

GAG Report to the RCC 6 June 2022

Some good news. As you may recall the Gardens Advisory Group (GAG) has been conducting the area by area inspections of the gardens on its own through the pandemic. In our last report I highlighted our hope that we would be able to resume joint inspections with members of the City Gardens Team.

Those joint inspections have now recommenced. We have conducted three out of the four area inspections with the last one scheduled for May 27th. The willingness of Jake Tibbetts, City Gardens Manager, to make himself available to join each of the inspection teams has been very much appreciated.

Joint inspections produce a much more fruitful dialogue than simply writing and circulating reports. Joint inspections also enable residents to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of City Gardens staff on all matters gardening which is an additional welcome benefit. If a member of the Barbican Estates Office were available to join the next round of inspections they would be very welcome.

Members of the RCC may have noticed the discussion on Barbican Talk about the three year long absence of the fountains and the waterfall on the lake. Inspection of the gardens in the lake revealed a further range of problems: deteriorating brickwork that is admitting water to some beds and a bulge in the weir. According to the discussion on Barbican Talk the Barbican Centre pays 50% of the costs of the lake, the Corporation pays 7.5% and residents, through the service charge, pay 42.5%. This service charge payment - if the Barbican Talk report is accurate – makes the lake's infrastructure a matter for the RCC. Further delays in effecting essential repairs are likely to result in greater deterioration and damage.

Among the joys and difficulties of gardens is that they are not static – they grow, develop, blossom and deteriorate. If we are to have gardens of the quality appropriate to our listed building status, we need a long term plan for their continuing and continuous re-development. It is now widely recognised that there is an overdue need for a comprehensive property maintenance programme to keep our buildings in good condition. In parallel, a comprehensive garden maintenance programme that responds to the challenges of climate change and garden usage as well as the natural development and deterioration of plants, shrubs and trees is also required. The Gardens Advisory Group is proposing to engage in discussion with City Gardens and the BEO on how such a programme might best be developed.

Jim Durcan
Chair
Gardens Advisory Group