

Gardens Advisory Group Report to the RCC March 2024

The Gardens Advisory Group, working in four teams, carried out their quarterly inspections of the four sections of the Barbican Gardens in February. We were very pleased to welcome City Gardens Manager, Jake Tibbetts, to every one of our inspections and to Helen Davinson, Resident Services Manager, who was able to join two of our inspections. Many thanks to GAG members for their active participation in the inspections and for the reports on the areas inspected.

Since our last report in November the weather has, largely, been cold and wet. Unfortunately it was not so cold that the growth of weeds was seriously inhibited.

Prior to commencing the inspections I had received several unsolicited testimonials from residents praising the work of the gardeners as they prepared the gardens for Spring. The inspections reinforced and added to those testimonials. Shrubs have been pruned and shaped. Beds have been weeded and prepared for planting. Paving stones have been laid in front of the benches in Speed Gardens where the grass had been worn away. The overhead hanging garden between Andrewes and the Postern had been cut back and tidied. Since the inspections the reeds in the lake have been cut down and tree work is due to commence shortly.

The overall result is that the gardens are in good shape and ready for the arrival of Spring.

Despite these efforts some problems remain. The Thomas More Gardens adjacent to Thomas More House are prone to flooding making the path slippery and, at times, unusable. Dealing with drainage issues is a matter for Property Services. Hopefully, given the decision to move responsibility for fabric maintenance into the BEO, it will be possible to find a remedy to this problem. There is a similar problem on the Barbican Highwalk in front of Bunyan where path becomes flooded and impassable.

The City Gardens team continues to support a number of apprenticeships and some former apprentices are now part of the team that looks after the Barbican. Plans are in place to recruit new gardeners to replace those who are retiring so that there will be no gap in provision of services.

The GAG was very pleased that the RCC and subsequently, the BRC, approved its proposal to ask officers to organise a comprehensive survey of the private gardens and, on the basis of that survey, to produce plans to secure the future of our Grade II* listed gardens. Officers are working on this request and expect to respond by the next RCC meeting in June.

Although it is outside the scope of our inspections the Barbican Wildlife Garden (BWG) is part of the Barbican Gardens. The attached note, prepared by the BWG, provides a valuable update on the state of the garden and the work of its volunteers.