

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Dated: 10 December 2024
Subject: City Gardens Update	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	Diverse Engaged Communities Leading Sustainable Environment Vibrant Thriving Destination Providing Excellent Services Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
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 Environment
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. Since the last update the Keeper, the Gardener (Volunteer Facilitator) and four other gardeners have started. City Gardens are in the process of recruiting a Gardener for the EC Bid area (funded by EC Bid) and a new Team Leader.

Operational Activities

2. Tower Hill Playground

LUC have been commissioned to deliver the design and build of the new playground at Tower Hill. The programme for delivery is below, it is a tight programme but there is an ambition to bring a final design to the next Natural Environment Board, so that the playground can be completed during the summer of 2025.

Below is a timetable for the development of the designs, as part of the consultation process we will letter drop every business and resident within 200m of the playground as well as Mansell Street and Middlesex Street estates. We will be holding a public consultation workshop in Artizan Street Library, and have a presence at Aldgate School Christmas Fair. The consultation will also be promoted online via social media platforms.

DESIGN PHASE PROGRAMME – KEY DATES

Task Name	Start	Finish
Develop x3 concept designs	4/11/24	29/11/24
Develop & prepare online consultation strategy	4/11/24	29/11/24
Stakeholder meeting 1	25/11/24	29/11/24
Public consultation events	29/11/24	17/12/24
Develop preferred design	2/12/24	19/12/24
Stakeholder meeting 2	16/12/24	17/12/24
Christmas Holiday Break	23/12/24	03/01/25
Develop detail design proposal	16/12/24	23/01/25
Prepare post consultation report	6/01/25	17/01/25
Natural Environment Board Meeting	6/02/25	6/02/25

3. **Friends of City Gardens:** The FoCG are progressing well with delivering the rewilding works at Bunhill Fields, they have held a number of corporate volunteering days, creating new planting beds and held a successful open day on Sunday the 13th October.
4. **Corporate Volunteering** – City Gardens are developing a programme of corporate volunteering days for 2025 which will be delivered by an external provider “Leaves Breath”. This is being done on a trial basis and we will feed back to Natural Environment Board after the trial period.
5. **Open Squares Weekend** – The City Gardens Manager and the Deputy Chair of NEB met with representatives from London Parks and Gardens Charity who run the annual Open Gardens weekend in June. Discussions were held around how a partnership approach could be fostered to develop interactive digital resources, volunteer-led activities, and creating sustainable programs to increase awareness and accessibility, particularly for underrepresented communities. The City Gardens Manager will also be leading a tour of Finsbury Circus for Open Gardens Weekend in 2025.
6. **Bunhill Fields:** The new keeper is now in post, he is receiving a programme of training including specific training from Parkguard on enforcement. The City Gardens team will also be providing some free dog workshops and training in Bunhill Fields to help build positive relationships with dog owners.
7. **Memorial to Catherine Blake** - The Blake Society are in discussion with Historic England and are working up a proposal document to be discussed before submitting a planning application. Natural Environment Board will be kept apprised of developments and any proposed memorial will be presented for approval.

Project Updates

8. Current projects City Gardens are working on with Policy and Projects:
 - Jubilee Gardens – planting has now been completed, there are some snagging works that need to be completed before the site is opened to the public.
 - Moorgate London Wall – a redesign of the area around the oldest Oak tree in the Square Mile, anticipated to be delivered before March 2025
 - Nicolas Cole Abbey - the two planters on Queen Victoria street are being rebuilt and a new tree planted.
 - Finsbury Circus Western Arm anticipated planting – January 2025

9. 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.

10. **Finsbury Circus:** Maylim, the main contractor, took occupation of the site 20th November 2023. Expected Completion February 2024.

- Physical works completed since last update:
 - Installation of irrigation tank
 - Installation of central lawn turf
 - Decompaction of Soil in perimeter beds
 - Trees Planted
 - Main planting programme has now commenced
 - Installation of listed fountain
- Works planned for coming month:
 - Complete paving
 - Complete planting
 - Complete parks office clay render and make building watertight

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