

Committee:	Date:
Natural Environment Board	17 October 2024
Subject: City Gardens Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1)Diverse Engaged Communities 2)Leading Sustainable Environment 3)Providing Excellent services 5)Vibrant Thriving Destination 6)Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment	For Information
Report author: Jake Tibbetts, City Gardens Manager	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the Natural Environment Boards on current management and operational activities across the City Gardens section.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Personnel

1. City Gardens have recruited three new gardeners, one of which is a Volunteer Facilitator and a Keeper, currently recruitment is underway for further Gardener Positions.

Procurement

2. The Contract for the design and build of Tower Hill Playground is being awarded and the public consultation will commence soon.
3. The two new electric tipper transits have been delivered and are operational.

Operational Activities

4. **Friends of City Gardens:** The FoCG are progressing well with delivering the rewilding works at Bunhill Fields, and will be delivering a morning of walks and talks on the morning of Sunday the 13th October.
5. **Tree Removal – Bunhill Fields:** An application to remove two of the London Plane trees in the Bunhill Fields has been made to Islington Council. Bunhill Fields has a continuous high tree canopy in the southern enclosed areas, which is predominantly made up of mature London Plane. Through the rewilding works there is an aim to diversify the ground flora and increase pollinator friendly plants, we would also like to establish a secondary tree canopy to again increase the biodiversity value of the site. This work is going on across the site and is part of a rewilding project that is being funded by the GLA and is being delivered by the Friends City Gardens Volunteers and the City of London. The removal of these two plane trees would increase light to the ground allowing us to diversify through planting the flora and also establish some small native trees to provide some sub canopy. These two plane trees are growing in close proximity and are suppressed by a larger Plane. The removal of these two trees give this tree the ability to develop its crown further and become a heritage value tree.
6. **Bunhill Fields:** The north western wall has now finally been repaired. The new Keeper will be starting at the end of September. Since the last report there have been 46 recorded incidents of dogs off of lead.
7. The Chair and Vice Chair of NEB and the City Gardens Manager met with representatives of the Blake Society to discuss the possibility of introducing some kind of a memorial for Katherine Blake into Bunhill Fields to mark where she is buried and to work to improve the information provided on site for both William and Katherine Blake. A site visit with the Vice Chair, the City Gardens Manager and representatives from the society has been diarised.
8. **Business Improvement Districts:** The summer programme of sporting and cultural events has come to a close. Throughout August, Aldgate Connect held 9 live music events on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Aldgate square which were well attended.
9. The EC event in Seething Lane showing sporting events and films on large screens was considered a success and discussions are already underway for a similar event next year. Attendance at the sporting events fluctuated and

overall the summer's changeable weather did reduce numbers but the two family film events at weekends was successful with a total attendance achieved of 130.

10. City Gardens are continuing to work with all of the BIDs to deliver a programme of cultural and fitness events across the City next summer.
11. City Gardens are in advanced contractual discussions with the EC Bid to fund an additional Gardener for the EC area, this gardener will focus on raising the quality of key sites.

Project Updates

12. Current projects City Gardens are working on with Policy and Projects
 - Jubilee Gardens - a climate resilient scheme that will feature a relatively high volume of new trees for the size of the site. This scheme is on site and it is intended that planting will take place in October
 - Moorgate London Wall – a redesign of the area around the oldest Oak tree in the Square Mile, will be delivered this winter
 - Nicolas Cole Abbey - the two planters on Queen Victoria street are being rebuilt and a new tree planted.
13. Current City Gardens Projects
 - St Anne St Agnes – City Gardens are working with the developer of Alderscastle to develop a master plan for this site. Initially the first phase will be an improvement scheme that will be implemented to the area in front of the entrance to Alderscastle to improve the aesthetics of the site for when the building works are completed in March 2025
 - St Olaves Silver Street – This scheme which includes the removal and replacement of two trees and improved planting will be delivered before March 2025.
 - St Mary Staining – Improvements to planting will be delivered before January 2025, with the possibility of a small pond being installed being discussed with the church and dioceses. . This would be delivered later in 2025.
 - Riverside – rear of St Magnus the Martyr Church, a climate resilient scheme similar to the one outside of the boys' school will be delivered before March 2025.
14. St Brides - City Gardens are working with the church to make improvements to the churchyard. These include:
 - Pruning works to the trees have been specified. We are waiting to obtain the required permissions from the dioceses before progressing.
 - Planting – A planting schedule has been drafted and is being finalised through discussions with the church.

- Planter – an estimate has been received for the price of a lead effect planter for which we are looking at funding options.
 - MACE are providing volunteer support and have fixed the water tap in the churchyard which was faulty.
15. **Finsbury Circus:** Maylim, the main contractor, took occupation of the site 20th November 2023. Expected Completion Feb 2024
- 1) Project update:
- Main Contractor has agreed a Schedule of plants with Client design team from alternative supplier (Robbin Thackie)
 - Client Team Visit completed to Nursery on 19th Sept with second Nursery visit to be scheduled mid Oct before any deliveries to Site.
- 2) Physical works completed since last update:
- Sewer connection completed
 - Park office frame constructed
 - Install Planters - Ongoing (11 & 12 Completed)
 - Hard surfacing Outer Perimeter Installation - Ongoing (75% of Existing Scoutmoor installed & 65% of New Scoutmoor Installed)
- 3) Works planned for coming month:
- Install Planters 36 - 40
 - Install irrigation system
 - Install Park Office Windows & Doors
16. City Gardens are developing the Finsbury Circus Events Policy, this will be completed by the time the gardens open, the first draft will be presented to committee at a December NEB.

Events

17. The members tour of some City sites and Finsbury Circus took place on the 11th September. Members were given a presentation by Maylim and shown around the Garden viewing progress made so far.
18. The Chair along with the Lord Mayor will be attending a rededication event at St Aldermanbury garden event in October. The event is organized by Westminster College in the US and will be attended by a number of Churchillians. The college has contributed towards the recent works that have taken place within the Garden.

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