushroom Bookshop 1994

2 *Sustainable Settlements*, Local Government Management Board 1995

3 *People, Parks and Cities*, Department of the Environment, 1995

4 *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal*, Comedia/Demos 1995.

5 *Park Life* op.cit.

6 *The Future of Urban Parks*: Findings of the Symposium held on 25th October 1994 at Church House Conference Centre, London

7 *The Gaia Atlas of Cities*, Herbert Girardet, Gaia Books Ltd 1992

8 Local Government Management Board, op.cit.

9 *Sustainable Development: the UK strategy*, January 1 HMSO, 1994

10 Local Government Management Board, op.cit.

11 Bill Mollison, *Permaculture: A Designer’s Manual*, Tagori Press 1988

12 Local Government Management Board, op.cit

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Ashram Acres

23-25 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham B11 1LU

Tel: 0121 773 7061

Contact: Judith Weltman

Inner-city community project growing organic Asian and Caribbean produce

Background: Ashram Acres was started in 1981 by the Sparkbrook Ashram Community House, a group of Christians living communally and working in the inner city. A majority of Sparkbrook residents have origins overseas - in India, Bangladesh, Ireland, the Caribbean, but predominantly Pakistan. Problems in the area include infrastructure decay, poor housing, discrimination and unemployment. The project aims to be:

- ❖ a community resource
- ❖ a food co-op based on trust supplying fresh vegetables to meet local tastes and cooking styles, to grow these organically and to support the organic movement
- ❖ a place where people can contribute whatever their skills or background, can exchange and learn new skills, and can take part in activities which are not solely money-related

The site: Ashram Acres occupies 3/4 acre of back gardens behind a Victorian terrace, in two houses of which the Ashram Community Service Project has offices and Ashram Community House, its residence. There are two polytunnels, a solardome, cold frames and outhouses for 2 goats, for milking and dairy work, and for the farm office.

Participants: Apart from a few years when the project had a paid horticulturalist, the garden has been run entirely by volunteers- a member of the Community House as the main worker - and interested locals, people referred from the Birmingham Volunteer Bureau, WWOOFers (see **Sources of useful information**), workers sponsored by international organisations and schools. The Employment Preparation Unit sends clients for 3-6 month placements. Local schools visit and take saplings from the plantation set up by BTCV to plant in their school yards. Women call to pick their own vegetables and children come to feed the animals, collect eggs and milk the goats. A management committee of subscribers meets monthly and a new basis for membership is being developed for those who cannot pay in cash.

Activities: The garden grows organic callaloo, fenugreek, spinach, pumpkin shoots, garlic leaves and much more, and keeps goats for milk and hens for eggs; produce is sold on site and at stalls at events. Ashram Acres also holds workcamps of young overseas volunteers and has run playschemes for children from neighbouring streets. Volunteers help maintain gardens for pensioners and disabled people and undertake gardening projects for other organisations and centres such as the Hindu temple. Every Saturday, work-ins are held.

Funding and support: The project has, up until now, been financed mainly by subscribing members who receive a share of produce to that value. Money is also raised from charitable trusts, sales on site and at events. The local community donates left over rice and chapatis for the animals and sometimes pasture the goats in their gardens to keep their weeds down.

Benefits and problems: The project is well known in the area, provides otherwise unobtainable vegetables, the opportunity to become involved in a number of activities, learn new skills and show how people can use their own backyards to produce vegetables.

3.1 Issues affecting food growers in cities

Oh I am a cat that likes to Gallop about doing good

Stevie Smith, The Galloping Cat

Section two has demonstrated the many benefits of growing food in cities. But inevitably, as with all community initiatives, urban food growing projects are bound to face some difficulties along the way. This final section looks at some of the main problems that have been encountered and how they might be overcome. It is far from being a comprehensive guide, but, together with further details from some of the organisations listed in **Sources of useful information**, it provides a starting point for those wanting to grow food.

Land

It is not always easy for people to find out who owns the land they want to use for food growing. Around 87% of the land in the UK - both urban and rural - is privately owned; only 13% is under government control.¹ The Council's property services department will be able to say whether the land is publicly or privately owned but, if the latter, it may not know who the owner is. In this case, the prospective food grower may either have to ask shops and residents in the area for information, or contact the Land Registry, for information on who owns the land and on what terms. A district branch can be found in the telephone directory.

In theory, details of land ownership are recorded in the land register. However, 'Although the Land Registry has details of more than 15.5 million registered properties in England and Wales...there are still many millions of properties not yet registered, for which the Registry holds no information.'² Only land **sold** (as opposed to inherited or given) is obliged to be recorded and even this list is incomplete. Landowners may escape registration by, for example, 'renting' the land to themselves.³

The **Sustainable neighbourhoods** section suggests ways in which some local authority land could be used for growing food. However, the potential for food growing on public land can be hampered by the fact that it may be managed by any of a number of local authority departments - from Housing to Highways. This can give rise to contradictory policies, despite the attempt at co-ordination by means of Development Plans (see **Glossary**).

There is also the issue of derelict land. The Council for the Protection of Rural England suggests that 5% of urban land lies vacant. In London alone 5,600 acres of land - an area the size of Westminster - is unused.⁴ Over the last 10-15 years, local authorities have been selling off land to raise revenue and are obliged, according to audit rules, to sell on the open market to the highest bidder, which is likely to favour commercial over community or environmentally oriented activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Department of the Environment should ensure, by legislation if necessary, that all land is registered and that information regarding land ownership is freely available to the public.
- ❖ The Department of Trade and Industry should amend audit regulations to enable local authorities to sell or rent land to community groups for socially or environmentally beneficial purposes, even if they are not the highest bidders.

Local agencies

- ❖ Local authorities should clarify land ownership details in their area and make this information readily available to the public.
- ❖ Land management and use should be co-ordinated among local government departments, and local communities should be involved in such decisions.

Contamination

The 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP) on soil⁵ identifies five main areas of concern, one of which is soil contamination. The RCEP recommends that Government should draw up and implement a long term soil protection policy for the UK, and that sites should, wherever practicable, be recovered for beneficial use. The 1995 Environment Act requires local authorities to survey land for contamination, and the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance note 23 states that 'Access to information is an essential aspect of all the pollution control regimes.' However, government has not provided additional funding either for the surveys or for remedial action.

The health risks of eating food grown in urban areas are not usually as great as some might imagine. Lead is probably the most common contaminant and constitutes the main risk to urban food growers. Small children are most vulnerable; lead interferes with their vitamin D production and mental development. The government sets safety limits on lead presence in soil, though compared with the Soil Association's recommended maximum of 100mg of lead per kg of dry soil, and even the EU's 300mg, the Department of the Environment's maximum limit of 500mg of lead/kg of dry soil is high.⁶

However, the main source of lead pollution is not from soil but from car exhausts; a decreasing problem since the introduction of lead-free petrol. Lead accumulates on the surface of vegetables and

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Gorgie City Farm

Gorgie Road, Edinburgh EH11 2LA

Tel: 0131 337 4202**Contact:** John Percival**A city farm providing curriculum based educational services**

Background: The city farm was started in 1982 to provide a focus for the community and to demonstrate the workings of a farm. Gorgie Farm is there to show people what real farming is like. Local volunteers cleared the site and set up a management committee. Once the farm was in existence, staff were employed to manage it.

Site: Two acres

Participants: Ten paid staff in addition to volunteers who range in age from 10 to over 70. The farm has 100,000 visitors a year, including many school visits.

Activities: The farm keeps a variety of animals (cows, horses, goats, pigs, sheep, hens, ducks, pheasants, tortoises and rabbits) and grows fruit and vegetables which are sold to the public and to a nearby salad bar. The farm also sells flowers, bedding plants and compost and provides a range of educational services. In Autumn 1994, the new Education Centre was opened, offering facilities for primary schools including an overhead projector, CD ROM, video equipment and a display room for exhibitions. It provides curriculum-based teaching packs and regular workshops on themes such as **Sheep and Wool**, **Harvest**, and **Chicken and Egg**. In June 1995 two in-service sessions were run for teachers who were new to the farm's activities. Schools in the Lothian area also receive a quarterly newsletter with information on the farm's activities. The farm is a venue for one school's lunchtime club, while another comes for weekly practical sessions. A part time education officer co-ordinates activities and liaises with schools and environmental organisations. There is also support for children with learning difficulties and other disabilities.

A Young City Farmers club meets every Saturday to work on the farm. In 1994/5, four school children did work experience placements on general farm duties. The farm also provides adult education courses including weaving and spinning and has now set up life skills classes funded by the National Lottery Charities Board on a three year programme. Provision for secondary education is still in its early stages.

Funding and support: The farm has been supported since its beginning by a range of national, district and regional public and private sector funds. Today it has a turnover of £180,000 a year. £100,000 of this is from the Regional Council and Edinburgh District Council while around £35,000-£40,000 is generated from the on-site café. About 5% comes from vegetable sales, and the remainder from admission, school parties and donations. Members of the farming community support the farm in many ways; by providing straw and hay, grazing, helping with breeding programmes and so on.

Benefits and problems: As the farm has grown, the opportunities for volunteering have reduced since it has demanded increasing levels of professional skills. The farm is now attempting to regain its community based focus.

is not actually taken up by the roots. It can therefore be quite easily removed by washing or scraping. Furthermore, if the pH (acidity) level of soil is maintained above 7.5 (by adding one part of organic matter to three parts of contaminated soil), lead uptake by the plant is prevented and cadmium uptake is reduced.⁷ The Henry Doubleday Research Association (see **Sources of useful information**) publishes a list of hedging species which can take up pollutants in the soil and act as barriers to air borne pollution. Another solution is to avoid contact with the contaminated soil altogether by growing crops in containers or raised beds which contain locally produced compost or other growing media.

It is worth bearing in mind that, such risks as there are from eating city grown food, should be balanced against those of eating food grown in the countryside. This, unless it has been produced organically, is likely to have been treated with an array of chemicals. Although government sets residue limits for all of these, some vegetables have been found to contain high residues of toxic pesticides - in 1994 up to three times the Acceptable Daily Intake for some samples.⁸ Furthermore, agricultural chemicals, both here and abroad, are used not only on vegetables and fruit but also in the production of meat and animal products. Many of these chemicals are very persistent and have also been found in processed foods such as chocolate.⁹ Avoiding fruit and vegetables is not, therefore, the solution to potential contamination.

There may be suspicions, though, based on community knowledge of what land was used for in the past, that the land in question is heavily contaminated. In these circumstances the best solution is to avoid growing food until professional sampling tests have been undertaken. Some local authorities already provide a list of laboratories in the area which undertake soil testing. The other alternative is for people to contact a laboratory themselves, by looking in the telephone directory. Some universities or colleges may be willing to undertake soil tests for community projects for free or at low cost.

If the land **is** found to be contaminated, according to the 'polluter pays' principle, the polluter is responsible for cleaning it up. However, it is often very hard to determine who this is and often the culprit may be dead; a great deal of urban contamination is the legacy of Victorian industrialisation. In this case, the owner becomes responsible for the clean up, though ascertaining land ownership can also be difficult (see above). Due to lack of funds local authorities are forced to limit decontamination only to areas that are to be developed, though most land reclamation is now undertaken by private developers who have the available funds.

If the land cannot be cleaned up, one way of dealing with contaminated land might be to grow a non-food crop, such as hemp, which has a variety

of uses,¹⁰ and which can reduce the toxicity of the soil after a few seasons, thus enabling food to be grown at a later date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government:

- ❖ The Department of the Environment, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department for Trade and Industry should implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on soil contamination.

Local agencies

- ❖ Relevant local government departments should work with local academic institutes and laboratories to provide food growers with soil sample testing at subsidised rates.
- ❖ As a part of planning permission, local authorities should require developers to clean land adjacent to the development, up to food growing standards.

Water

Access to water is, of course, vital for food growing projects and the drought in 1995 highlighted what is becoming a serious problem, not just for food growers but for everyone. In some areas, water demand has increased by up to 70% in the last thirty years. In 1993, the National Rivers Authority found rivers were running at abnormally low levels in 40 locations.¹¹ These reduced water levels concentrate pollutants, lower the levels of oxygen available and increase water temperatures.¹²

Households, concentrated in urban areas, account for half the water used for public supplies and around a third of this is flushed down the lavatory. Furthermore, the water companies supplying the UK lose between 8 - 32% of the water they deliver because of leaky pipes.¹³ Although the 1995 Environment Act places a direct duty upon them to promote water conservation there is no penalty system for excessive use. In Arizona, on the other hand, water companies can be fined up to \$10,000 a **day** if they do not keep within prescribed limits.¹⁴

Food growing in cities would appear to increase the demand for water at exactly the time when there is pressure to use less. However, depending on how the food is grown, and what the land was used for previously, growing food may use no more - and possibly even less - water than before. The substitution of vegetable plots for lawns, for example, may save water¹⁵ as evapotranspiration is lessened. Mulching and composting also increase

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Restore

Manzil Way, Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1YH

Tel: 01865 790193

Contact: Rosie Hallam

Food growing project for people with mental health problems

Background: Restore was set up in 1977 by the father of a psychiatric patient, and the patient's consultant psychiatrist, as an alternative to Industrial Therapy. It aimed to enable those with mental health problems to gain skills and confidence, and to ease the transition between hospital occupational therapy and employment or voluntary work. Drawing on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, a pilot project was started in the grounds of Littlemore hospital. Money was raised from charitable and businesses and staff recruited from the STEP government unemployment scheme. After a few years, Restore moved to its own premises.

Site: Three acres at the allotment site for food growing; other activities are at Manzil Way.

Participants: Eleven full time staff (four of them at Elder Stubbs) and 80 workers, 15 of whom work at Elder Stubbs every day. The workers are referred by psychiatric hospitals, GPs and social services. They experience, or are recovering from, severe mental health problems. Workers' progress is assessed by Community Psychiatric Nurses and Restore's staff through regular meetings which the worker attends. Around 10 workers move on each year.

Activities: These include woodwork, screen and hand press-printing, basketry, work at the garden centre, marketing and sales and food growing. When, in 1989, Restore took on the site at Elder Stubbs, the land was gradually reclaimed from dereliction and the workers had to adjust to working in an open setting alongside other allotment holders. The site now produces vegetables, herbs, soft fruit, top fruit and willow (for basketry). Produce is sold at the shop in Manzil Way, taken by horse and cart to local housing areas or sold at local events. A crafts residency has been supported by Oxford's Museum of Modern Art and trellises and sculptures have been created. Three buildings have been constructed at the allotment site for shelter, craft work and a canteen. The canteen provides training in cookery and other domestic skills and the workers help to cook lunch every day. Some of the food grown is made into jams and pickles for sale. Restore also runs NVQ courses in retail training and Garden Centre Management as well as training in literacy and numeracy. Some workers also undertake specialist work in peoples' gardens, which again increases contact between workers and the outside community. Future plans include constructing more buildings on site and developing a box scheme (see under Local Food Links in **Sources of useful information**) with the other Elder Stubbs allotment holders (see case 21).

Funding and support: Restore is a charity. Around 60% of its income comes from statutory bodies. Between 15-30% is generated from product sales (about £80 a week); private sponsorship, the European Social Fund and grants from charitable trusts make up the remainder. Clients at Restore are mostly on benefits and do not earn money from the work.

Benefits and problems: Workers gain skills and self confidence, learn to interact with the wider community, and to control aggressive behaviour. There has been much support from other tenants of the Elder Stubbs site. There have been some problems with theft and break ins but these have hardly hindered the project.

the level of residual water in the soil and reduce evaporation.

And of course the water used on plants need not be first use, drinking quality water. Rain water can be collected in water butts and recycled grey water (see **Glossary**) can be used for watering. On average, around 46% of all water supplied to a household goes down the drain as grey water,¹⁶ where instead it could be used to water the garden. Indeed, waste water, which contains nutrients, has even been shown to increase crop yields.¹⁷ Water reuse packages have now been developed which connect grey water directly to the garden or to the toilet. These systems are becoming widespread in the USA but are still mostly at the research and development stage in the UK where plumbing systems and regulations differ from the US. However one recycling package, the Pressure Butt¹⁸ is now commercially available although installing it is not cheap - around £1,200 in an old home and half that in a new one. Anglia Water has also developed a treatment process that can make grey water suitable for toilet flushing. The first domestic trial unit is now in operation and is undergoing site trials; the results obtained will be used to calculate its cost effectiveness. A larger sized commercial system is also being developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Central government

- ❖ The Environment Agency should set limits on per capita water abstraction by water companies, set leakage targets, and penalise companies failing to comply with these limits while ensuring that these costs are not passed on to consumers.
- ❖ The DoE should commission further research into household grey water systems, where necessary amend planning legislation and, through local authorities, provide grants to households installing such systems.

Money and other inputs

The amount of money required by a project obviously depends on its size and whether or not the project is to rely entirely on volunteers. For individual food growers, financial support is usually neither expected nor received. For groups, however, some form of financial support is usually essential, at least at the beginning. This section looks at possible sources of funds and help in kind which are available.

Money

Europe: The European Fund and the European Regional Development Fund are potentially fruitful

sources of money. However, for many people hoping to set up a project, the idea of braving the Brussels bureaucracy is unthinkable. Some local authorities and voluntary organisations have experience in this area and can guide people through the system. Projects funded by the European Union are almost always partnerships between local authorities, projects and sometimes business, and often link up with similar projects elsewhere in Europe.

Central Government and QUANGOs: Starting points for groups might include:

- ❖ Single Regeneration Budget
- ❖ **Make a Difference Initiative** (Department of National Heritage)
- ❖ Environmental Action Fund (Department of the Environment)
- ❖ Countryside Commission
- ❖ National Lottery Charities Board
- ❖ **More People, More Active, More Often initiative** (Health Education Authority)
- ❖ Training and Enterprise Council funds (contact local branch)

As with funds from Europe it often helps if projects involve partnerships. The other partners might also be able to advise on, for instance, preparing applications.

Charitable Trusts: For national trusts, the best sources of information are the **Directory of Grant Making Trusts**¹⁹ and the **Guide to the Major Trusts**.²⁰ The local authority or council for voluntary service may have a computer programme such as **Funder Finder** which contains information on funding sources that local groups can use. They may also be able to point projects towards local charities that might be interested in providing funds.

Businesses: Local businesses might also be willing to provide funds or support in-kind. Nationally, many large companies have departments to support community initiatives and the Directory of Social Change's **Guide to Company Giving**²¹ and **Major Companies Guide**²² lists all company donors. The Shell Better Britain Campaign, as well as providing funding, also produces **Interactive**, a free annual guide which contains a very full list of voluntary organisations, their activities, their publications and possible sources of funding. The Campaign also publishes a separate sheet on funding bodies and advice. BT might be willing to provide funding through its BT Environment Week funds, while Barclays' Site-Savers campaign specifically funds

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Calthorpe Community Gardens

258-274 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8LH

Tel: 0171 837 8019**Contact:** Steve Place**Community run organic gardens in inner city London**

Background: The gardens grew out of a successful campaign by local residents to prevent the Council developing a plot of derelict land. Residents also gained permission to manage the land for the community. One of the residents had a background in planning and arranged for the Council to fund a community planning exercise. 10,000 residents were leafleted with questionnaires (generating a 20% response) and exhibitions were held at the local shopping centre. Around 70 people attended the planning session, where a community garden was planned. Calthorpe Community gardens is now a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee with a management committee of 15 people.

Site: The 1.2 acre site has seating and lawn space, ornamental shrubs and flowers, a football/netball court, community building and a small food growing area with room for nine 4' x 2' beds, another small plot and a 15' x 10' polytunnel.

Participants: The project employs one co-ordinator, two full time garden rangers and six part time staff. There are around 35,000 visits to the site a year (150 a day in summer and 50 a day in winter). Locals are encouraged to help with the gardening. The gardens have a membership of 60, 65% of whom are Bangladeshi (thanks to a committed Asian development worker in the area). Almost all of the children involved in the gardening activities are Bangladeshi. Demand for plots is huge and vastly exceeds supply.

Activities: The 4' x 2' beds are cultivated by children who mostly grow food. Half the polytunnel is used by 7 Bangladeshi women, ranging in age between 20 and 50, who grow tomatoes there. They also cultivate a plot where they grow coriander and spinach. The other half of the polytunnel is used by adults with learning difficulties; they also have an outside plot where they grow sweetcorn, beetroot, radishes and tomatoes. Wheelbarrows, an old filing cabinet and plastic barrels are also used as containers for planting. The project provides participants with tools, seeds and compost.

Funding and support: The project has a turnover of around £150,000 a year. Some 60% of this comes from the Council, 25% from charitable trusts and 15% is self generated (the project has a lunchtime café and charges for the use of the football ground and netball court).

Benefits and problems: Community involvement has been strong ever since the project began. Women are particularly involved and 14 out of the 15 council members are women, mainly from working class backgrounds. Some of them have gone onto professional employment. The project also plans to involve local schools more in the project's activities; at present, schools tend to visit the nearby Camley Garden wildlife site instead. Steve, the co-ordinator, is applying for funding to run workshops with local schools.

activities which put derelict or vacant land to good use.

Local agencies: Although local authorities receive no specific funding for local Agenda 21 activities, the aim of sustainable development should in any case be informing every aspect of their policy and practice. Local authorities may consider making funds for local food growing projects available under community development, economic development, education, environment, leisure and planning budgets, to name but a few. Similarly health authorities and trusts may fund food growing projects to help meet **Health of the Nation** targets on diet and mental health, and to increase physical activity.

Credit Unions: Members of a credit union must share a common bond of community (living in the same neighbourhood), occupation, or association (for instance of religion or ethnicity). All of these may be appropriate for food growers who could either set up their own food growing credit union or join an existing one. (see **Glossary** and **Sources of useful information**)

Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS): LETS-Link UK (see **Glossary** and **Sources of useful information**) have recently launched LETS-EAT to promote links between food and LETS schemes. Tools, seeds, gardening skills, and produce is often exchanged on LETS and shops and businesses could buy and sell food on LETS.

Support in-kind

For many projects lack of money has simply made them all the more resourceful. With a little lateral thinking and a great deal of persuasive charm, projects have managed to get hold of essential inputs for free or at very low cost. These include:

- ❖ Site surveys and garden design by local college students
- ❖ Leaflets and posters designed and produced by local college students
- ❖ Cheap or free deliveries of manure from local stables
- ❖ Free deliveries of leaf litter and wood chips from landscape contractors
- ❖ Free deliveries of rotten produce (for compost) by local greengrocers
- ❖ Free window panes from skips, for use as greenhouses
- ❖ Sharing tools among projects

- ❖ Setting up 'seedbanks' (envelopes and a cardboard box do the job very nicely)

- ❖ Visiting car boot sales

Projects have also managed to raise their own funds by:

- ❖ Selling fresh produce as well as jams, chutneys and meals
- ❖ Holding fund-raising jumble sales, cake-sales and discos
- ❖ Selling plants
- ❖ Selling gardening and design skills

People, knowledge and skills

At their best, community-led projects are well organised, managed and motivated. However they can also be disorganised, ad-hoc affairs which eventually fizzle away. Local government and voluntary sector organisations can help groups organise themselves and maintain the momentum of their work. This section identifies three organisational hurdles which many groups have encountered and suggests ways over them.

Starting up

There is a great deal of gardening information available and some of the most dedicated and successful food growers have taught themselves from books, trial and error. However, many people living in cities have no links with the land and no horticultural knowledge and find the prospect of starting from scratch rather daunting. Some possible ways for food growers to obtain support and advice in the early stages include:

- ❖ Joining a local or national gardening organisation (see **Sources of useful information**)
- ❖ Going on a gardening course, organised by a national or local organisation, or by the local authority
- ❖ Learning from friends, or buying/loaning books.

For information and advice on organisational matters such as charity law, Public Liability Insurance and financial management the local Council for Voluntary Service or Volunteer Centre (in the telephone directory) may be able to help. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers has particular experience in Public Liability Insurance issues.

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Manchester Youth Group,

Trinity House, Grove Close (off Platt Lane), Rusholme, Manchester M14 5AD

Tel: 0161 225 1064

Contact: Pauline Hocking

Youth group growing food in a local park

Background: The youth group meets regularly to discuss issues ranging from racism to drugs to the environment. Some members have become increasingly interested in environmental issues and particularly in growing plants and trees as a way of taking control of their lives. They have been involved in launching a local Agenda 21 youth network in the city called ***Our Manchester Our Future.***

Site: An area the size of a small football pitch in the local park. The group has also recently secured an allotment in the park, previously cultivated organically.

Participants: The group is a real mixture of people; ages range from 12 to 25 and there are a diversity of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Some members have disabilities. Close relationships and friendships have been formed as a result of the group.

Activities: In April 1994 Pauline approached the Council, who granted the group permission to plant an orchard in one area of the park. Planting began in November - the Mayor planted the first tree. In all, 240 trees were planted - mainly apples but also mulberry trees and some wild food trees. An area was also set aside for wildlife. The group has celebrated the planting with a party and a 'wassailing' around the apple trees. The group are now beginning to set to work on the new allotment.

Funding and support: The Council provided the project with nearly £5,000 through European funds. Most of this was spent on trees. The young people took part in workshops throughout the planting weekend and, for their labours, were rewarded with a big party with food. All the volunteers donated their time, free. They were helped by an extremely helpful and knowledgeable tree officer and by an 'apple mad' contact of Pauline's.

Benefits and problems: Fortunately, the orchard has been vandalised very little as the park is very well used and because the project has involved so many local people, especially the young people from the area. Other similar projects have been inspired in the Manchester area although, sadly, this year no more money was available from European funds as the council did not have the necessary matching funding.

Managing the project

Many projects are started by one enthusiastic, motivated individual. However, this individual may lose interest and/or simply run out of steam, and if there is no clear mechanism for keeping the project going it may simply fold. The following systems can help:

- ❖ Forming links with other local groups. Sheffield (case 23) has a Healthy Gardening Group made up of local and health authority officials, voluntary groups and individuals. Bradford also has a food growers' network, which is also a subgroup of the Bradford Environmental Action Trust, BEAT (see **Sources of useful information**), as does Bristol
- ❖ Raising funds to employ someone to take responsibility for the project; alternatively, persuading someone who is already employed doing similar work to take the project on
- ❖ Encouraging members of the project to invest, financially, in the project. The sums involved need not be large but they demonstrate commitment and can often attract matching funds from other sources.

Sustaining motivation

Maintaining interest in the project after the initial excitement and enthusiasm has died away can be difficult. Possibilities for so doing include:

- ❖ City-wide food growing festivals, meals and shows with prizes, which can be linked to national events such as **Environment Day**, **Tree Week**, Common Ground's **Apple Day**, the Soil Association's **Organic Harvest Month** and Learning through Landscape's **National School Grounds Day** (see **Sources of useful information**)
- ❖ Visits to other projects, to learn new ideas, share information and restore fading oomph
- ❖ Generating publicity; articles in the press, interviews on the radio, and posters and flyers in local shops
- ❖ A food growers' library, with a range of books and magazines, in a local café might benefit the café and provide an opportunity for people to meet and exchange information on a regular basis.

1 *This Land is Our Land*, Marion Shoard, Paladin, 1987

2 Land Registry, *The Open Register - A guide to infor-*

mation held by the Land Registry and how to obtain it, explanatory leaflet 15, the Land Registry, undated

3 *The Land is Ours Information Pack*, The Land is Ours, 1996 (see also *Sources of useful information*)

4 CPRE, (London) *Derelict Land Survey* 1994

5 *Sustainable Use of Soil*, Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, HMSO, 1996

6 Henry Doubleday Research Association, *Organic Gardening Advice: Lead and the Gardener* GGG3, HDRA, 1995

7 United Nations Development Programme, *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*, publication series for Habitat II, volume One, UNDP, 1996

8 Friends of the Earth, *Prescription for Change: Health and the Environment*, FoE 1995

9 For more information on chocolate and chemical inputs, contact the Women's Environmental Network (see *Sources of useful information*)

10 The Bioregional Development Group (see *Sources of Useful Information*) has undertaken extensive work on hemp growing for fibre production

11 Global Action Plan, *Action on Water*, GAP, undated

12 *Using Water Wisely: A Response to the Government's Consultation Paper*, Friends of the Earth, October 1992

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*

15 Bill Mollison, *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*, Tagori Press 1988

16 *Grey Water Treatment And Reuse* prepared for the IChemE conference on 'Water Recycling: Technical and Social Implications' (March 1996, London) by John Murrer and Graham Bateman of Anglia Water Services Ltd

17 UNDP, *op.cit.*

18 Contact the Building Services Research and Information Association (BSRIA) for details (see *Sources of useful information*)

19 *Directory of Grant Making Trusts*, Charities Aid Foundation, published every 2 years

20 *Guide to the Major Trusts 1995-6*, Directory of Social Change

21 *Guide to Company Giving 1995-6*, Directory of Social Change

22 *Major Companies Guide 1996-7*, Directory of Social Change

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Martineau Centre

Curriculum Support Services, Balden Rd, Harborn, Birmingham B721JR

Tel: 0121 428 1167/1186

Contact: Sue Fenoughty

Food growing linked to the school history curriculum and environmental education

Background: Sue is the Environmental Awareness Teacher Consultant responsible for environmental education curriculum support in 450 schools throughout Birmingham. Since 1992 she has been working with landscape architects and in 1994 started up the SCILD (School Curriculum in Landscape Design) project to provide information and support for schools wanting to develop their school grounds as an educational resource. One aim is for schools to incorporate organic allotments in their site designs.

Two years ago, Sue and the history consultant at Curriculum Support Services decided to create a 'living history' project to help pupils understand conditions on the 'Home Front' in the 1940s. A pilot project was launched with three junior schools in November 1994 and its success led to a fortnight of activities the following summer, and again in the late autumn.

Site: Local park with a large house belonging to the city council.

Participants: Around 1,000 pupils from junior, secondary and special schools were involved during each two week session.

Activities: Children were 'evacuated' to the house where they learned to 'make do and mend' and cook 'allotment stew' using wartime recipes and rations. Students from a local sixth form college assisted with the cookery which formed part of their course work. Outside they dug and prepared an allotment, planted vegetables, made scarecrows, raked leaves and built a compost heap. At the end of each session, children took away starter packs of seeds and vegetable plants to help them start an allotment of their own at school, guided by a leaflet on organic gardening methods from the Henry Doubleday Research Association. Schools are also encouraged to forge links with their local allotment society for advice.

Funding and support: Schools pay to take part in the project from their curriculum development budget. The Council, who owns the park, gave permission for part of it to be used. The Parks Department lent gardening tools and helped out in rainy weather by opening up a potting shed for planting activities. The BTCV came along to 'lend a hand on the land' dressed for the occasion as under gardeners, and the head gardener from the LEA environmental studies centre and allotment holders helped with advice and donated plants.

Benefits and problems: The fact that the project was carried out successfully three times is an indication of the support for the idea. The children learned a great deal about life fifty years ago and enjoyed the gardening experience as well as eating the food they cooked. Some of the plants grown during the summer sessions were later picked by the schools for their harvest festival displays. Despite the hot dry summer, there was a very good crop of lettuces, radishes and beetroot. One future possibility may be to develop the children's interest in their salad crop to promote the idea of healthy eating. However, the next 'Dig for Victory' project may be the last one on this particular site as the building is scheduled for sale.

3.2 Sources of useful information

- G** Involved in food growing
- I** Sources of related information/organisations to involve
- F** Sources of funding

ACTAC (Association of Community Technical Aid Centres) (I)

64 Mount Pleasant
Liverpool L3 5SD
0151 708 7607

A national network of centres, groups and individuals who provide a range of professional and technical skills in support of local community projects. It provides regular training courses for community groups on environmental improvements - from tree planting to community development. Also has regular conferences, a newsletter and other publications.

Association of British Credit Unions Limited (ABCUL) (I)

Unit 305
339 Kennington Lane
London SE11 5QY
0171 582 2626

A source of information and advice on setting up credit unions; can also give local contacts who can help in starting up. Individual credit unions can affiliate to ABCUL.

Bioregional Development Group (I)

The Ecology Centre
Honeywood Walk
Carshalton
Surrey SM5 3NX
0181 773 2322

Research and education organisation reviving traditional, sustainable uses of the land through the introduction of appropriate technology. Three of the projects it has developed are: charcoal production from coppice, textiles and paper from hemp and flax, and revival of the plant oils industry (mainly lavender) in south London.

Black Environmental Network (I, F)

9 Llainwen Uchaf
Llanberis
Gwynedd
Wales L155 4LL
01286 870715

Aims to promote equal opportunities in the celebration, protection and improvement of the environment through a network of individuals and organisations. The Ethnic Minorities Award Scheme (EMAS) gives small grants to environmental projects by black and ethnic minority groups. Provides a UK wide advice and information service.

Bradford Environmental Action Trust (I, G)

C/O Environmental Action Unit
Room 145
City Hall
Bradford
West Yorkshire BD1 1HY
01274 753924

Bradford wide group involving a range of local organisations, businesses and individuals and tackling environmental and community issues in the Bradford area. Has a range of sub-groups dealing with issues such as allotments, food growing trees, waste, and green businesses. Produces a newsletter, BEATROOT and holds regular meetings open to the public.

British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres) (BASSAC)(I)

First Floor
Winchester House
11 Cranmer Road
London SW9 6EJ
0171 735 1075

National network of multi-purpose centres committed to helping local communities bring about social change and tackle poverty and injustice in urban and inner city areas. Has links with 1,000 projects in 60 centres throughout the UK. Offers local contacts and advice.

British Beekeeping Association (G, I)

BBKA Administrative Headquarters
National Agricultural Centre
Stoneleigh
Kenilworth
Warwickshire CV8 2LX
01203 696679

Represents beekeepers and their interests. Members receive the BBKA's yearbook, BBKA News and Bee Craft, a monthly journal with information on beekeeping for beginners and experts alike and can take advantage of insurance schemes. Also produces audiovisual aids and leaflets and holds conferences and courses. The BBKA headquarters has a Bee garden containing observation hives, specimen hives of various designs and a range of plants and shrubs attractive to bees.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (I, G)

36 St Mary's Street
Wallingford
Oxfordshire OX10 0EU
01491 839 766

Practical conservation charity supporting communities in positive action to improve the environment. Over 90 BTCV offices organise projects and offer advice, training and support. BTCV's group membership offers advice and information, (eg. on

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Perring Estate Community Garden

61 Bracken House, Perring Estate, Devon's Road
Bow, London, E3 3RG

Tel: 0171 515 5342

Contact: Gavin Jones

Housing estate organic community garden project.

Background: The community gardening project was set up over ten years ago by Gavin Jones, an artist living on the estate who felt there was a need for such a project in the area.

Site: A small courtyard, (25x35m), covering an old air raid shelter (which now serves as a water tank) and surrounded on three sides by Bracken House. The area is divided into tiny plots, some no more than 1m x 1m.

Participants: Residents of Bracken House itself are not involved in the project; most of the plot holders are Bangladeshi families from a nearby block on the estate. Women do most of the work although men occasionally help. White people are not involved and tend to attach a social stigma to food growing. One Afro-Caribbean family has a plot but does not eat the food it grows (although it eats the produce from a nearby allotment which it keeps), seeing it as polluted. A paid gardener, employed by the Tenant Managed Co-op, comes in to do general weeding and maintenance work although the co-op itself is not particularly involved in the running of the project. Gavin undertakes most of the project's fundraising activities.

Activities: Residents grow a variety of herbs, vegetables or flowers on the tiny plots. Much of the coriander grown is sold to local shops. The plots are bordered with box, slate or yew and the courtyard is bordered with wild pear trees and flower beds. There is also a children's play area. A metal fence with lockable gate (made by Gavin), surrounds the courtyard. An upturned trawler makes a wonderful garden shed and there are plans to thatch the 'roof' this year. Tools are communally shared although they do get stolen. Manure is bought in and garden waste composted. There is as yet no household composting scheme; Gavin fears that people might not sort rubbish adequately. One possibility for the future is to use the vast quantities of mussel shells coming out of London restaurants, as a mulch. Gavin also hopes to keep bees although this may not be feasible given the garden's proximity to housing.

Funding and support: The project spends around £5,000 a year. Bracken House is a tenant managed co-op and money for area maintenance goes into the project. Shell Better Britain Campaign and English Nature have donated funds, and local companies have given in-kind support.

Benefits and problems: Access to fresh produce is hugely valued by the Bangladeshi population; indeed plot holders sometimes steal from each others' plots. Although in the early days there were problems with vandalism, this lessened as the garden became accepted. Cat fouling continues to be a real problem and puts some people off growing food. The tidiness of the site has been an important factor in the project's success; as the garden is taking the place of more conventional low maintenance arrangements, it has had to conform to generally agreed notions of visual respectability. Although the Council's initial hostility to the idea is fading it is still unsupportive and has until recently been trying to remove the shed. However, the project has now matured to the point that, even if Gavin left the area, it would continue to exist.

recruiting volunteers), competitive rates for insurance, tools and protective clothing. BTCV also runs working holidays and a wide range of environmental training courses.

Building Services Research and Information Association (BSRIA) (I)

Old Bracknell Lane West
Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 7AH
01344 426 511

An independent, non profit distributing, member based research organisation. Its aims are 'To assist the building services industry to improve the quality of its products and services, the efficiency of their provision and the effectiveness of their operation.' Its membership encompasses consultants, contractors, manufacturers, building owners and operators, organisations specialising in, for example, maintenance and commissioning, and other interested parties including utilities and academic institutions. Can provide information on grey water recycling.

Centre for Alternative Technology (I, G)

Machynlleth
Powys
SY20 9AZ
01654 702 400

Promotes the use of alternative technology through demonstration, education and information. Has displays of renewable energy, energy conservation, organic growing and ecological building and a vegetarian café. Runs residential courses, offers information and consultancy courses.

Civic Trust (I, F)

Design House
5 Fazakerley Street
Liverpool L3 9DL
0151 227 3434

Works to improve and regenerate the built environment where people live and work. Does feasibility studies, project management and research through its Regeneration Unit. The national body for nearly 1,000 local civic and amenity societies, provides help and advice on conservation and planning matters including a comprehensive library and publications, and organises Environment Week annually. The Trust administers the Department of the Environment's Environmental Action Fund.

Common Ground (I, G)

Seven Dials Warehouse
44 Earlham Street
London WC2H 9LA
0171 379 3109

Runs projects which combine practical action with a sense of the cultural significance of surroundings. Emphasis on working in association with the arts. Has a manifesto on looking after trees, has initiated several projects including Parish Maps, Local Distinctiveness, Save our Orchards and New Milestones and produces a series of publications. Common Ground promotes an annual Apple Day to celebrate and draw attention to the diversity and richness of the UK's apple heritage.

Community Development Foundation (I)

60 Highbury Grove
London N5 2AG
0171 226 5375

Supports innovative community projects through advice, research, consultancies and training for projects. Works with funders and organisations seeking to run more effective schemes involving local people. Publishes handbooks and information, newsletters and **Community Currents** - a current awareness service on issues related to community development. Runs a Community Environment Resource Unit to provide advice, information and training for organisations.

Community Matters (I)

8-9 Upper Street
London N1 0PQ
0171 226 0189

Promotes, supports and encourages locally-based, multi-purpose community groups. Represents over 800 local community organisations and can advise on legal and fundraising issues. Produces a newsletter, publications and information sheets.

Community Regeneration Ltd (I)

Giant's Basin
Potato Wharf
Castlefield
Manchester M3 4LA
0161 834 2214

Promotes, sets up and develops environmental projects for the adaption and use of vacant or underused buildings, open space or wasteland by community groups or individuals.

Comedia (I)

The Round
Bournes Green
Near Stroud
Gloucestershire, GL6 7NL
01452 770 624

An independent, strategic research consultancy, specialising in cultural and urban policy issues, notably on the state of Britain's parks heritage (in partnership with Demos, see below and

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Springfields Community Gardens

Stirling Crescent, Holmewood, Bradford BD4 0DA

Tel: 01274 688359

Contact: Chris McKenzie-Davey

Background: In 1993, the Holmewood Village Executive, a voluntary group of residents and council members, formed to regenerate the rundown Holmewood Estate. The Executive decided to make use of derelict land in the area and invited **Designed Visions**, a permaculture design team, to turn it into a productive site, the aims being to:

- ❖ Produce vegetables, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and berries for local use and cash
- ❖ Provide employment training and opportunities for the local community
- ❖ Raise the profile of gardening and provide gardening materials to local gardeners
- ❖ Provide cooking training and facilities
- ❖ Provide playing space for young children
- ❖ Provide workshops for carpentry, woodwork and for recycling/reusing salvaged materials

Having held introductory permaculture for the public and for Council and City Challenge staff, the team, with local involvement, conducted a site survey, and produced a plan.

Site: Seven and a half acre Housing Department site in the middle of the Holmewood Estate.

Participants: Two employed workers supervise activities and a local builder is employed for building work. Volunteers are fully involved and encouraged to implement their own ideas. Some are unemployed and on Community Action schemes, some may have learning difficulties while others may simply be interested individuals. Horticulture students on placements are also involved. The Village Executive, having got to grips with planning law and the City Challenge system, has established consultation mechanisms on the estate. Local children also participate.

Activities: The site has growing areas, a polytunnel, water channel systems and dry stone walls. Compost toilets have been completed and two buildings are being built. Artists have helped the community make stone and wooden sculptures. The food grown is taken by volunteers, given to a social club for the elderly or sold to local shops. During the summer of 1995, 150 special needs children worked on site and a qualified special needs trainer is working to develop projects with them. Some adults with learning difficulties are training for National Accomplishment Tests.

Funding and support: Bradford City Challenge, via the Holmewood Regeneration project has provided funding. Community Health gave money for polytunnels and Building Control helped with site buildings, the access road and car parking. Future funding sources may be the Council, City Challenge, the Lottery, the local TEC and, (with local groups), Europe. Income will also be generated from crop and bedding plant sales, tours and lecturing at the University.

Benefits and problems: The Springfield site has highlighted the potential of food growing in Bradford and acts as a focus for a community of food growers. Springfields also supports other projects by lending out tools and materials. For the future, there is a need to involve local young adults more in the project.

Sustainable Neighbourhoods). It began working primarily in Britain but in recent years has been involved in an increasing number of European projects, as well as working collaboratively with other research, academic and policy organisations in Australia and North America.

Composting Association (I)

c/o Henry Doubleday Research Association - see below for address.

A national organisation, run by the HDRA Consultancy Unit and dedicated to the development of composting. Provides advice and information to most of the centralised composting sites operating in the UK and lobbies the Government for changes in legislation, to enable local authorities and others to set up composting facilities. It has over 200 members comprising interested individuals and those from all sectors of the composting industry. Members receive **Composting News** quarterly and have the opportunity to attend working groups.

Council for Environmental Education (I)

University of Reading
London Road
Reading RG1 5AQ
01734 756061

A national body to co-ordinate and promote environmental education, exchange ideas and information and encourage its development through various projects. Publications include a monthly news-sheet, journal and resource sheets.

Countryside Commission (I,F)

John Dower House
Crescent Place
Cheltenham
Glos GL50 3RA
01242 521381

Official government body for countryside conservation and recreation in England. The Commission works in partnership with local authorities, public agencies, voluntary bodies, farmers, landowners and individuals. Produces publications and practical guidance and provides funding.

Demos (I)

9 Bridewell Place
London EC4V 6AP
0171 353 4479

An independent think tank set up to improve the breadth and quality of political and urban debate. It encourages radical thinking and solutions to the long term problems facing the UK and other industrial societies. A registered charity, Demos is funded by individuals, companies and foundations. Demos co-

authored a report on parks with Comedia (see above and **Sustainable neighbourhoods**)

Development Trusts Association (I)

20 Conduit Place
London W2 1HZ
0171 706 4951

National Association for development trusts - local independent bodies which work to regenerate the neighbourhood physically, socially, economically and in spirit. The trusts bring together representatives of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

Directory of Social Change (I)

24 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2DP
0171 209 5151

Produces a range of publications and runs short training courses on fundraising, management, publicity, and so on. Publications include **A Guide to the Major Trusts** and **A Guide to Company Giving**.

Education 2000 (I)

Garden City Corporation Offices
Broadway
Letchworth
Hertfordshire SG6 3AB
01462 481107

A charitable foundation which has strong links with the educational and industrial sectors and which runs a range of national projects. Its aim is to help create a more vital, enterprising and creative society. It seeks ways of strengthening people's confidence in their ability to learn so that they may become more adaptable, flexible and positive in their attitudes to change.

Elm Farm Research Centre (I)

Hamstead Marshall
Nr Newbury
Berks RG15 0HR
01488 658 298

The Centre is a registered charity based on a 232 acre mixed arable/dairy organic farm. It carries out research into all aspects of organic farming and works to promote and disseminate its principles. The Centre also provides advice and holds courses and conferences on organic farming.

37**Knightswood Secondary School**

60 Knightswood Road, Glasgow G13 2XD

Tel: 0141 954 9124/6335

Contact: Jim Marshall

Secondary school horticultural project linked to the school curriculum

Background: The school is situated in the middle of Glasgow. In 1993 it took part in a City Council run (and still running) environmental competition, 'Superbowl,' which aimed to encourage schools to improve the environment and to improve peoples' attitudes to the environment. Twenty three secondary schools were involved while fifty primary schools took part in the junior 'Rosebowl' competition. Knightswood decided to involve children in horticultural activities which would also form part of the school curriculum.

Site: There is a garden area about half the size of a football pitch plus raised beds in the central playground. Pupils also grow many of the plants indoors in tubs and planters.

Participants: The school children and a core group of staff are involved.

Activities: The pupils grow flowers for the school itself and also for sale to parents and staff. The garden project is linked to Art, Biology, Technology, Geography and even Dance classes (the students choreographed a dance around it).

Funding and support: The school won £500 from the competition and funding was also secured from the Glasgow Development Agency. Since it started, the project has cost just over £2000.

Benefits and problems: The ethos of the school has improved considerably since the horticultural project started. There has been no vandalism and staff morale has risen - they are much more optimistic about the school and its activities now. The project has also introduced pupils to new skills. One problem is that there is so little available time for such activities; consequently all gardening must be tied in strictly to the school curriculum. There are plans to try and get the land landscaped properly and the local college has agreed to develop it for the school. The site has already been cleared with the help of HMS Glasgow, which sent volunteers from the ship's company. Some of the area might well be used for food production.

English Nature (F,I)

Northminster House
Northminster Road
Peterborough PE1 1UA
01733 340 345

Government adviser on nature conservation in England. Runs two grant schemes of interest to community groups - the Schools Grant Scheme and Community Action for Wildlife.

English Partnerships (F)

16-18 Old Queen Street
London SW1 9HP
0171 976 7070

Statutory national agency for urban regeneration and derelict land reclamation. Runs a community investment fund which will make £3 million a year available to grass roots schemes from community and voluntary groups which contribute to local urban regeneration. Local projects are eligible for funding of between £10,000 and £100,000.

Environment City (I)

The Wildlife Trusts
The Green
Witham park
Waterside South
Lincoln LN5 7JR
01522 544 400

A partnership between local authorities, the business community, voluntary organisations and the public to create sustainable cities through an integrated approach. At present there are four designated cities - Leeds, Leicester, Middlesbrough and Peterborough although the programme may expand in the future. Produce publications and a newsletter.

Going for Green (I,F)

First Floor
Churgate House
56 Oxford Street
Manchester M60 7HJ
0161 237 4158

An environmental campaign aimed at the UK public. It's aims are to encourage people to cut down on waste, save energy and natural resources, travel sensibly, prevent pollution and care for the environment. The £1 million a year campaign is backed by all the political parties. It works to promote the green message through the media and sponsors community projects for which it has allocated over £600,000 over the next 2 ½ years. Projects aim to increase people's awareness of sustainability issues and brings together people from the local community to create local action plans The extent to which people's behaviour actually changes is being measured. Going for Green also promotes

the Eco-Schools Award Scheme in conjunction with the Tidy Britain Group (see below).

Henry Doubleday Research Association (G,I)

Ryton on Dunsmore
Coventry
CV8 3LG
01203 303517

Researches and promotes organic methods of horticulture and agriculture. Manages demonstration gardens open to the public at Ryton and in Kent. Provides information, runs courses and seminars. Sells organic fertilisers, safe pesticides, rare seed varieties at Ryton and by mail order. Newsletter, mail order catalogue and information leaflets and booklets available.

Horticulture Therapy (G, I)

Gould's Ground
Vallis Way
Frome
Somerset BA11 3DW
01373 464782

National charity promoting the benefits of gardening, particularly for those with disabilities. Publishes a magazine, leaflets and books and runs a membership scheme, training and design service. Produces a tape magazine and advice line for visually impaired gardeners. Has demonstration gardens where people can try tools and techniques.

Land Registry (I)

32 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London WC2A 3PH
0171 917 8888

The Land Registry is a civil service executive agency responsible for the registration of title to land in England and Wales. The purpose of registration of title is to provide a safe, simple and economic system of land transfer. The Registry has 19 regional offices. Enquiries on general policy issues should be made to headquarters while local information is obtainable from the regional office (contact details in the telephone directory).

Landscape Institute (I)

6-7 Barnard Mews
London SW11 1QU
0171 738 9166

The Landscape Institute is the professional body for landscape architects, landscape managers and landscape scientists. Its main objective is to promote the highest standard of professional service in the application of the arts and sciences of landscape architecture and management.

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BTCV Tipton

Grange House, Brick Kiln Street, Tipton, DY4 9BP

Tel: 0121 557 0807

Contact: Philip Dicken

'Plant a Community Orchard and Herb Garden' Project

Background: The aim of the project is to encourage residents to plant herbs and fruit trees in their gardens, thereby creating a network of green oases throughout the Tipton area, linked to the Sandwell food co-ops project (see case 13), encouraging community activity and improving access to fresh produce. It is intended that the participants on the project will take what fruit they want and sell on the bulk of the produce, at wholesale prices, to the Sandwell food co-op, who will sell it on at very low cost to other members of the community. Tipton BTCV began the first pilot project on an Asian estate in 1994 and is now working together with the Sandwell Food co-op to extend the idea to other areas of Tipton.

Site: Front and back gardens.

Participants: Local residents.

Activities: Over a six month period in 1994, BTCV and community workers held meetings with the predominantly Asian local residents of one housing estate to discuss the idea of a community orchard. Out of 40 households, 15-20 expressed interest and took part in a tree planting day, where about 40-50 apple, pear and plum trees were planted. An Apple Day was also held, with games and entertainment. Some trees fruited the following year.

The Co-op and BTCV have recently been working together on the Shrubbery Estate, which already has its own flourishing food co-operative and an active community. BTCV and the Co-op distributed leaflets about the project and a third of the residents (sixty people) have expressed strong interest, already specifying the types of herbs and trees they want to grow. Those wanting to get involved receive free herb boxes and three varieties of fruit tree; the herbs in March 1996 and the trees in Autumn 1996. The Co-op will be holding a fundraising day soon, featuring a band, free tasting sessions and so on, to raise interest and money for the project. The project will also be replicated on other estates in the near future.

Funding and support: The Asian community orchard received £1,500 in City Challenge money. The Shrubbery Estate project already has funds for the herb boxes but is applying for £5,000 for trees and training.

Benefits and problems: The project is still at a very early stage. Among the Shrubbery Estate residents, with whom the Co-op has strong links, enthusiasm is enormous. The Asian community is a little more reserved, because both the BTCV and the Co-op are new to the area. However, with time, and the support of the community workers, it is likely that interest will grow. Some Asian residents also have allotments and there is potential for more extensive involvement in food growing. Unfortunately, funding from traditional tree funding trusts has been refused because fruit trees are not classed as broadleaved native trees and planting must be on public open space. The strength of the Community Orchard and Herb Garden project lies in the simplicity of its 'tool kit' approach, which makes it easy to replicate elsewhere.

Learning Through Landscapes (I,F,G)

Third Floor
South Side
The Law Courts
Winchester SO23 9DL

Aims to stimulate improvements to the environmental quality and educational use of the land surrounding school buildings. Produces publications and videos, runs an activity and training programme and provides small grants to schools. It initiated **Green Releaf**: a national project to raise awareness of the many benefits of growing and using plants in primary schools. It aims to give an understanding and appreciation to primary school teachers and, through them, to children and their parents, of the direct impact that plants can have on our quality of life. Can also provide information about possible funding sources.

LETS-Link UK (I)

61 Woodcock Road
Warminster BA12 9DH
01985 217 871

National body to promote and coordinate local exchange trading schemes. Produces information on LETS and provides a list of local groups.

Local Government Management Board (I)

Arndale house
The Arndale Centre
Luton
Bedfordshire LU1 2TS
01582 451 166

Provides advice and support for local government. The environmental and local Agenda 21 team produces guidance on eco-management and audit schemes, community participation in Agenda 21 and many other issues.

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS) (I)

3rd Floor
Arundel Court
177 Arundel Street
Sheffield S1 2NU
0104 2786 636

Councils for voluntary service are independent local development agencies which promote and support effective voluntary service and community based activity, mainly in urban areas. There are about 300 CVSs in England for whom the NACVS can provide local contacts.

National Association of Volunteer Bureaux (I)

St Peter's College
College Road
Saltley
Birmingham B8 3TE
0121 633 4555

The central body for Volunteer Bureaux; contact them to provide your nearest bureau.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (I)

Regents' Wharf
8 All Saints' Road
London N1 9RL
0171 613 6161

The major source of information for and on voluntary organisations, offering services including legal advice and information, seminars, conferences and publications.

National Federation of City Farms (I,G)

The Greenhouse
Hereford Street
Bedmister
Bristol BS3 4NA
0117 923 1800

Promotes and supports sustainable regeneration through community managed farming and gardening. Is the co-ordinating body for over 60 city farms and more than 200 community gardens in the UK. Produces newsletters, technical information sheets and a list of city farms. Has received funding from the National Lottery Charities Board to undertake a 3 year nationwide food growing project, providing opportunities for people on low income to learn how to grow cheap and healthy food.

National Federation of Credit Unions (NFCU) (I)

Unit 1 and 2
Howard House Commercial Centre
Howard Street
North Shields
Tyne and Wear NE30 1AR
0191 257 2219

Provides advice on running a credit union. Individual credit unions can affiliate to NFCU; it also gives local contacts who can help in setting up new unions.

National Food Alliance (I,G)

5-11 Worship Street
London EC2A 2BH
0171 628 2442

Aims to enable the people of the United Kingdom to fulfil their potential through food policies and practices that enhance public health, improve the working and living environment and enrich society.

The NFA represents national public interest organisations including voluntary, professional, health, consumer and environmental bodies working at international, national, regional and community level.

National Gardening Association (I,G)

180 Flynn Avenue
Burlington
VT05401
USA

Founded in 1972 to spearhead the community garden movement in the US, the NGA produces publications, science education programmes and garden related research. It is the largest non-profit organisation in the country and has a range of aims: to feed the hungry, strengthen the connections between people and the environment, teach respect for the environment and provide educators with innovative and effective teaching materials and methods.

National Play Information Centre (I)

359 Euston Road
London NW1 3AL
0171 383 5455

Provides information, advice and publications on all aspects of children's play and related issues including legislation, safety, design of playgrounds and play work.

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (I,G)

Odell House
Hunter's Road
Corby
Northants NN17 5JE
01536 266576

A network of over 1500 organisations, the NSALG provides advice on practical and legal matters relating to allotments, including organising and running shows and problems affecting gardeners.

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (I)

The Poplars
Lightmoor
Telford
Shropshire TF4 3QN
tel:01952 590777

Promotes and supports community participation by providing training courses to local authorities, professionals and the general public, in the use of techniques such as Planning for Real, which it pioneered. This involves role playing so that people can see for themselves what needs to be done to improve their neighbourhood or community. Also produces packs and publications on a range of

community topics (building design, planning) and designed for different users such as schools, community groups, co-ops and government in-service training schemes.

New Economics Foundation (I)

Universal House
Second Floor
88-94 Wentworth Street
London E1 7SA
0171 377 5696

Works on issues relating to social indicators and sustainable economics (including LETS and credit unions). Newsletters and publications available.

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux (International Office of Allotment and Leisure Garden Societies)(I,G)

20 rue de Bragance
L-1255 Luxembourg
00 45 32 31

Represents the interests of allotment and leisure gardeners on an international level and seeks to promote the activity to policy makers.. 12 countries are affiliated to the Office. Since 1990 the Office has had consultative status at the European Council.

Open Spaces Society (I)

25a Bell Street
Henley on Thames
Oxon RG9 2BA
01491 573535

Campaigns for stronger laws to protect common land, village greens, open spaces and public paths in England and Wales. Encourages community action at local level and publishes information on taking practical action. Runs an advisory service specialising in legal aspects for its members. Produces a magazine and other publications.

Permaculture Association UK (I,G)

PO Box 1
Buckfastleigh
Devon TQ11 0LH
01892 825049

Provides advice on the principles and practices of permaculture, local contacts and links to local permaculture schemes, training, publications, information and advice to set up new schemes.

Reading Terminal Farmers' Market Trust (I,G)

Two Penn Center
1528 John F Kennedy Boulevard
Suite 2000
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania 19102-1702
001 215 928 1029

A charitable organisation founded in 1991 to encourage better nutrition and improved health in low-income communities. In 1993 the Trust started the Community Farmers' Market Programme which, by building on the traditions of Reading Terminal Market (a century old market), is working to establish a nutritious food distribution system available to the residents' of inner-city Philadelphia. The Market is open one day a week at a number of locations, operates in partnership with community organisations and provides on-site nutrition education.

Royal Town Planning Institute (I)

26 Portland Place
London W1N 4BE
0171 636 9107

Promotes the professional practice of town and country planning and is the nationally recognised organisation for planners. It runs conferences and seminars, runs a free planning aid service, and produces a journal and other publications.

SAFE (Sustainable Agriculture, Food and the Environment) Alliance (I,G)

38 Ebury Street
London SW1W 0LU
0171 823 5660

A national alliance of 33 farmer, environmental, consumer, animal welfare and development organisations. The Alliance shares a common vision of food production which is beneficial to the environment, sensitive to consumer demand and which produces safe and healthy food in a manner supportive of rural life and culture. It works to achieve this through analysis, research, education, and the dissemination of information.

Shell Better Britain Campaign (F, I)

Victoria Works
21a Graham Street
Hockley
Birmingham B1 3JR

Encourages action by local people to improve the quality of life at neighbourhood level, in ways that respect the earth's resources. The Campaign is funded by Shell UK as part of its Community Investment Programme and is a useful source of information on all aspects of the voluntary sector, producing a comprehensive free annual publication, **Interactive** and information sheets on funding. It

also provides two grants: the Community Projects Fund (grants up to £2,000) and the Partnership Innovation Fund (grants up to £10,000).

Soil Association (I,G)

86 Colston Street
Bristol BS1 5BB
0117 929 0661

Works to maintain and improve the quality of food, health and the environment by promoting organic agriculture. It runs the Soil Association's Symbol scheme (an EC approved certification body) and acts as a consumer watchdog over food quality and the effects of farming on the environment. Produces a range of publications and has over 40 local groups.

Tidy Britain Group (I)

The Pier
Wigan WN3 4EX
01942 824620

Eco schools award scheme - is a Europe wide scheme which helps schools take environmental lessons from the classroom and apply them in the day to day running of the school. An environmental code has been developed and schools doing well receive an Eco-Schools Flag. 8 UK schools have already received the award.

The Land is Ours (I)

82 Percy Street
Oxford OX4 3AD

A non-membership, non-hierarchical campaign for the fairer use and distribution of land. Aims to raise awareness of the problems caused by ordinary people's exclusion from the land and to campaign to put this right. Organises events, lobbies and provides media support, research and contacts for local campaigns.

UNED UK - United Nations Association (I)

3 Whitehall Court
London SW1 2EL
0171 930 2931

The UNA acts as a focus for UK voluntary organisations relating to the UN. It co-ordinates UNED-UK, the United Nations Environment and Development UK committee, runs a Sustainable Communities project and is involved in work relating to Local Agenda 21. Produces publications, magazines and research reports.

United Kingdom Co-operative Council (I)

c/o Co-operative Bank
PO Box 101
1 Balloon Street
Manchester M60 4EP
0161 829 5290

An organisation 'to promote the common interests of co-operative organisations of all kinds in the development of co-operative forms of business throughout the UK.'

Urban Agriculture Network (I,G)

1711 Lamont Street NW
Washington DC 20010
USA
001 202 483 8130

Undertakes research into urban agriculture world wide. A major contributor to the United Nations Development Programme book on urban food production, **Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities**, publication series for Habitat II, volume one, UNDP, 1996.

Volunteer Centre UK (I)

Carriage Row
183 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BU
0171 388 9888

Promotes volunteering for the benefit of individuals and the community. Runs training courses and provides help and advice to people who work with volunteers. Publishes materials on all aspects of managing volunteers, including legal requirements.

Waste Watch (I)

Hobart House
Grosvenor Place
London SW1X 7AE
0171 245 9998

Promotes action on reducing and recycling waste. Offers a range of publications, free information sheets (send an A4 SAE), membership scheme, business consultancy service, free consultancy service for community based waste reduction/recycling groups and an international events listing.

WI Country Markets Limited (I,G)

Reada House
Vachel Road
Reading
Berks RG1 1NG
01734 394 646

Women's Institutes Co-operative Markets were set up by the WI to 'help people help themselves.' They are places where good quality, home-produced garden, dairy, kitchen and craft items are sold to the general public. Money from the sale of the goods - minus a

small commission for stall running costs - is returned to the shareholders, who need not be WI members.

The Wildlife Trusts (I)

The Green
Witham Park
Waterside South
Lincoln LN5 7JR

A partnership of 47 Wildlife Trusts, 52 Urban Wildlife Groups and WATCH, the junior wing, with a total of 220,000 members. They protect almost 2,000 locally managed wildlife reserves.

WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) (I,G)

19 Bradford Road
Lewes
Sussex
BN7 1RB

WWOOF is an exchange: in return for work on organic farms, gardens and smallholdings, workers receive meals, accomodation and the opportunity to learn. A newsletter is published every two months providing details of places requiring help on a short or long term basis.

Women's Environmental Network (I)

Aberdeen Studios
22 Highbury Grove
London N5 2EA
0171 454 8823

WEN seeks to empower educate and inform women who are concerned about environmental issues and their health. Provides information and campaigns on issues of importance to women including toxic pollution, asthma and children, and packaging.

World Wildlife Fund for Nature (I,F)

Panda House
Weyside Park
Catteshall Lande
Godalming
Surrey GU7 7DZ
01483 426444

Largest independent international nature conservation organisation in the world, working for wildlife, their habitats and the environment that affects them. Funds conservation projects and research and runs an education service. Has a network of local groups, links with schools and local environmental organisations. Produces newsletters, posters and publications. The Community Education Section runs the BT/WWF Partnership Awards which makes grants to local groups working to benefit the environment and the community.

Glossary

Agenda 21: The action plan for the 21st Century agreed by 178 heads of national governments (including the UK) at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21 sets out a blue print for sustainable development and covers issues as diverse as forests, atmosphere, seas, agriculture, health, population, poverty, women, youth, community decision making and many more. Although not legally binding it is considered to be influential because of the breadth of international agreement which underpins it. The idea is that everyone should get involved in sustainable development at a local level by participating in local Agenda 21 activities. All local authorities should now have a local Agenda 21 plan in place for their area.

Biodynamic Agriculture: Biodynamic agriculture is a form of organic farming which considers the individuality of the farm as a self contained organism, and avoids bringing in inputs from outside the farm. The biodynamic farmer also takes into account what is occurring in the cosmos and farms accordingly. In addition to compost and other inputs, the soil is fed with biodynamic preparations which are regarded as soil medicines.

Community Supported Agriculture: A co-operative farming system in which the farm holding is jointly owned and managed by the growers and the consumers and where the farmer is employed by the co-operative. Everyone involved is responsible for farm policy and shares in its output (see also Local Food Links)

Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT): Under CCT regulations a local authority is obliged to tender out contracts for services to the lowest bidder rather than automatically using the local government's own services

Credit unions: A credit union is a mutual financial co-operative which provides savings and loans to its members. It is owned, operated and controlled by the members, a group of people who share a 'common bond' of, for instance, employment, profession, locality, religion, or ethnic group. Each credit union is autonomous. Unlike other financial institutions, credit union members can take out very small loans and are charged very little interest. This can be extremely useful for those on low incomes who only require small amounts of money. Any profits gained are used for the direct benefit of the members, either through dividends or through building up reserves to make the credit union more financially sound. There is no question of profits being used on 'unethical' investment; and no resentment that profits are being diverted to pay high dividends to share-holders. The co-operative basis of the credit union means that profits go to help those that helped create them in the first place.

Development plans Include County Structure Plans, London and Metropolitan Unitary Development Plans (see below), Local Plans, Waste and Minerals plans. These set out County, city or local planning policy depending on the remit.

Farmers' markets: A system popular in the USA whereby farmers sell their own produce at local markets - another form of local food links (see below). The produce is often organic and the emphasis is on seasonal, local produce. Sometimes the markets are linked with health promotion schemes.

Food miles: A term used to cover the social, environmental and economic effects of transporting food by road, air or other means.

Grey water: Water that has been used for bathing or washing. It is not suitable for drinking but is clean enough for reuse, for instance for irrigating plants.

LETS schemes: Local Exchange Trading Schemes combines some aspects of a bank credit card and a barter system; it is a kind of 'I'll scratch your back if you scratch someone else's.' The system works as follows: a group of people who live locally and who wish to trade together, agree to the LETS rules, and give themselves account numbers. Each person then makes out two lists; one of what he/she wants to purchase, and one of what she/he wants to offer, with 'prices' attached. What is offered and wanted varies from group to group - from plumbing services to prams, from organic vegetables to legal advice. A joint list is then produced and circulated, and the members begin to trade. Each time a person 'buys' a good or service, the cost is debited from his or her account. In order to gain credits, he or she must provide a good or service; but not necessarily to the person from which he or she has obtained a good or service. The limitations of one to one barter are eliminated, as each person trades with the people in the system as a whole and is in credit or debit to the system as a whole. The complete accounts are sent every month to everyone in the scheme. At the moment there is uncertainty as to LETS' eligibility for tax. Up until recently in Australia, LETS members have paid tax in 'green money' which is spent on local schemes. In Canada the tax authorities say that Green Dollar earnings in pursuit of a person's normal profession are taxable but other activities are not. In the UK, those regularly converting part of their main income to LETS should, theoretically, declare it. VAT-LETS negotiations on a national scale are pending.

Local Food Links: Schemes which aim to bring producers and consumers closer together in local agricultural systems. Examples of local food links are farm shops, local markets, box schemes, home delivery systems, subscription farming and community supported agriculture.

Organic: The organic approach to gardening aims to minimise our adverse impact on the wider environment. Up-to-date techniques are combined with the best methods from the past to make up an effective, sustainable, and interesting system for managing all areas of the garden - both ornamental and edible. Organic gardening avoids the use of materials from non-renewable sources, recycles where possible, and keeps the use of pesticides to a minimum. Natural systems are encouraged to maintain fertility and plant health; this in turn makes the garden a safe haven for wildlife.

Permaculture: Is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems - permanent agriculture. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. Permacultural design is a system of assembling conceptual, material, and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms. The philosophy behind permaculture is one of working with, rather than against, nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions, rather than asking only one yield of them; and of allowing systems to demonstrate their own evolutions.

Planning Policy Guidance notes:(PPG) Are issued by the Department of the Environment to local authorities who must take PPGs into account when preparing their development plans. There are currently over 20 PPGs providing planning guidance on subjects as diverse as telecommunications, green belts and tourism. The PPGs referred to in this report are PPG12 (Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance 1992), PPG13 (Transport 1994), PPG17 (Sport and Recreation 1991) and PPG23 (Planning and Pollution Control 1994).

Pocket park: First introduced by Northamptonshire County Council, these are small areas of park or derelict wasteland which are designed, 'owned' and managed by the local community. Schools, local environmental groups and others can create pocket parks for use not only by themselves but by other sections of the population, such as the elderly.

School Building Premises Regulations: Established in 1955, and revised in 1981, these set out minimum requirements for the provision of school playing fields, recreation areas and classroom space. However, in 1996 an Act was passed which abolishes those parts of the Regulations which protect school grounds against development.

School Nutrition Action Groups: These are school based alliances in which staff, pupils and caterers, supported where appropriate by health and education professionals, work together to review and expand the range of food and drink provided through the school's tuckshop, vending machines, and meals in order to increase the uptake of a healthy diet.

Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act): This enables planning authorities to establish agreements that limit the expansion of developments beyond the size agreed when planning permission was originally granted. In this way a small low cost house is not able to develop into a large expensive one.

Single Regeneration Budget (SRB): This 'brings together 20 existing regeneration programmes from five Government departments to provide flexible support for local initiatives. It aims to achieve sustainable regeneration, industrial competitiveness, and economic development initiatives in England' according to the Department of the Environment.

Standard Spending Assessment: According to the Government's definition: 'the amount of revenue expenditure which it would be appropriate for the authority to incur in that year to provide a standard level of service.'

Subscription farming: The consumer pays in advance for the produce, has a say in the running of the farm and shares in the risks. However, unlike Community Supported Agriculture (see above), the farm is still owned or leased by the individual farmer.

Sustainable development: the classic definition developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development is development which 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Unitary Development Plans (UDP) replace the two tier system of structure and local plans in metropolitan areas. They are prepared every ten years, with interim reviews, and are drawn up by local authorities to offer protection to some existing developments, and to plan future developments. The UDP does not consider land smaller than 0.4 hectare and policies on smaller areas are open to some change. Local authorities are required to take Planning Policy Guidance notes (see above) into account. The preparation of the UDP involves consultation with all Council departments, with government departments and with outside agencies such as the National Rivers Authority. After this it is sent out for consultation with the public.

National Food Alliance

5-11 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BH
Tel: 0171 628 2442 Fax: 0171 628 9329
Registered Charity Number 1018643

Our Work: We represent national public interest organisations including voluntary, professional, health, consumer and environmental bodies working at international, national, regional and community level **Our Aim:** To enable the people of the united kingdom to fulfil their potential through food policies and practices that enhance public health, improve the working and living environment, and enrich society

National Food Alliance members

Action and Information on Sugars + Association of School Health Education + Co-ordinators + Baby Milk Action + British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry + British Dental Association + British Diabetic Association + British Heart Foundation + British Organic Farmers and the Organic Growers' Association + Campaign for Real Ale + Caroline Walker Trust + Children's Society + Common Ground + Community Nutrition Group + Coronary Prevention Group + Council for the Protection of Rural England + Diet Breakers + Elm Farm Research Centre + Food Additive Campaign Team + Food Commission + Friends of the Earth + GMB (Britain's General Union) + Genetics Forum + Green Network + Health Education Trust + Henry Doubleday Research Association + Hospitality Management Learning Consortium + Hyperactive Children's Support Group + Institute of European and Environmental Policy, London + Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards (LACOTS) + Maternity Alliance + McCarrison Society + National Association of Teachers of Home Economics and Technology + National Confederation of Parent-

Teacher Associations + National Dental Health Education Group + National Farmers' Union + National Federation of City Farms + National Federation of Consumer Groups + National Federation of Women's Institutes + Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Association + Pesticides Trust + Rural Agricultural and Allied Workers' Trade Group + Scottish Federation of Community Food Initiatives + Scottish Food Poverty Network + Society of Health Education and Health Promotion Specialists + Soil Association + UNISON + Vegetarian Society + World Cancer Research Fund + Women's Farming Union

National Food Alliance observers

British Dietetic Association + British Medical Association + Christian Aid + Consumers' Association + Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians + Health Education Authority + Institute of Food Research + Institute of Trading Standards Administration + National Consumer Council + National Heart Forum + Royal Society of Health + Royal Society of Medicine Food and Health Forum + Scottish Consumer Council + Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment Alliance + Trades Union Congress + Vega Research + Welsh Consumer Council

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SAFE Alliance

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Tel: 0171 823 5660 Fax: 0171 823 5673

The Sustainable Agriculture, Food and the Environment Alliance is a coalition of groups working together to research and promote sustainable agriculture. It includes farming, organic sector, environmental and conservation, Third World Development, animal welfare and consumer organisations. The Alliance has established itself as a major voice in the debate on agriculture and food policy, and works with a network of similar offices in Europe.

SAFE Alliance members

Association of Unpasteurized Milk Producers and Consumers + Bio-Dynamic Agriculture Association + British Organic Farmers and Organic Growers' Association + Butterfly Conservation + Catholic Institute for International Relations + Commonwork Land Trust + Compassion in World Farming + Consumer Watch + EarthKind + Elm Farm Research Centre + Family Farms Association + Farmer's Link + Genetics Forum + Gloucestershire County Council + Green Network + Henry Doubleday Research Association + Land Heritage + Intermediate Technology Development Group + National Federation of City Farms + Permaculture Association + Pesticides Trust +

Plantlife + Sir Richard Body MP + Soil Association + Scottish Crofters' Union + The Ecological Foundation + The Ecologist + The Food Commission + Third World Network Europe + West Country Graziers + Willing Workers on Organic Farms + Women's Environmental Network

SAFE Alliance observers

British Trust for Ornithology + Council for the Protection of Rural England + Farmers' World Network + Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups + Friends of the Earth + Institute for European Environmental Policy + National Food Alliance + Oxfam + RSNC the Wildlife Trusts Partnership + Rural Agricultural and Allied Workers' Trade Group + UK Food Group

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Growing food in cities

A report to highlight and promote the
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