Foreword

We had many exceptional entries for the Growing Localities Awards 2015, highlighting the breadth and diversity of projects in London which can help to make our capital a greener and more inclusive place. With this tremendous array of entries, it was very difficult to select projects for the shortlist and the subsequent prize winners. This year’s winners demonstrate a special focus on the hard-to-reach groups, who are sometimes overlooked. It has been fantastic to see such a high level of innovation and dedication in using London’s green spaces to improve the well-being of its residents. We congratulate all this year’s entrants on the high standard of their work.

Jeremy Mayhew
Chairman of the City Bridge Trust Committee
The City of London Corporation’s charity, City Bridge Trust and Lemos&Crane were delighted that 96 organisations from across London entered this year’s Growing Localities Awards.

Entries came from both large and well-established organisations as well as some smaller and newer initiatives involving a wide range of participants: children and adults with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, young offenders, people experiencing homelessness, people with HIV/AIDS, and older people including those with dementia. These projects are built on the hard work of many volunteers who donate their time to work side by side with vulnerable groups to make London a place worth living in for everyone in society. The judges were particularly impressed with the diversity of projects this year, and thought that all show a great potential for growth and expansion.

Interaction with nature provides improved well-being, stress relief and new sensory experiences. Being involved in the creation of natural spaces is also a meaningful way of contributing to the community, which comes with a great sense of achievement. In this sense everyone who has participated this year deserves an Award.

Yet the Awards recognise the most outstanding projects, those with the most scope, range and impact. In so many ways they stand out as role models for this movement of people committed to nature and its benefits, particularly by providing opportunities for some of the most excluded and vulnerable people in local communities. We hope that the Growing Localities Awards will keep on inspiring people to ‘get their hands dirty’ and become part of an ever growing and wider range of green, community and nature based projects.

Gerard Lemos
Partner, Lemos&Crane
London, July 2015
Awards categories

01 Gardening and growing food
For communal eating and small-scale enterprise

02 Introducing young people to nature
Encouraging young people to develop an interest in nature through bird-watching and similar activities

03 Keeping animals
Bees, chickens, pigs, etc for the experience of care but also to farm

04 Nature-themed arts and crafts
Woodcraft, photography, film-making, writing, etc

05 Reclaiming and developing wasteland
Especially led by residents and tenants

06 ‘Green’ exercise
Groups for walking, cycling, running, etc with a nature theme
Growing Localities

Ambitious about Autism
Teaching pupils with complex autism through the medium of nature

Winner of the Growing Localities Awards 2015

Pupils with complex autism are designing and making their own wildlife garden and sharing this with peers from local schools.

Ambitious about Autism is extending existing ‘integration’ work with local schools by inviting their pupils to enjoy and learn about nature through a wildlife project on previously unused land. They wish to challenge the low societal aspirations for pupils with complex autism by providing alternative and motivating environments for teaching, an opportunity for pupils from other local schools to spend time with pupils in a natural environment and by making their work tangible to the local community. This is both to provide a positive picture of the potential of people with complex autism and to create greater understanding around complex autism itself.

With the prize money Ambitious about Autism would like to create a ‘sensory path’ entirely based on the theme of nature. The path will have a number of offshoots leading to ‘rooms’ focusing on particular senses. Besides pupils being fully involved in the construction of this new path which will be informed by an occupational and speech therapist, it will also help the pupils who are hypersensitive to smells, noises and texture to learn to tolerate sensory triggers.
Great Croft Garden is based at a day resource centre for older people in King’s Cross. High proportions of older people visiting the centre have dementia and are physically frail. As many of their clients are of Bangladeshi origin, joint gardening aims to break down cultural barriers and integrate local communities, focusing on the therapeutic effects of maintaining a garden.

Age UK Camden will increase the number of gardening sessions available for those with mild to moderate dementia with the prize money. Moreover, they wish to set up a gardening group for Bangladeshi women, many of whom are carers for their husbands with dementia, to grow Bangladeshi vegetables. They are also interested in developing new art initiatives based around the garden.

Our garden’s purpose is to enhance the lives of our members and local residents by growing vegetables, herbs and fruit for our kitchen and the community, as well as flowers to make it a beautiful place to sit and enjoy time with friends and family.
Furry Tales delivers outreach sessions to residential homes and day care centres in Tower Hamlets and onsite sessions at Stepney City Farm. They aim to improve the quality of life for older people and those with dementia by increasing their opportunities for sensory stimulation, intergenerational interaction and physical comfort. This is done by delivering therapeutic animal-handling and nature based sessions that prompt reminiscence, storytelling, curiosity and laughter. Outreach sessions involve guinea pigs, rabbits and bantam hens, and interaction by the elderly with volunteers means inspiring exchanges between the young and old.

They will use the money to help continue their activities and develop a sustainability programme which would see residential care homes take the project into their own hands by providing them with small animals and training sessions so they can bring older people and animals together every day.

Furry Tales combats the social isolation of elders through therapeutic animal-handling sessions and contact with nature at Stepney City Farm.
Father Nature ‘skills up’ young fathers in Lambeth to combat worklessness, teach life skills and promote responsible fathering models. The Growing Dads Project builds community partnerships to create a learning resource which stimulates interest in the environment, develops knowledge and understanding of plants and insects and improves the local environment in an urban context whilst also encouraging healthier lifestyles. The majority of the preparation and maintenance work is carried out by local dads, but overseen by skilled Father Nature workers. They build raised beds and natural habitats that dads and children can access in order to develop a greater understanding and respect of nature. Dads are coached to encourage their children to work together in understanding the wild environment, learning to take sensible and measured risks and develop skills such as basic carpentry in a carefully managed way.

They will use the prize money for the dads to build more robust raised beds at Max Roach Playground before the next growing season, and buy the tools and seeds required to grow food there, and pay for Father Nature coaching sessions throughout the 2015 growing season.
SHP supports socially excluded people with complex needs around substance misuse, mental health, offending and homelessness to help them gain the confidence and skills to overcome barriers to independent living and a better quality of life. It helps them engage in healthy and meaningful activity while learning new skills, such as gardening, food growing and cooking, and also accredited training. This project does much to increase self-confidence, responsibility and also engagement with other SHP programmes. They will use the prize money to build a terrace garden at one of their floating support centres and for excursions to learn more about horticulture, nature conservation and biodiversity.

SHP’s Green Project enables people with complex needs to gain confidence and work towards their recovery by learning new skills, growing their own food, promoting biodiversity, and forging social networks within a structured, therapeutic and safe environment.
When the Growing Localities Awards were started in 2012 Lemos&Crane and City Bridge Trust’s aim was simple: to celebrate projects across London that use nature and green spaces to bring communities together by providing opportunities for work and training and encouraging people to get active and involved in their local environment. Some of the first year’s winners were large charities with strong track records of supporting vulnerable people, while others were local and volunteer-led groups who had equally transformed their pocket of London and the lives of its residents. Among the first year entries there was a particular emphasis on redevelopment of wasteland and transformation of public, shared space.

More recently the Growing Localities Awards have come to reflect a growing community of projects in London that help individuals engage with nature and their environment to improve well-being. This is epitomised by the focus of the
Awards this year on using nature to engage hard to reach and vulnerable groups. The original five categories – Gardening and Growing Food; Introducing Young People to Nature; Keeping Animals; Nature-Themed Arts and Crafts; and Reclaiming and Developing Wasteland – are interpreted in ever more innovative ways to create and strengthen communities and involve people from all walks of life. This has been reflected in the selection of winning entries over each of the three years. The Awards have also taken on a networking and supportive role, with organisations, groups and projects meeting to celebrate each other’s success and learn from their collective experience.

The evolving direction and emphasis of the Awards, towards a more individual and community focus, has been what has kept them so special. We look forward with great anticipation to next year’s!
Ten Good Reasons to Support Environmental Projects

01
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.

02
Gardeners get to do everything from pleasant gentle exercise to strenuous physical work thereby improving physical well-being and health.

03
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.

04
The benefits of horticultural projects are far reaching. Participants may enjoy specialist benefits, while the whole community gains from the transformation of the area.

05
Participating in environmental projects allows people to be part of ‘something bigger’ and long-lasting, which provides a positive sense of perspective.
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.

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.

Environmental projects allow participants to experience the benefit of stepping back from normal routines and environments, ‘clearing your head’ and **taking more time for yourself**.

Horticultural projects work with **structured methods and clearly defined aims**, which is very welcome for people whose lives may be unfocused, chaotic or not stimulating.

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.
Shortlisted entries

Age UK Camden
Great Croft Garden
This gardening project for older people based in King’s Cross aims to break down cultural barriers and integrate local communities, focusing on the therapeutic effects of gardening. Many participants have dementia and are physically frail.

Ambitious about Autism
Teaching pupils with complex autism through the medium of nature
The project brings together pupils from local schools in north London with pupils with complex autism. Together they learn about nature through a wildlife project on previously unused land. This creates greater understanding around complex autism.

Caritas Anchor House
Ambassadors Time Bank Gardening Project
Single homeless people with a history of mental health problems, criminal justice histories, substance misuse and domestic violence experiences develop their self-confidence through volunteering in a gardening project, a recycling project and the upkeep of a local market space.

City and Hackney Mind
Growing Minds
This project enhances mental resilience and well-being of clients through therapeutic green activities. It does this while teaching the participants about gardening in an inner-city area, and seeking to minimise isolation through group activities.

Bede House Association
Bede Centre Nature Group
This project enables adults with learning disabilities to increase their awareness of environmental issues and discover nature and ecology for themselves. Practical workshops involve making insect habitats, animal shelters and feeding stations.

Father Nature
Growing Dads Project
The project in Lambeth serves to combat unemployment of young fathers, teach life skills and promote responsible fathering models. Dads build raised beds and natural habitats that they can access with their children, while acquiring knowledge of gardening and plants.
Shortlisted entries

**Global Generation**
Skip Garden outreach projects
Young people are trained in gardening, cooking and carpentry, which contributes to community cohesion while generating income to support wider green community activities in the King's Cross Skip Garden.

**Stepney City Farm**
Furry Tales
This project delivers outreach sessions to residential homes and day care centres in Tower Hamlets and onsite sessions at Stepney City Farm aimed at improving the quality of life for elders and those with dementia. It increases their opportunities for sensory stimulation, intergenerational interaction and physical comfort.

**Rootless Garden**
Projects for London's older people are delivered in residential care homes, sheltered accommodation and day facilities. Activities centre around gardening projects, social clubs, and botanical tea and cocktail parties, and provide intergenerational opportunities in elderly care.

**St Mary’s Secret Garden**
This project runs therapeutic gardening days for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. It also holds weekly sessions for people living with HIV/AIDS, older people and training for students with learning disabilities or mental ill-health. The project aims to relieve social exclusion.

**SHP (Single Homeless Project)**
By learning skills, such as gardening, food growing and cooking, and by training participants as peer mentors to engage harder-to-reach clients, this project addresses socially excluded people with complex needs around substance misuse, mental ill health, offending and homelessness.

**Waltham Forest Youth Offending Team**
Through horticulture courses, the project aims to provide new skills and knowledge to young offenders who can be vulnerable and socially excluded. Garden produce is sold to workers, and the proceeds are donated to Victim Support.