

## **Gardens Advisory Group Report to the RCC November 2023**

The Gardens Advisory Group, working in four teams, carried out their quarterly inspections of the four sections of the Barbican Gardens in October. We were very pleased to welcome City Gardens Manager, Jake Tibbetts, to every one 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 September the combination of unseasonably warm weather and copious rainfall has extended the usual growing season. Unfortunately the growing season for weeds has also expanded meaning that the gardeners have had to go on weeding extensively which impacts their ability to conduct more usual Autumn tasks e.g. pruning and shaping shrubs and bushes.

Despite vagaries of the weather the inspections revealed well tended gardens that are, in the main, flourishing although it is inevitable that some replacement and gapping up will be required. The Gardens Advisory Group would like to express its appreciation of the hard work and skill of the gardeners in keeping the Barbican Gardens such an attractive feature of the estate.

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.

The Barbican Gardens are included in the listed status of the estate. Much attention has been focused on the buildings resulting in the Savill Stock Condition Survey and the on-going development of plans to remedy the building issues that have appeared in our fifty year old estate.

The GAG believes that we need to devote time, attention and resources to the gardens too if we are to ensure that they will continue to flourish in the face of climate change and that they play their role in supporting greater bio-diversity in the City. We appreciate that the Corporation, by embarking on a rolling programme of podium renewal, is already taking steps to deal with some of these issues but there is no comprehensive plan for the private gardens.

Consequently we would like to propose that the RCC request the BRC 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 the gardens. Those plans should include not just the gardens but also proposals in relation to budgets to cover staffing (including, for example, specialist teams brought to work at heights by the waterfalls or in the sculpture court) and the financing of new plants, shrubs and trees. Having clearly defined budgets would improve accountability. It is envisaged that any major works on the gardens would be spread over a number of years in order to minimise the disruption at any point in time and to allow the costs to be spread. The development of any plans would involve extensive consultation with leaseholders before the plans came to the RCC and BRC.