

London Food Link Small Grants Scheme

On 5th September 2003 London Food Link announced the 20 successful applicants to its small grants scheme.

Launched on 1st June 2003 at the opening of London Sustainability Week by the deputy mayor, Jenny Jones, the scheme offered support to community food initiatives.

This report provides details from some of the applicants who were successful in obtaining a grant from London Food Link, to give a flavour of the activities that were supported by the scheme.



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The Children's Centre

The Children's Centre grant to enabled them to plant fruit bushes/trees in their outdoor area in September 2003. This gave the nursery an opportunity to extend their already existing vegetable growing area and continue to develop their strong environmental education commitment.



Plantings at the nursery

The children were very involved in the planting, under the guidance of the nursery gardener and head teacher Denise Lepore. They are also regularly involved in watering and nurturing the plants. A project like this is of great importance to city children and has contributed enormously to their understanding of growth and food supply. Their knowledge will increase as spring and summer unfold and the plants begin to grow. The



A young apple tree

outdoor area is very attractive and, in addition to the outdoor play facilities and equipment, there is a strong emphasis on planting. There is a large vegetable patch, which the children work on under careful supervision, and numerous other plants. The nursery's environmental policy also involves keeping a variety of animals. There are chickens, which lay eggs on a regular basis, rabbits and guinea pigs. As part of the continual development of their environmental programme, all of the outside areas will be signposted which will contribute to literacy development and the parents' overall understanding of what the project is offering to the children. The magic for the children will be watching the fruit grow and then eating it. At the moment they are certainly looking forward to the eating part!

East London Organic Gardeners

The East London Organic Gardeners applied for the grant to purchase an apple crusher and a 12-litre press to make apple juice. On learning of their successful application, they ordered the crusher and press, arranged the place of delivery (Forest Recycling Project) and organised the production of a low table for the press to stand on. In the end an excellent table was designed and made by Chris Rigby, teacher at the Woodworks Collective, which could be dismantled for transport and storage. On 6th October, a trial was run in Hornbeam Environmental Centre adjacent to Forest Recycling Project, pressing apples gathered from allotments and gardens into delicious juice.

The official launch was on 11th October at the Apple Day Celebration and the press was a very popular feature. As small and less perfect apples can be used for juicing, Andrew Tann at Crapes Farm could sell them to organisers for 10p/lb, so 100lb were bought for juicing, a mixture Sunset, Ribston Pippin and Laxton's Fortune. In addition there were apples to display and a wide range of local apple varieties for tasting and for sale. The apples were crushed every hour over the event from 11:00 to 4:00pm. Two batches could be crushed and pressed by the equipment before needing to be emptied. The dry pressed pulp was removed for composting. The juice was sold at 50p for a small glass and visitors loved it!



A member of the public tries out the apple press

In 2004, the Gardeners plan to hold apple-juicing events for local residents' apples at Hornbeam in September and October in addition to the Apple Day event. The press is now an invaluable asset to the local community.

Freightliners City Farm

Freightliners Farm has been running the Get Healthy Grow Your Own Exotic Fruit and Vegetables since June 2002. This project has enabled the local community to grow exciting fruit and vegetables at the farm. Individuals, community groups and youth groups have taken part in the project and have produced some prize-winning vegetables. The main objectives of the project were:

- To improve the opportunities for a healthier lifestyle and raise the general standard of living for the people in the local community
- To educate and train visitors, volunteers and staff in new horticultural techniques from around the world
- Encourage wider community involvement in the farm and encourage volunteering amongst Black and Minority Ethnic groups
- Create greenhouses and vegetables patches that are accessible to all

This project continues to be a huge success, but there was no way of informing the public of what was being grown and what the nutritional value of plants was. The grant has enabled Freightliners to make signs for the Get Healthy Grow Your Own Exotic Fruit and Vegetables Project. This has helped people to take part in learning about the various properties of some of the plants grown as well as obtaining new skills. People have come to sign making workshops, (the signs are now on display around the farm), have had the opportunity to use literacy skills as they write the signs and have also learned new computer skills as much of the research for nutrition information on the sign has been carried out on the Internet.

The project has been of social value to those involved as they have met new people on the farm. Some young people working on the sign project are now registered as volunteers. Many of them have had the opportunity to sample produce that they would never had gone anywhere near if they had not been involved in this project. The farm also now has a collection of pyrograph machines, which means that they are able to continue making informative signs for the public about all sorts of farm features.

Growing Communities

Growing communities is based in Springfield Park in Clapton E5. The site has organic status from the Soil Association and Growing Communities has been at the site since 2000. The first thing constructed was a polytunnel, which provides a good proportion of the salad crop to their organic fruit and vegetable scheme. Since 2001, regular monthly Open Sundays take place where members of the public can drop in to learn more about sowing, planting and harvesting vegetables. The events are informal and fun, and activities for children and lunch are provided. An outreach programme also exists and has made contact with people on nearby estates, nurseries and after school groups. There is also a team of volunteers who work each Monday at the site with the community growers gaining skills in a wide variety of areas to do with organic growing. Those involved enjoy the many opportunities to meet others and gain confidence while working with an innovative community group.

The project has aimed to make all its sites as fully accessible as possible, especially for those with restricted mobility. The Open Sundays are for everyone and all can join in with activities for a wide range of abilities and ages. With mobility and access in mind, Growing Communities has ensured that paths have been made so they are wide enough for a wheelchair user and that work top surfaces are of varying heights too. To complete the access

they wanted the grant to introduce an extra height raised bed so that people could do a variety of tasks in a growing bed whilst standing or in a wheelchair.

Clare Goodridge, a disability access officer was initially consulted and provided measurements and design ideas that would work best with the site. There were also plenty of discussions on design and visits to other projects that had extra raised beds to see what might be appropriate for what was needed. Then designs were drawn up and materials were bought. Clare Goodridge was available throughout the process for consultation. Les Climpson, a carpenter who had worked previously on the lowered beds was available to do the work early 2004.



Planting in the raised beds

On the back of this small development they Growing Communities has tried to raise more awareness about disability and access to their sites by talking to people at the project about what they were aiming to do. They have also been in touch with different community groups in the area who want to learn from their experiences of design and have been coming by to follow progress. A regular group of volunteers that visit Springfield who are adults with learning difficulties have also been involved in the construction and, as some of them have limited mobility, will be able to join in more fully now.

Les came up with a very innovative design that both incorporates a high bed on one side so that people can stand and work, and on the other side the height is lower and has a cut away so that

wheelchair users can work at this level. At the end of the bed there was a small space, so a last minute addition was a seated area that can be enjoyed too! The wood that was used in the construction was lined on the inside to prevent it from rotting and this has been filled with organic topsoil ready for vegetable growing.

As a team Growing Communities wanted to maximise the importance of the bed, to emphasise it as vital part of the planting scheme. To work best with

the space, they decided on a mini rotation that would reflect the rest of the site. They would grow vegetables that they needed for the scheme, but also to show to people visiting that, even with a relatively small space, you could grow a four-bed rotation of vegetables. The constantly changing bed rotation means that they can maximise the amount of work required so that there are always jobs to do.

It is hoped that by building this bed, opportunities for people at the growing sites can be widened. Outreach to disability groups has already begun to increase as part of a raised awareness and commitment.

The official launch of the new extra bed will publicise their work further and involve new people who may have not otherwise taken part. Already a volunteer has suggested buying some adapted tools for people to use who may have difficulties with some of the standard tools.

The extra raised bed is the first growing bed that you come to when you arrive at the Springfield site, which they hope will speak volumes!

OrganicLea Community Growers

The OrganicLea Forest Garden Development is a project run by the OrganicLea Community Growers. In the 1970s Robert Hart introduced the concept of the “forest garden” to the UK. A forest garden is an attempt to



Preparatory work at the forest garden

imitate the natural climate forest, using edible and other “useful” plants. It’s a form of gardening practised in many tropical areas, but poses more of a challenge in temperate zones. However, if done effectively it is the highest yielding, lowest

maintenance, most sustainable system of food production.

Because of this, forest gardens are sprouting up all over the country. Since OrganicLea acquired their site, a forest garden area was always part of the design. In 2001 some fruit trees were planted, but it was not until winter 2003, and the receipt of the London Food Link grant, that extensive development of the site was looked at, horticulturally and educationally.

A large part of this development was to be the marking out and construction of suitably marked pathways, which would simultaneously demarcate and segregate, “organically” shaped no-dig beds. Tools for the job were purchased – including billhook, maul, secateurs, saw, plus biodegradable mulch for suppressing weeds in the beds as they establish themselves. Initially, wooden stakes were budgeted for but in the event London Borough of Waltham Forest donated locally harvested wood. Donations of plants have also been received from Naturewise, Becontree Organic Growers, and Chris Olende of East London Organic Growers. Additional plants and seeds were purchased, amongst them fig, Japanese wineberry, pignut, black mulberry, cardoon, and wild rocket: all perennial or readily self-seeding edibles.

Preparatory work, which involved clearing brambles, digging out bramble and bindweed roots, marking out paths/beds was done throughout winter 2003 on OrganicLea workdays, in time for the Forest Garden day on 15th February. Four members of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers groundforce (BTCV) were drafted in, plus 14 volunteers and they constructed paths and planted up, in the process learning about woodchip log-lined paths, weaving bed borders and planting trees.

A map of the forest garden has been produced, copies of which are now available to volunteers at, and visitors to, OrganicLea. The official forest garden opening ceremony has been put back to October, when the hope is to tie it in with the other events around Apple Day. On February 29th, five members of OrganicLea visited and helped Naturewise weed the Margaret MacMillan Forest Garden, an established forest garden in Crouch Hill. This was felt to be a highly useful and informative visit. Overall, the forest garden development has ensured considerable yields, in terms of food education, training, biodiversity and culture, for many years to come.

Whilst there remains work to be done on the forest garden, including further stocking, maintenance and signage, OrganicLea happily consider that the original aims and objectives of the project for which we sought London Food Link funding have been met:

- Development of the forest garden on the OrganicLea site
- Establishment of the forest garden as an educational site
- Development of the perennial food growing aspect of the OrganicLea site
- Enhancement of overall OrganicLea project
- Provision of training to volunteers and local gardeners through the development of the forest garden.



The forest garden further down the line

Poplar Housing And Regeneration Community Association (HARCA) Healthy Lansbury

Poplar HARCA Healthy Lansbury use the grant to enable them to continue in the final development and running of schools healthy eating programme. The programme required extensive community outreach, which occurred in July and August 2003, which led to the successful recruitment of 6 local residents as volunteers for the healthy schools work. The team was in training for six weeks to deliver three healthy eating workshops: Fruit Smoothies, Fruit Tasting and The Balance of Good Health. It was the intention that the team should mirror the cultural mix of the local community and included Bengali, Kenyan and Chinese volunteers.

The next step was to make contact with two local primary schools, St Saviours and Bygrove. There was a very good response and dates were planned for the first Fruit Smoothie workshops. The teachers gave useful information on the background and knowledge of the children to allow sensitive and accurate approaches to teaching and building relationships. In both schools a key leader was recruited to help organise the communication, planning and set up within schools.

The first demonstration was with year 1 (5-6 year olds) at St Saviours School and it was very successful. In three groups of ten children the volunteers helped them to design their own smoothie recipe using both tinned and fresh fruit, fruit juice, milk, natural yoghurt and sometimes ice cream for a treat. At the end of the session there was a competition for the tastiest smoothie and of the main "5 a day" messages questions to see how much they had remembered. At the end of the session the teacher filled in an evaluation form and prizes were given out, plus 5 a day leaflets for the parents.

The second workshop encouraged the children to taste a large variety of fruit and vegetables, some of which they had never seen or tasted before. The session began with a game called Fruit Salad, which got them running around, and thinking about fruit. The tasting began with citrus fruits and discussions on taste, texture and colours, their likes and dislikes, opportunities to practice their vocabulary. Through games and other activities it was amazing to discover just how many children had never tried certain fruit. By the end of the session most of them were excited about new healthy things.

The third workshop was Balance of Good Health, which taught the older children about the five food groups and how much from each group they should be eating. Activities included questionnaires and putting food from a shopping basket in the correct section on a large food "wheel" on the floor. It was very interesting to see just how unbalanced some of the children's diets were and a lot of time was spent explaining the importance and benefits to their growth and general health if they eat a balanced diet.

Each workshop was evaluated and the children were given a “5 a day” challenge sheet to monitor their progress over a four week period. The intention is to revisit the schools in the summer term to assess progress.

The project worked extensively with St. Saviour’s School and was involved each day during the health week. Parents, children and teachers took part in our workshops and attended a healthy breakfast club, sponsored walk, aerobic sessions, healthy packed lunch demonstrations and making biscuits. It was a very successful week and on the final day a presentation was given during assembly summarising the week and giving prizes to the best child for each year group.

Looking to the future, strong relationships with the schools have been built up and the intention is to revisit them in the summer term to evaluate progress in the children’s eating habits. They would like to do another training programme for local residents who want to become healthy schools volunteers. More funding is currently being sought to continue the work in other schools in the area.

Richmond and Twickenham Primary Care Trust

Richmond and Kingston Primary Care Trust applied for the grant to enable them to fund a recognised nutrition skills course set up through Richmond Adult Community College where local workers and volunteers can become Cookery Club leaders. The course aims to encourage local communities to improve their diet by providing consistent healthy eating information and empowering people to translate knowledge into practical skills. The project also hopes to encourage individuals and families to adopt healthier cooking skills, deliver training to workers and local volunteers to enable them to provide consistent health information and run cookery clubs and increase confidence and self-esteem in students.

The nutrition skills course programme consists of three levels, each lasting for six weeks. Each level is tutor-led, apart from the last four weeks of level three, which are student-led. Subjects covered include breastfeeding, weaning, food safety, nutrition, and - of course - cooking. Students that attended the course came from various backgrounds. These included:

- Four young mothers
- Two local workers from the local authority
- Two nursery nurses
- Three newly appointed Dietetic Assistants
- A student interested in nutrition

As part of their level 3 programme students included the following groups as part of their cooking training:

- Young mothers at The Hampton Youth Project

- The Homeless Project for single mothers in temporary accommodation
- Scamps, an after school club

The student-led cooking sessions observed by the tutor involved cooking on average, six participants with recipes such as chicken korma and rice, rice and vegetable pasties, pizza, smoked haddock kedgeree, chicken stir-fry, spinach and okra soup, and fruit cocktails. After the cookery club more single mothers were eating together, and the communal kitchen was more frequently used.

The grant from London Food Link provided new cooking equipment for the students. The three students who completed the course are able to use the mobile cooking equipment as and when they lead local cookery clubs.

The course has also created a good partnership between the local Primary Care Trust and Adult Community College. A recognised nutrition course is an incentive for students to acquire further qualifications.

Southside Partnership

Scotch Bonnet catering is Southside Partnership's emerging social enterprise, planning to produce quality African and Caribbean meals while also providing employment and training for people with mental health support needs and learning disabilities. Over the last year, the enterprise has benefited enormously from the business development work carried out and the extensive investment in its infrastructure, and is now on the verge of securing its first commercial contract. A first batch of trainees should be recruited in late spring 2004. The London Food Link grant has enabled them to cover the development costs of the enterprise including covering the hygiene requirements and other regulations necessary to become a provider of meals in the health and social care sector.

Over the past year, Scotch Bonnet has continued to provide hot African and Caribbean meals at the Fanon Day Centre in Brixton, along with buffets for local organisations and events. The feedback from these events has generally been very positive and has been used to improve the service and the menu range available. As a result of the business development work carried out over recent months, Scotch Bonnet Catering will soon gain its first contract for providing frozen African and Caribbean meals to the Royal Bethlem Hospital. This is an extremely exciting development for Scotch Bonnet, and provides excellent potential for further contracts once the enterprise is relocated in larger premises.

Central to Scotch Bonnet Catering is its aim to provide training and employment for people with mental health support needs and learning disabilities. Over the last few months, 'Scotch Bonnet Experience' sessions have been running to provide service users with the opportunity to discover how a professional kitchen works, watch a meal being prepared, and find out

more about opportunities to be involved. These sessions have been very popular, and feedback forms from participants have shown that they have been very interesting and useful

Scotch Bonnet has also continued to maintain its links with relevant networks and organisations. A number of events have been attended hosted by Social Enterprise London, and have been featured in their newsletter and will soon feature in a photographic exhibition of social enterprises. These provide invaluable opportunities for Scotch Bonnet to raise its profile, gain contacts, and learn from the experiences of other social enterprises.

W2 Food Project

The Westbourne Park Family Centre applied for the London Food Link grant to purchase a set of scales and an electronic till for their fledgling fruit and vegetable co-op, established in Nov 2002. It came about when a couple of people from West London visited a food co-op in East London at Star Street School. Thoughts of bringing some of the ideas to West London had been around ever since. Representatives from Westminster Primary Care Trust had met with some of the workers from the Westbourne Park Family Centre who were also interested in a food co-op when an invitation to apply for a grant was spotted in the *Jellied Eel*. For most it was their first grant application and being successful spurred them on to apply for others, including one from Westminster PCT, which was also granted.

Detailed planning was followed by trips to Borough Market to sample the fruits and walk throughs of the family centre to cover the last details. In January, the test period began and ran until March 2004. A great deal has been learned during the pilot phase, such as which fruits and vegetables are more popular, what's in season and better value for money, how to work the till (not as easy as it sounds) and the need for quality control. Cheaper fruit and veg is not the main aim of the co-op. People want produce that tastes good as well.

One co-op runs at the same time as a toddler drop-in session. Mothers can take it in turns to leave their children with another to choose their food; which makes for a family-friendly way to shop. Toddlers like coming up and choosing their fruit, and there is much less hustle and bustle than in an ordinary shop. Some children from a school with special needs happened to be visiting the family centre with their food technology teacher when the co-op was running one day, and were delighted to buy themselves a piece of fruit. They were all given a leaflet to take home to their parents, and it is hoped that a long-term link with the cookery classes at the school will be made.

The group now makes weekly early morning trips to Borough Market in a van hired from Kensington and Chelsea Community Transport to pick up their favourite fruits and vegetables for the stall at the Family Centre. Fruit that isn't sold is either made into appetising juice, bought and enjoyed by children and workers alike or prepared, bagged up and sold at after school clubs. One hope for the co-op is to make it self-sustaining. At the moment they look at

simple things like how many buyers they have in each session and the areas people live. Feedback is also encouraged at every session and some ideas circulating have included cookery classes, a community café, and a special service for the housebound. and so on.