The Knowledge
Learning from London

City Bridge Trust
20 years of investing in Londoners

The Growing Localities
Awards 2016
The Growing Localities Awards have again this year attracted entries from a wide range of organisations of a high standard and it has proved, once more, to be very challenging to select a shortlist.

The Awards have helped to establish the Growing Localities brand, providing an opportunity to celebrate some excellent growing projects all over London. Community based nature projects encourage people to ‘get their hands dirty’ and become a more environmentally conscious community.

We would like to congratulate all entries on the amazing, interesting and innovative work they are doing to bring communities together, help individuals engage with nature and improve health and well-being.

I would also like to thank my Livery Company, The Worshipful Company of Glovers, who give away over 6,000 pairs of gloves each year to charities and who presented pairs of gardening gloves to the award recipients.

Alderman Alison Gowman
Chairman of the City Bridge Trust Grants Committee
Introduction

2016 is the fourth year of the City Bridge Trust’s Growing Localities Awards. Initially not knowing what to expect, over the last four years we have received many hundreds of fascinating entries from passionate, committed community groups, often working with very limited financial resources, but with boundless enthusiasm.

It is clear that the benefits of nature for well-being, particularly for those worst off or most excluded in our capital city, are now widely acknowledged and enthusiastically practised by an ever-growing number of citizens. The days of small groups of neighbours working together voluntarily to recover an unsightly piece of local waste land was only the beginning of what is now an enormous movement in London and in cities across the world.

Each year the Growing Localities Awards have attracted a wealth of new ideas, taking the levels of creativity and innovation to ever greater heights, as well as reaching larger and larger numbers of people. This year was a real highlight for creativity and innovation, including for example school children making musical instruments from plants they had grown; drinks made with foraged ingredients; and unique natural cosmetics made by people with learning disabilities.

The commitment to helping those most excluded is also a notable feature of this year’s entries. We have had entries from groups working with prisoners, people with mental health problems, homeless people, adults with learning disabilities and refugees, asylum seekers and survivors of conflict and torture.

The Growing Localities Awards are not about recognising large, well-established and well-funded projects. Our focus is on new ideas, practiced with limited resources, great enthusiasm and a passionate commitment to giving people who have not had the best of life chances a greater sense of well-being through nature. In that context, it could hardly be more appropriate that the winner of the 2016 Growing Localities Awards was SLAM NHS PTSD horticultural group working with refugees, people who have survived torture and people with post-traumatic stress at Vauxhall City Farm.

We want to congratulate SLAM NHS, and all entries, for all the work they do in enhancing nature and supporting the well-being of people and communities across our great capital city.

Gerard Lemos CMG
Partner, Lemos&Crane
Growing Localities Awards 2016: Winner

South London and Maudsley NHS (SLAM NHS)
PTSD horticultural group at Vauxhall City Farm

A charitable horticultural project organised by SLAM NHS at Vauxhall City Farm, to facilitate recovery from trauma among traumatised refugees and asylum seekers.

SLAM NHS runs 12-week psycho-educational groups for refugees and asylum seekers from war zones who are coping with trauma. Planting and growing are used to promote calm and a sense of peace. During the sessions people are taught coping strategies for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as nightmares and flashbacks. Often, service users are too frightened to attend mainstream services.

People usually join the groups feeling very isolated and distrustful. Sometimes group members may even come from opposing sides of the same conflict. Nevertheless, gardening helps bring people together and promotes team work. They may feel more at home in the garden if they are from more rural locations; doing gardening reminds them of home and family. For those who have pain and disabilities due to torture, gardening helps them to move their bodies.

A gardening only follow-on group is organised which involves planting, watering, growing vegetables from seeds, and harvesting. At the end of each group, everyone eats a meal together, often consisting of vegetables grown in the garden. Participants are involved in designing their own garden, making it accessible to people with disabilities including those with sensory impairment. Members of the groups are also engaged in other ways of disseminating their wisdom, for example, developing a resource book for staff and those working with traumatised clients. This helps them to feel valued and connected to others. Engaging participants is a major achievement and drop-out rates from the groups are extremely low. Many participants have moved on from the project into work and training having gained increased confidence and well-being. In a service evaluation, participants reported reduced stress, anxiety, depression and better emotional control. They also reported feeling less isolated, more connected and as if they belong. In addition, they felt the group had helped them with pathways into recovery.

This project is an inspirational exemplar of the healing power of nature, kindness and community in the face of violence and rejection.
Growing Localities Awards 2016: Runner up

Spare Tyre
The Garden

The Garden, a multi-sensory interactive performance space for people with dementia, brings the outdoors inside, creates moments of shared joy and inspires the imagination.

The Garden is both an innovative performance space, and a skills development tool for carers. During an interactive one-hour performance people with dementia are taken on a journey through the sights, smells, tastes and senses of the seasons in an immersive garden environment. Participants are invited to join in the action – playing conkers, touching soil and snow, throwing leaves, smelling fresh herbs like rosemary or smelling fresh washing on the line, and flying butterfly puppets. Carers are also invited to participate, learning new sensory methods of stimulating and engaging imagination of those with dementia. Separate complementary skills development sessions explore creative methods of care-giving and communication for carers, building confidence to bring practical creativity into everyday activities and enhancing long-term well-being. This model has been successfully toured across London during spring 2016 and will be toured again in October and November 2016 to more care homes in London.
Urban Picking, a part of Company Drinks, is a community rooted and community-led green enterprise, involving more than 2,000 residents in the making of drinks from locally grown produce, ranging from eight sodas, seven different cordials, juices and a green hop beer. Through its broad local communication and outreach, the project has reached an additional 11,000 residents who know about the work and the communal use of existing green resource. Regular use is made of the natural environment and assets by running green events and nature workshops (from plant identification and learning about their health benefits and medicinal qualities, to community picking and foraging trips) across 12 green spaces in Barking and Dagenham and four farms nearby. Over 1,050 local people were involved in picking and producing drinks for the projects in 2015, and of these 240 were schoolchildren.

Company Drinks

Urban Picking offers a year-round public programme for residents across the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to actively engage with and make use of nature and existing green resources in their locality by picking together, producing healthy seasonal drinks and contributing to a social enterprise that supports community development.
Growing Localities Awards 2016: Highly commended

Northbury Primary School
Growing with our pupils

Engaging pupils in the garden of a large multicultural primary school, raising awareness of fresh produce being both easy to grow and a healthy eating option and being involved with the outside in a fun and exciting way.

Pupils are involved with the garden in the form of lunch-time and break-time clubs where they have sown, watered, grown and harvested edible plants. They see their produce being used in their school dinners, giving them pride and making them aware of how much food costs, and how it is possible to grow at home too. The school has encouraged growing as a family activity with all 900 of the school’s pupils having planted a herb which they have taken home. Northbury Primary School is very multicultural so different herbs such as coriander, parsley, chives and basil were used. As many children live in flats without gardens, the project has focused on plants which can be grown indoors.

Interestingly, the school also grows bamboo in the garden, which is then used in a unique music project. Having seen first-hand the versatility of bamboo and how it grows, Year 6 pupils have used it to make pan pipes, which are tuned. The pupils then composed pieces of music which they performed to the school. This has been such a success over the last two years that it is hoped that this project will continue in the future.
Growing Localities Awards 2016: Highly commended

Providence Row
Providence Row Garden Project

Nestled among the concrete and glass skyline of London is a garden hidden from view, which grows herbs, vegetables and hope for people affected by homelessness.

Just a few years ago Providence Row, an East End homelessness centre, had plenty of outdoor space not being used at all by staff and clients. One client described their courtyard as being more like a 'prison yard'. The organisation embarked on a three year project to transform their space, with help from corporate partners, local volunteers and the charity’s beneficiaries themselves. Since then, the courtyard has been completely revamped and now has movable flowerbed planters and a herb garden. The building’s unused roof, refurbished last winter, is now a flourishing allotment, growing a whole range of fruit and veg, and providing a home to the charity’s resident bee hives. The garden regeneration provided an excellent project for the organisation’s garden group. Regular corporate volunteering days have been getting local workers into gardening gloves and working with clients on a range of green projects. This does wonders for breaking down barriers and misconceptions of homelessness in the local area and helps raise vital funds for the charity’s work.

The courtyard garden is used for a gardening club, art projects and as a meeting space for clients to relax in a safe, supported environment. The English class uses the gardens in the summer months to discover aspects of the English language, through poetry and photography based workshops. The roof garden is now the official training space for the organisation’s accredited gardening trainee scheme. Providence Row also grows fruit, veg and herbs for use in the kitchen.

Over 70 clients have grown over 100 kg of 140 different varieties of organic fruit and veg, helping to serve more than 1,300 healthy nutritious meals to clients affected by homelessness.
Sprout There! is a healthy lifestyle organic horticulture project for adults with learning disabilities, which encompasses a diverse range of activities promoting the natural environment.

The linchpin of Sprout There! involves all knowledge and practice of horticultural tasks and skills from propagation, cultivation and maintenance of plants through to their harvesting. Under the guise of this horticultural knowledge and due to the seasonal restraints of the project, other activities have been developed with which participants can be involved all year round. A healthier lifestyle for all members is of prime importance, not just physically but also emotionally. One way in which the herbs are used is through the production of cosmetics, where individuals who have been involved in the growing of plants incorporate various base materials to make massage oils, shampoos, shower gels, bath bombs, body creams and soaps. Members are taught to identify the plants associated with their essential oils through smell and using easy-read and pictorial identification sheets, and discuss their therapeutic values. Finally, after the product has been finished, it is sold to raise funds for the project.
Northbury Primary School
Growing with our pupils
Pupils are engaged with the garden of a large multi-cultural primary school, being involved in the outside in a fun, exciting and practical way that raises understanding of fresh produce which is easy to grow and is a healthy eating option.

HMP High Down
The Clink Gardens
The Clink Gardens is a prisoner rehabilitation initiative that trains serving prisoners in horticulture and provides a dedicated mentoring and support service leading to employment opportunities upon release.

Loughborough Farm
Marcus Lipton Youth Centre Outreach
Loughborough Farm is a volunteer-led community food growing project, which promotes health, well-being and resilience through food growing, community involvement and outreach.

Bethwin Road Adventure Playground
Bethwin Road Adventure Playground
Bethwin is an open-access and free adventure playground in south London for children aged 5 to 15 and their families involving play, cooking, gardening, community beekeeping and youth work services.

Mabley Green Users Group
Mabley Green Edible Park
Developed by the Mabley Green Users Group, this project is an edible park planted and maintained by schools and the local community for everyone to come in, pick some fruit and enjoy.

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Uniting Friends
Sprout There!

Sprout There! is a healthy lifestyle organic horticulture project for adults with learning disabilities, which encompasses a diverse range of activities promoting and sourcing the natural environment, in particular producing cosmetics from the herbs and plants they have grown.

Pooles Park Primary School
Naturehood

Many inner city people, from all age groups, abilities and backgrounds, are provided with opportunities to engage and connect with Pooles Park Primary School’s natural environment and community garden through growing organic food, gardening and discovering wildlife.

Froglife Trust
London Dragon Finder: Swimming with Dragons

This Froglife Trust project converts public swimming pools into ‘pond habitats’ for family fun sessions where young people learn about the conservation of amphibians and reptiles and their habitats.

South London and Maudsley NHS
PTSD horticultural group at Vauxhall City Farm

This horticultural project is organised by South London and Maudsley NHS at Vauxhall City Farm to facilitate recovery from trauma among refugees and asylum seekers who have suffered in the countries from which they fled.

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Company Drinks
Urban Picking

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Ten Good Reasons to Support Environmental Projects

1. Green spaces bring people together. Shared outdoor projects provide space for people to forge new relationships and to strengthen pre-existing ones, encouraging social confidence and reducing social exclusion.

2. Gardeners get to do everything from pleasant gentle exercise to strenuous physical work thereby improving bodily well-being and mental health.

3. Outdoor activities attract a wide range of people who may not be drawn to more traditional ways of working, allowing a wide range of people to develop new skills, confidence and qualifications.

4. The advantages of horticultural projects are far reaching. Participants may enjoy specialist benefits while the whole community gains from the transformation of an area.

5. Participating in environmental projects allows people to be part of ‘something bigger’ and long-lasting, which provides a positive sense of perspective.

6. Organisation of green space projects can come from anywhere, and successful participation is accessible at all levels, from enjoying a transformed space or its produce to cultivating the land and educating local residents.

7. Participation in gardening projects can encourage the reduction of stigma and isolation, and redress negative perceptions, through engaging in a shared or highly visible positive activity.

8. The advantages of horticultural projects are far reaching. Participants may enjoy specialist benefits while the whole community gains from the transformation of an area.

9. Outdoor environmental activities for children support confidence, skills and health, and go a long way towards protecting the natural environment for future generations by ensuring it is understood, respected and enjoyed today.
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Memories of the Growing Localities awards ceremony 2016, held at the Horniman Conservatory