



# **St Ann's Allotments**

Hungerhill Developments Ltd - part of The Renewal Trust 

## **St Ann's Allotments Management and Maintenance Plan Chapter Four**

## **Chapter 4 – Management and Maintenance Plan**

Please note this document was written in 2019 so some information has changed and may be out of date.

The following chapter contains ideas and emerging themes from time spent by the consultants with Directors, Staff, Project Leads and Community Stakeholders based on site. These have yet to be consulted on and as such the reader should not consider these 'Final'. Consultation will commence in June 2022 and run through to December 2022 to allow maximum engagement.

Below is a brief timeline from funding being awarded to present day to give some context to this document.

- HLF funding was awarded in May 2019.
- Work tendered out and consultants appointed in September 2019.
- March 2020 the county went into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Allotment Team focussed on keeping the site open for plot holders only.
- Project files were completed with an evaluation report and filed with HLF in December 2020.
- During 2021, the ongoing restrictions affected tenants, visitors and staff alike with the visitor centre remaining closed.
- Covid safe one-to-one vacant plot tours returned in May 2021 along with a plant swap and sale. This valuable social event, evidenced the caution with which people were reconnecting.
- From spring of 2021 we focussed on proactive site management, which has involved a degree of 'catch up; for the time when operations were negatively impacted during various lockdowns/restrictions.

Through our Newsletters we have tried to communicate the site priorities for reopening along with information about the two specific areas of work – 'starter plots' and 'woodland plots' along with the success of DEFRA funding for the New Roots programme.

## **1.1 Future Management and Staffing**

HDL will continue to hold the 30 year lease with Nottingham City Council. HDL will therefore hold overall responsibility for the management, administration and maintenance of the allotments (with the City continuing to hold some long term responsibility for major capital repairs). As part of this agreement, the City Council will also make a significant contribution to increased revenue budgets.

The Site Management Team focus exclusively on the St Anns allotments, and cover all aspects of the site management, maintenance and administration, along with activities and partnership projects.

The continued role of the Dedicated Management Team will include:

- Implementation and update/review of the Business Plan and Management Plan
- Implementation of the masterplan including securing external grants for key aspects of the proposals and coordinating their delivery
- Health and safety, security, legal and insurance issues
- Staff management and recruitment plus providing new training opportunities
- Tenancy matters: new tenancies, enforcement, administration and customer care
- Site/plot condition monitoring and records
- Rent issues: sending bills, receiving rent, keeping records and enforcement
- Internal administration and finance
- User and community involvement including increasing links with the local community and businesses in the Nottingham area
- Publicity and promotion in conjunction with the Communications Team at the Renewal Trust
- Specifying, issuing and monitoring maintenance contracts
- Instructions for direct site works and one off repairs
- Management and co-ordination of key stakeholders and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to heritage and interpretation improvements, the development and expansion of the Site Partnership Forum and the annual events and activities programme

These areas of work will be the responsibility of the Allotments Manager, Site Maintenance Officers and Receptionist/Administrator. Such work will be overseen by the HDL board and monitored by NCC.

To generate the levels of income forecast in the trading profile and to open the allotments up for the public; a part-time Event / Volunteer Co-ordinator would need to be appointed, a wealth of volunteers recruited and the operational function of the visitor centre will need to change. Additionally, to support site maintenance the site would benefit from the appointment of a Horticultural Apprentice, Traineeships and Internships.

## **1.2 Future Key Stakeholder Development**

Organisations and individuals involved in the site have detailed knowledge of the site and the gardeners, experience of maintaining allotments and managing capital works programmes, and of community involvement both on site and in the locality. In addition, the commitment and involvement of gardeners themselves – as primary stakeholders – are a powerful asset.

Partnership organisations are therefore an important part of the strategy to maximise plot take up and increase the use of the site, and will enable HDL to provide more facilities and an improved standard maintenance, as well as delivering wider benefits.

Partnership working with current key stakeholders should be improved and current tenancies revised ensuring that some of the current issues are tackled e.g. it would be a good idea to introduce a clause about seeking HDL permission for any further grant applications and plot alterations, request quarterly monitoring and evaluation data with regard to activities delivered on site and seeing sight of annual / monthly event calendars that may have an impact on the wider site. To start to address this a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was drafted for the St Ann's Allotments Partnership in October 2020. The MoU, to be reviewed every three years, was shared with site stakeholders and feedback invited ahead of the document being signed. The document sets out the partnership aims and objectives, responsibilities and benefits, measuring impact and review mechanisms as presented below.

The overarching aim of this partnership is to work together to ensure the long term sustainability of St Ann's Allotments in line with the 10 year Masterplan. To provide a safe and welcoming place, diverse in community and culture, its heritage and wildlife protected and activities are environmentally sustainable.

Common Objectives / Goals:

- Secure the long term sustainability of the site
- Create a Safe and Welcoming Place
- Contribute to a programme of events & activities
- Support volunteering and training opportunities
- Gather feedback and Measure Impact

Benefits:

- Focus on a shared vision and common goals
- Ensuring momentum within the partnership
- Attract funding
- Improve effectiveness and efficiency

To participate in a St Ann's Allotments Partnership Forum as a key stakeholder, each organisation agrees to the following:

- Legal and governance - Organisations must be a Constituted Group registered with Companies House and/or the Charities Commission. At March Rent renewal partners must confirm that the following are in place:
  - Public Liability Insurance appropriate to activities
  - Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults & Children Policy
  - DBS checks for all staff including sessional workers
  - Risk Assessments and First Aid qualified project staff / volunteers
- Participation through meetings
- Contribute to an annual programme of events
- Fundraising and publicity - consultation with HDL and sharing of impact evaluation data.

HDL will continue to support, encourage and work with key stakeholders through the Site Partnership Form and will look to develop new relationships with other local organisations and potential delivery partners in order to maximise the reach of the allotments and invite new audiences from diverse communities to experience the site. This enhanced partnership working for the benefit of the local community and the sustainability of the site. Organisations already identified to help build capacity within the Site Partnership Forum and increase networking include Nottingham Growing Network (NGN) (meetings are attended by a representative of the Nottingham City Council's parks section), NOSF, Social Farms & Gardens, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust City Local Group (a team of volunteers, supporting opportunities to get involved with nature and support conservation), City Heritage, In Bloom and Garden Champions and volunteer representatives.

It is advisable that the allotment staff share their experience and learn from other allotment sites across Nottingham and the UK. The Site Partnership Forum should therefore become part of the wider NOSF group and join the Midlands Allotment Forum (a spin off from the Midlands Parks Forum) once developed.

All stakeholders could contribute to the maintenance of the wider site through continued and coordinated marketing campaigns and work programmes (both formal and informal). Both Nature in Mind and The Nottingham Refugee Forum (NRF) are keen to get involved with work programmes across the wider site and STAA have an interest in managing unlet plots that are designated wildlife plots, carrying out wildlife surveys and training and upskilling gardeners. NRF would like to interact with plot holders on the main site where they hope to improve their English language skills - users of the forum could get involved with across the site.

Additionally, a heritage assessment monitoring programme should be developed with stakeholders and volunteers to ensure all outputs and outcomes across each stakeholder organisation are being captured.

Other partnerships that could be developed include organisations who will bring their own additional resources to the project and will manage these themselves. Examples could include:

- Nature conservation volunteer group maintaining the wildlife plots.
- Nottingham Wildlife Trust could potentially take on the pond and adjacent space proposed in the masterplan.
- A locally based orchard group or cider production company managing the Perry orchard.
- Training organisation undertaking site maintenance contract – would receive payment as per commercial contractor, but would bring additional social benefits.

### **1.3 Future Involvement of Volunteers**

Volunteering across the site needs increasing generally and there is real potential to tap into the CSR market and make more use of probation services. With regard to corporate volunteering The Renewal Trust are building relationships with Experian and Reckitt Benckiser (donated £5,000 for plot renovations in 2020) - some of which will filter to the allotments. Boots are eager to building a more long term CSR commitment and in March 2019 Experian offered 50 of its staff for a volunteer day at the allotments and £750 towards tools. HDL should continue to encourage businesses to pay for volunteering.

It is recommended that contact is made with large local firms of banks, insurance companies, supermarkets to discuss CSR opportunities. Discussions should also include asking if companies would like to 'sponsor' an allotment plot - renting a plot (and make a donation) as a stress reliever and source of exercise for their employees or company team workdays e.g.

helping with plot clearance or providing assistance creating accessible plots (both potentially at a price).

Plotholders will continue to have their central role in maintaining (and developing) the majority of the site by looking after their own plots. Many will continue their current informal role as the eyes and ears of the site – reporting issues or undertaking repairs. We expect this role to increase as gardeners see the benefits of the implementation of the strategic plans, and feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the gardens overall. Plotholders should be prepared to give up some time helping with site improvements that have direct benefits to them. Arranging workdays combined with social events or refreshments may increase involvement.

A range of volunteering opportunities should be developed and promoted to encourage gardeners, key stakeholders and members of the local community to join a St Anns Allotments Volunteer Group. To facilitate a comprehensive volunteer programme employment of an Events / Volunteer Co-ordinator is recommended. Employment of this officer would increase capacity of existing site staff and would enable enhanced marketing the site, development of key relationships and would ensure a key lead with regard to volunteering and events and activities.

#### **1.4 Financial Plan - Future Maintenance Costs**

The management and maintenance of the allotments is currently delivered by HDL with annual revenue support of £38,400 from NCC. HDL will work closely with key stakeholders to ensure the future sustainability of the site.

The masterplan proposals present an ideal opportunity to further restore and improve the allotments, offer new proposed uses for currently unlet and overgrown plots and enhance its management and maintenance. Costs have been produced for each of the projects presented within the masterplan, linked to this management plan and the fundraising strategy.

It is hoped that through the implementation of plot rent increases, a phased approach to plot clearance, enhanced volunteer programmes, increased partnership working, improved marketing and new investment through external funding that increased income generation will further secure the allotments future. These new potential sources of external funding are explored in the Fundraising Strategy and sources of income are explored in the Business Plan. Additionally, the maintenance costs have been assessed and future maintenance costs forecast – these can be seen in the trading profile in the Business Plan.

## 2 How will we know when we have arrived?

This section sets out how the management plan should be monitored, how the action plan should be updated and also how the plan itself should be reviewed.

There are several elements to the monitoring and evaluation of the future management and maintenance of the site and the 30 year lease and management agreement between NCC and HDL and the new strategic plans for the site including the business plan and this management plan will aid that process.

**Important note: the Annual Outputs and Service Targets set out in the Management Agreement dated June 2008 - need updating reflecting the new measures of success set out below as they relate to the previous NLHF restoration project.**

### 2.1 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and reviewing assists the process of management planning to continue after the plan is written. It offers the opportunity for ongoing dialogue involving board members, elected members, key stakeholders, partner organisations and a range of interests. By linking the action plan, through measurable targets, with the vision, aims and objectives we can see where success has or has not been achieved in delivering change on the ground.

The management and maintenance plan covers a period of ten years with a requirement for the work plan / action plan to be reviewed annually by the Allotment Manager and Site Staff - any completed actions will be noted and a revised action plan inserted. The Management Plan will also be monitored and reviewed based on Green Flag judges' recommendations. HDL will ensure it remains current with future developments, management arrangements and key stakeholder, plotholder and community aspirations and involvement.

It will be integrated with existing management policies and not separate from them.

### 2.2 Measures of Success

Monitoring arrangements should consider how well the team are progressing against the management aims and objectives. By gathering baseline data progress can be measured and the value of the allotments to wider agendas.

The measures are set out under some key headings to relate back the Green Flag Community Award based analysis.



### 2.2.1 A Welcoming Place

- Number of entrances improved
- Number of access improvements made

### 2.2.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure

- Details of staff inspection results
- Number of recorded incidents / crimes
- Perceptions of safety from plotheadholder surveys

### 2.2.3 Well Maintained and Clean

- Condition of plots
- Number of plots cleared and let
- Improved tree maintenance
- Number and nature of complaints received on colony
- User satisfaction from plotheadholder surveys
- Performance against standards through internal site quality inspections and audits

### 2.2.4 Environmental Management

- Use of water - aim for reduced usage across the site
- Amount of waste recycled
- Amount of pesticide use
- Amount of peat use
- Energy and natural resource use

### 2.2.5 Biodiversity, Landscape & Heritage

- % plots dedicated as wildlife plots
- Number of heritage building / features restored
- Wildlife sightings and annual survey records
- Diversity of habitat types
- Tree work undertaken following arboricultural survey

## 2.2.6 Community Involvement

- Number of volunteer sessions delivered
- Number of corporate volunteering sessions delivered and numbers/hours involved
- Numbers of volunteers across the site including gardener volunteering
- Number of partners in Site Partnership Forum
- A record of events and activities delivered across the site
- Visitor numbers and reach (postcode data)
- Number of schools visiting the site
- Volunteer training delivered and the numbers involved
- Diversity of users
- Progress on implementation of the Communication Plan - including methods of marketing and communication
- Feedback from surveys - % of gardeners satisfied or very satisfied with administration and maintenance of the site and positive feedback from events and activities

## 2.2.7 Management / Achievements

- Management and tenancy agreements updated and new ones written
- Annual work programme developed and progress against it
- Annual review of cyclical maintenance programme
- Annual review of action plan
- Number of people on waiting list and postcodes
- Number of plots tenanted and % across alternative offers
- Increased % of plot take up
- Reduced number of unlet and overgrown plots
- Heritage features recording per plot on colony
- Increased plot inspections with the support of annual drone surveys
- Staff training
- Performance against annual income targets
- Annual inspection delivered
- Increasing work based learning through the delivery of a horticultural apprenticeship, traineeships and internships, and staff and volunteer training
- Green Flag Community Award for the whole site achieved by year 5
- Amount of external funding secured (grants, donations, sponsorship etc)
- Income generated
- Continued investment programme

- % of master planning elements delivered
- Evaluation reports for all externally funded projects delivered by HDL and key stakeholders

### **2.3 Management and Maintenance Aims and Objectives**

In the long term, HDL must be able to implement the management and maintenance plan. Periodic assessments of performance will focus on their success in achieving the stated aims and objectives.

Site staff will continue to keep good records of the management and maintenance that is carried out and will regularly update them. Copies of surveys, consultation, funding applications and other relevant information will also be stored along with a copy of the current working version of the management and maintenance plan. Copies of the management and maintenance plan will be accessible for anyone who is involved in looking after our allotments including staff, ploholders, key stakeholders, volunteers and contractors.