

Gardens Advisory Group Report to the RCC November 2024

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 and Helen Davinson, Resident Services Manager, 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. It was particularly pleasing to welcome another new volunteer to the inspection teams.

A dry spell during the summer saw the lawns begin to dry out and look less appealing but a combination of excellent work by the gardeners and renewed rainfall dealt with that problem. The gardens contribute much to the atmosphere of the Barbican Summer Party. The frequently cooler and wetter weather since then has been good for the gardens and was welcomed by the gardeners. The results are evident in the well cared for appearance of our gardens with bushes and shrubs neatly shaped and trimmed, weeds kept to a minimum and colour apparent throughout the summer and into the autumn.

The overall result is that the gardens are looking good. GAG would like to thank the gardeners for their work in planting, weeding and cutting that ensure the gardens can be enjoyed by all. Jo Rodgers, from the Barbican Wild Life Garden, is keen to acknowledge their support and assistance in the temporary absence of Nic Guerra, who is so familiar to so many of us.

Towards the end of 2023 the RCC and, subsequently, the BRC, approved a 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. This is in keeping with the recommendation in the Barbican Listed Management Building Guidelines Volume 4 – Landscape which stated that

“the City is encouraged:

- to establish an estate-wide Landscape Masterplan in order to maintain consistency of design, specification and detailing;”.

At its meeting on June 5th GAG discussed the progress that officers had made with the proposal for a comprehensive survey and the production of plans. A couple of House Groups asked for more time to consider this proposal. During the resulting interval the ADBRE explored the possibility of obtaining CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funding to offset part of all of these costs. It isn't yet clear whether funding will be available but the option is being pursued. The Gardens Advisory Group requests that the RCC now lends its support to this proposal. If CIL funding is forthcoming the costs, originally estimated as a maximum of £40,000 spread over two years, will be reduced correspondingly.

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.