

Seminar for Yorkshire and North West England,
West Yorkshire Playhouse
13 July 2004

This report summaries the proceedings of the above seminar. It should be read in conjunction with the three previous ARI Seminar Reports for events that took place in Birmingham, Newcastle and Bristol. The reports are cumulative, to avoid duplication.



Opening Plenary – Introduction to ARI and regional perspectives

Bethan Stagg, ARI Co-ordinator welcomed everyone to the event and ran through the programme for the day. She hoped the day would be constructive, useful and enjoyable for all.



Bethan explained the background of ARI and how it came into existence: ARI is a partnership between the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) and QED allotments, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and SEED (New Opportunities Fund). (See previous reports for more detail).



ARI aims to get more people - individuals and community groups - growing on urban allotments. ARI will do this by:

- Promoting and supporting innovation and good practice in allotments management through technical support and advice, site visits, information materials and networking events.
- Projecting a positive and active image of allotments
- Raising the profile of allotments with the Government, local authorities and the public.



So far, over 2000 allotment associations and local authorities throughout the UK have registered their interest in the Allotments Regeneration Initiative £800,000 of funding has already been made available to promote allotments regeneration. This is one of a series of regional seminars taking place throughout the UK.

Background about the grants that ARI has awarded and resources available

There have been three funding rounds. The first consisted of seven major grants to pilot projects totalling £250,000. Grants ranged from £25,000 to £63,000. The aim of these grants is to regenerate sites that have fallen into partial disuse and provide examples of good practice in allotment regeneration to be replicated/built upon in other parts of the country.

The second round consisted of smaller grants ranging from £170 to £4000 (approximately 60% of which were to allotment associations). A total of £136,000 was awarded - ten times the funding available. The most popular funding objectives were:

- Widening participation in allotment gardening (24.9%)
- Restoring derelict plots (23.8%)
- General access improvements (22.2%)
- New fencing/gates (22.2%)
- Access/facilities for the disabled (18%).

The third round consists of three elements:

- Flagship Grant Scheme – like previous grant schemes, this is funding practical infrastructure work on allotment sites that have the potential to return to vibrant use. The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation decided to award an additional £63,190 towards the Flagship applications (in addition to the £200,000 originally allocated) because the standard of short-listed applicants was so high. A total of 23 projects were selected for grant funding, with an average award of £11,443.

- Mentor Network – ARI has put in place a team of 11 volunteer experts in England and Wales to give advice and support on allotment regeneration at a more local level.
- Beer and Buses – Bursaries are available for groups to visit successful allotment sites to learn about regeneration by seeing it with their own eyes.

Other Resources from ARI

- Newsletter – published three times a year
- Factsheets - providing advice, costings, case studies and resource lists on a range of topics including funding, toilets, fencing, tackling vandalism and other crimes blighting allotments, a guide for groups and agencies using allotments, young people on allotments, promoting allotments, clearing derelict plots, garden chemicals, devolved management and special needs. Available, as they are published, to download for free from the ARI website or from the ARI office (see Resources).
- Good Sites Guide – A directory of ideas of sites to visit for inspiration and advice.

Allotment regeneration success stories

The following groups gave presentations summarising their experience of successful allotment regeneration:

- Penall Environment Network, Judy Yacoub
A local charity committed to working towards a sustainable future for Pendle. Established in 2001 as Pendle's Community Empowerment Network, committed to widening community participation in neighbourhood renewal.
- GardenAble
A newly-constituted group run by and for the benefit of its members, who are all adults with learning disabilities. Hodge House Allotment Society managing the site for the benefit of allotment gardeners. [Wirral Allotment Federation, Barbara Higson](#)

A federation of 14 societies which has helped to regenerate over 20 sites to full capacity, out of 44. Interested parties please feel free to get in touch by e-mail. Website www.wirralfedallotments.20m.com

Promotional work includes: '5 a day' Healthy eating work; flagging up gardening as healthy exercise; mail shot to all G.P.'s in area. Future plans include: starter packs for new federation members, assisting vulnerable sites; fundraising for infrastructure upgrade.Sheffield Allotment Federation, Kevan Hall

Kevan Hall, Federation president, gave an update on the regeneration of Sharrard Rd allotments, funded by ARI Round 1 (more details on ARI website).Arid Lands and the Asian Community Healthy Network, Tony Milroy

Gave a presentation discussing the "Ten Barriers to 'Conventional' Food Growing by Children". These were described as follows:1. Access to suitable ground
Security from vandalism
Practical know-how
Garden tools: spades, forks, trowels, rakes, hoes etc.
Suitable soil and aspect: fertile, open structure, free draining, south facing, sheltered

6. Supplies of manure, fertiliser
Reliable watering and plant care, especially in the holidays
Fitting in with classroom/curriculum planning

9 Protection from adverse elements for children and plants

(cold, wet, heat)
Seeds, husbandry guidelines, practical links

across curriculum, testing and validation at all key stages, in key subjects

Tony summarised the project's approach to Child Centred Food Growing, its Aims and Aspirations, as follows:1 Retained knowledge through interest and practical 'hands on'

learning by doing.

2 Access for socially excluded, special needs and the 30% of children 'bored by blackboards'.
Support for teachers with no time or money.
Resource materials that include 'how to' and 'when to'.
An approach that can be applied nationally, regionally or L.E.A.-wide but 'local school specific'.
A role for voluntary, parent

and classroom assistant support. A route to life skills growing, cooking, budgeting, counting, reading, health/nutrition.

Workshops followed the opening plenary. Topics covered are listed below. A summary of the proceedings of each workshop follows.

Workshop	Facilitators
<u>Funding Allotment Regeneration</u> Grants and tips on applying for them, and raising funds through events and other means	Paul Jayson, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens Kevan Hall, Sheffield Allotment Federation
<u>Devolved management</u> What are the advantages, the pitfalls, and how can devolved management be sustained?	Phil Gomersall, Leeds Allotment Federation Malcolm Frith, Leeds Allotment Association
<u>Partners in allotment regeneration</u> Which national and local bodies can provide support, and what changes can this create for allotments?	John Cummins, Groundwork Leeds Alan Hull, Pilkington Allotment Society
<u>Promoting allotment gardening</u> What brings new people onto allotments, and what does it take to keep them there?	Jane Robinson, Bradford Community Environment Project Al Oswald, Low Moor Allotment Association
<u>Improving site infrastructure</u> Fencing/security, access/disability issues, water, toilets, sheds/storage	Sue Dymond, Stockport City Council Angela Poole, York City Council

Workshop Summaries

Funding Allotment Regeneration - Grants and tips on applying for them, and raising funds through events and other means

Paul Jayson, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

Kevan Hall, Sheffield Allotment Federation

Paul Jayson gave a brief introduction to the workshop as follows. See handout, "Any fool can spend money", for full details (Appendix 1).

- Key points – reduce your need for money, don't spend it in the first place. If you do spend it, make sure you've got 5 good reasons to do so.
- Forward planning/systems

Ways of reducing your need for money

Delegates then worked in small groups, pooling their experience, to generate ideas for reducing their need for money. This is what they came up with:

- Collect rainwater
- Make own compost
- Collect seed/propagate plants and sell or swap plants
- Ask for discounts and donations – tools, seeds, trays, plants, greenhouse. E.g. Tesco's donated refreshments for volunteers day
- Spend money wisely. Challenge what you're doing e.g. buying, re-evaluate needs and wants.
- Reduce small areas of waste e.g. taps
- Keep the site fully let to reduce vandalism and maximise rental income - ½ or ¼ plot letting
- Forward planning - Business plan
- Volunteers and self-help, including voluntary expert advice, e.g. Business in the community
- Recycle
- Wilkinson's DIY
- Use skills of members eg to run courses, plumbing, accounts etc

- Networking with local businesses, e.g. vouchers, hedging, prizes, manure.
- Pooling resources, working together, e.g. hire, loan repairs. Share equipment – seeds, tools, container, plants pond, polytunnel, tractors.
- LETS
- Welcome pack – sponsored, money saving ideas inside.
- Audit and contact agencies and ask what they can provide
- City partnership
- Community support
- Consider self-management
- Council support
- Find the right people in the community i/e tenants skills and enthusiasm
- Get the ‘word on the street’ – promote
- Lobby councillors, invite to open days, network
- Negotiate long lease for association
- Organise working party or self help group
- Partnership working
- Patch into existing initiatives e.g. compost bins, water butts, neighbourhood action
- Use organisations to work in partnership
- Using recognised network (CVS, Groundwork etc)
- The ‘Waste Market’
- Asking for realistic and relevant sponsorship
- Site shop/membership
- Self help/work days
- Fly tip grass → collected and composted → sold back to flytippers (funds to set up and advertise)
- Network with other ploholders
- Local newspaper ‘helping hands’ project

Cont.

Positive fundraising experiences and tips:

Delegates again worked in small groups, sharing their positive fundraising experience and tips. This is what they came up with:

- Yorkshire Forward etc £15K for disability and regeneration
- Awards for All £5K, £3K
- Peoples Places – wildlife, disability
- Council funding for access and security
- Selling part of site!
- Get permission to sell produce or seedlings (also watch out for Sunday regulations)
- Allotment watch paid for by Safer York
- Special schemes: deprived areas; government schemes; Local Agenda 21; waste minimalisation; tax credits; regeneration budgets.
- Key deposits and membership fees
- Council ward committees
- Ensured funding bid hit priority targets of provider – regeneration of site and provided tools etc (£5K)
- Plant sales and car boot sales
- Rent collection on behalf of the council – receive cut
- Interest free bonds
- Small local funds
- Local group needed tree planting and funding – sourced existing scheme with £10K that hadn't been spent for environmental improvements.

Partners in allotment regeneration – Which national and local bodies can provide support, and what changes can this create for allotments?

John Cummins, Groundwork Leeds

Alan Hull, Pilkington Allotment Society

The handout for this workshop can be found at Appendix 2.

Participants experience of partnerships in allotment regeneration:

- Bradford Environmental Trust – free hedging, practical help
- Young Offenders Team – practical input
- Probation Service – good for communal areas
- Asylum Seekers/Refugee Groups – providing a place to be. TESL.
- PCTs and GPs – healthy schools programme, cancer support centre, 5 a day, mental health service.
- PCTs – moral support, healthy living centres
- Local links – local community, tenants and residents associations, town and parish councils.
- SureStart – community associations host open days, development trusts, encourage parents to get involved, family units, making plots family friendly, crèches.
- Allotment associations – practical and moral support.
- Education establishment – good to get a keen member of staff, school food/growing schools, adult education, uni's, colleges.
- Day centres – day centre for people with learning disabilities/recuperation.
- Vegetarian Society – use of products
- Food Society.
- Private Sector – local businesses, materials, help in kind.

Other ideas:

- Careers Services, New Deal, Back to work schemes.

- Environmental organisations.
- Volunteers services, CVS
- Media – promoting the word.
- Community safety partnerships – safe sites
- Farmers markets
- Faith groups
- Local strategic partnerships
- Housing Associations- promotion, community rangers, plot holders support.
- Farms, riding centres, donkey sanctuary
- Local wildlife trusts
- Funders
- ARI/NSALG.

Examples of benefits for allotment sites from these types of partnerships:

- Primary Care Trusts - £'s; translation, publicity, info (stats), development workers.
- SureStart - £'s; families/volunteers; workers; links.
- Environmental orgs: £'s; expertise; links; labour/vols.
- Education – schools; uni's/colleges; WEA (Workers Educational Association); Neighbourhood Learning Officers; LSC - £'s; Educational Support - £'s; research; vols/rag days.
- Local Authorities – Leisure Services (Parks) – resources; funding; security; sponsorship; building and planning (what's going on); cleansing and path clearing; training (strimmers). Social Services: Youth Services – workers and people. Area Committee - £'s.
- Disability Federation – therapeutic; tools; senses/life enhancement; inclusivity; carers benefit too; specialist advice.
- Voluntary Organisations- CSV/CSV: £'s; vols; access; advice; local development.
- Community Service Groups - Rotary/Lions Clubs; Soroptimist - £'s/vols.

- Faith Groups – churches; Sikh/Hindu Temples – ploholders; £'s/
- Tenants and Residents Associations – local; security; linkages; new ploholders; political/practical support; £'s from third party.
- Local Working Mens Clubs – free venue; £'s; cast officers.
- Police – toolmark scheme; community warden; lost property; £'s; links; security; CCTV; manure.
- RAF – marquees;
- Territorial Army – community service; vols.
- Local Businesses – contractors – resources/£'s; staff schemes; left overs; discount scheme.
- Allotments – other ploholders; other associations (unite).
- Young Offending Teams – vols; community service.

Promoting allotment gardening – What brings new people onto allotments, and what does it take to keep them there?

Jane Robinson, Bradford Community Environment Project
 Al Oswald, Low Moor Allotment Association

Jane Robinson gave a short presentation about the Bradford Environment Project. The focus of B CEP is on deprived communities, working with a range of ages, disability and minority groups.

- Run Composting for All days – these are workshops on composting where in return for a bag of compostable material, participants get a free lunch.
- Groups of people get together and work on the allotment plots.
- Do a little bit of digging each time along with the less strenuous, nicer jobs, so the work doesn't feel overwhelming
- Work with a range of people including upper school children and primary school children, who are usually very keen.
- People share a variety of jobs each time; so don't get bored weeding, or digging.

- Bribe people with their stomachs. Try to do the harvesting first, then eat anything that can be eaten, then do some work and take any uneaten produce home.
- Use people already present on the allotment sites and work in partnership with other groups e.g. childcare trainees to get children involved.
- Can use Businesses on team building days to carry out work e.g. build a shelter

Vegetables can be grown by anyone and can win prizes at local shows –
“vegetables are not prejudiced”

Use the media – BBC, Video Nation recently did a short film about children working on BCEP’s allotment plots. Daily Mail wanted to take photos for a piece on “the changing Face of Allotments”

Al Oswald gave a short presentation about how he went about promoting his allotment site when the number of vacant plots began to rise.

Firstly he produced an A4 information sheet that he put on posts around the site. The sheet simply stated: “Yes, there are plots available. Yes, you can sell your excess produce. No, you don’t have to grow vegetables. “ Al included a logo made using children’s drawings. This method of promoting the site transformed the situation within two weeks and many plots were taken up by new people.

Al also put information about the allotments, their availability and condition, on the Internet. This had the effect of changing the demographics of the site to 25 – 40 year olds.

Participants were asked to list all the good things about allotments – and then to discuss why they are still derelict plots:

Good things about allotments

- Creativity
- Healthy diet, exercise
- Education
- Patience
- Spiritual
- Way of life/satisfaction
- Place to escape, peace
- Amenity
- Wildlife
- Social benefits (part of a community)
- Way of life
- Satisfaction
- Maintaining green spaces in a city
- Recycling
- Classless
- History – allotments are social monuments

Problems – why are there vacant plots?

- Time /modern lifestyles
- Image (elderly, white male, “big leeks”, vegetables planted in straight lines)
- Threat to sites
- Security, vandalism, personal safety
- Inertia – breaking the cycle of decline
- Size of the plot
- Conditions
- Presentation
- Ignorance
- Laziness
- Inexperience
- Cost
- Image

How do we help people to stay on their plots?

- Sense of belonging/association
- Mentoring/buddy/help
- Leisure gardens/flexibility of use
- Maintenance plan for community area
- Social events/show
- Offer help and encouragement at start/ongoing
- Provide some smaller plots
- 1st and 2nd year free of charge
- Communal purchasing/pricing

- Communal tools – rotavators/strimmers etc
- Community open days
- Plant swapping
- Seed scheme – cut price
- Encourage local societies
- Improve security
- Local contacts on gates/leaflets/websites
- Events and shows
- Good facilities eg water, stand pipes and toilets
- Introduction pack
- Prepared plot for new tenant available in autumn
- Free plot for mid season new comers
- Child friendly communal area
- Support
- “Teach-ins”
- Safety
- Addressing problems
- Identifying peoples needs
- Facilities
- Image
- Meeting place
- Toilets
- Newsletter
- Shows/competitions
- Society
- Access to community resources.

How do we reach new audiences?

- Newsletters – community, churches, CVS.
- Word of mouth

- Posters – doctors surgeries, supermarkets, local shops, libraries, community centres, play groups, site notice boards, post offices - give contact details.
- Site notice board
- Have info in different languages
- Local radio/paper/media.
- Society shows and social events
- Local fetes and fairs
- Leaflets – council dept; haven't done door to door as leaflets; may be perceived as junk mail
- Web and email networking – a web page with a plan of the allotments, and information about the availability and condition of the plots allows people to chose their own plots.
- Talks
- Networks of allotment assocs and groups
- Schools
- National Allotment Week 2005 – allotment constructed in Albert Sq Manchester
- Participants not spectators
- Direct marketing to specific groups
- Residents associations – open days
- Visit/Talk
- Approach established groups
- Start it small: starter programme; divided plots → choice; rotavated plots; toilets/play area
- Full occupancy: reach out to 'hard to reach'
- Diverse facilities: women; families → education/lifestyle improvements
- Single mothers
- Keep it local → sustainability

Cont.

What can we do to change the image of allotments?

- Can't do much on your own
- Societies – meetings, social event; open day
- Appearance – shanty town
- Promotion
- Provide amenities – toilets
- Make the site safe
- Resources – council involvement
- Promotion days
- New people
- Advertising on site
- Flexibility
- Tenancy agreements/bye laws
- Link to schools
- Leafleting
- Health benefits
- Sale of produce
- Societies on sites
- Communal tools
- Government support
- Work with partnerships
- Co-operate with youth/probation
- Neighbourhood action/residents assoc.

Making it easy to take on a plot

- Pre-cultivation and preparation
- Notices on sites with contact numbers – libraries, public offices, community centres
- Word of mouth
- Contact secretary on sites
- Starter pack

- Flexible approach to letting/rents etc.
- Family friendly
- Toilets?

Using an Action Planning Sheet (see Appendix 3) participants worked in small groups looking at a particular situation. One example of the results of this task is given below.

Getting more and more people interested especially youth

Four steps to make it happen

- Arrange visits from school
- Promote play area
- Clean paths to walk around
- Arrange learning sessions for new comers.

Who will do each of above?

Own community groups with schools and community centre.

By when? 2 years

Predicted problems and how to deal with them?

Lack of interest – approach schools and mosques and community centres.

Devolved management – What are the advantages, what are the pitfalls, and how can devolved management be sustained?

Phil Gomersall, Leeds Allotment Federation

Malcolm Frith, Leeds Allotment Federation

What is devolved management?

- Dictionary definition – be passed on to deputy
- Representative e.g. on a city controlled site
- An allotment association with a committee
- Self-administered association with trustees, a committee and a lease
- Affiliation to a larger organisation – for insurance and legal e.g. NSALG.

Malcolm Frith gave a brief history of the Leeds Allotment Federation, as an example of devolved management:

- Established 1917
- Self administration 1984 – 1988
- Present day 59 sites under self administration
- Administration of Leeds allotment amenities competition (open to non-members)
- In the process of updating
- Recently invited to meeting for promotion of self-administration

What are the benefits for the local authority?

- Future of sites more sustainable
- Problems dealt with more promptly
- Easier to deal with than individual plot-holders
- Reduces admin staff
- Lower cost of service provision
- In situ people dealing with problems as opposed to office based staff
- More economical best value for sites
- Funds brought in from outside authority
- Better public relations
- Empowerment of local people
- Better community spirit
- Improves image of council

What are the benefits for the ploholders?

- Prompt decision making
- Higher quality of day to day service provision
- Improved relations with local authority
- Creates atmosphere of trust
- Pride in achievements – sense of community and friendship

- Access to other groups and funds – extra resources for investment e.g. rent grant funding
- Improved sites raised profile – leads to greater take up of plots
- Ability to shop around – better value for money – fulfilling own requirements

Disadvantages for local authority:

- There have got to be more benefits than downs otherwise councils wouldn't promote devolved management
- Less control over demise of site
- Disempowerment
- Loss of income from rents – offset against less management and maintenance
- Risk of mismanagement – council left to pick up the pieces
- Increased demand for plots that council can't meet
- Organised 'council bashing'

Disadvantages for devolved managers:

- Hard work and time consuming
- Dependence on commitment and capabilities of volunteers
- Danger of cliques forming
- Exposure to freeloading
- Shared responsibility and tasks,
- Sticking to rules – problems with enforcement
- Risk of conflicts
- Legal liabilities – health and safety, adequate insurance essential – NSALG
- Know what is your responsibility and what is the councils
- Have balanced outgoings and income
- People moan at you – you become the local authority.

Bringing in devolved management:

- Clear statement of Authorities commitment - missing in Leeds at the moment

- Constitution needed – ARI – plans for way forward with timetable objectives and democracy
- Essential clear legal agreement defining each party's role
- Lease 7 years or 12 months
- Not taking on too much. Being realistic – willingness to develop new skills.
- Commitment of enthusiasts and support of plot holders

Sustaining devolved management:

- Forward planning and shared aims
- Anticipating problems
- Commitment of the devolved managers and the council
- Keeping plot-holders informed – notice board, meeting room etc
- Good budget management
- Good local politics and community involvement
- Committee members available on site
- Inclusion of new members – new blood and deas
- Ongoing encouragement for volunteers. Rewarding and celebrating achievements
- Continuing benefits of devolved management

Long-term sustainability

- The quick fix approach does not lead to long terms sustainability
- Abiding by the rules is essential to avoid conflict
- The hardest thing is to maintain commitment and enthusiasm
- Allotment gardening is great!

Issues raised from the floor:

- Lease essential for raising funds
- Special conditions in lease – to cover local circumstances, e.g. presence of special needs group with protection issues
- Training for committee members and in use of machinery

- Need to clarify who owns land – is it statutory gift covered by covenants, for example?
- Constitution need to be in accordance with allotment acts and procedures to implement the constitution in accordance with due process/human rights act.
- In Coventry it's taken 15 years to get devolved site up to scratch – so this can be a long term project.
- For non-conforming uses that will protect land in long term or complement allotments, consider taking out of allotment use.
- Networking with other organisations very important.
- In Doncaster have devolved management but don't collect rent. Still manage to get lots of grant funding/insurance paid by funders.
- Need to invest capital in a site, get up to standard before considering self management and then needs to be sustainable.
- Give incentives to sites to become self managed by offering grants funded by site disposal/consolidation (capital receipts) → creates matched funding to enable association to apply for other funding.
- Weakness – get dominant individuals.
- Still get council bashing – need to remember council budgets are so limited – may be it's central government that needs lobbying not councils.
- Temporary sites may be easier to get planning permission

Improving Site Infrastructure - Fencing/security, access/disability issues, water, toilets, sheds/storage

Sue Dymond, Stockport City Council

Angela Poole, York City Council

The handout for this workshop can be found at Appendix 2. Participants were asked to list the issues they were interested in discussing during the workshops. These were then grouped into themes and discussed in small groups in each workshop. The results of those discussions are summarised below.

Access for disabled, car parking, raised beds & paths

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
Poor state of communal paths. Dangerous/ill-defined paths. Steep and sloping site.	Landscape, 3' either side – best flowers/border competition stops weeds/paths being dug up. Make path next to plot responsibility of plotholder. Contract mowing 'rota' to low-income people who can do the work. More working parties. Reinforce plotholders responsibility to tend areas around plot.
Car parking	Charge for car parking/access for cars. Fine plotholders for inappropriate parking. Convert a plot for car parking. Use end of each plot for parking for that plot. Imposition of no parking. Set gates back from road for deliveries.
Disabled access	Smooth finish on paths for wheelchair access. Modify buildings for access. Allocate easy access plots for disabled people. Disabled-only parking.
Raised beds	Create raised beds on one or more plots. Seek funding. Who are they for? Work out dimensions to suit the actual clients. Develop with crop rotation in mind. Who's going to build? Cost? Maintenance? Do research first. Taster plots for new comers in half or quarter size. Seek grant funding

Recycling, waste disposal and composting

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
Fly tipping	Vigilance of plotholders/community; enforcement of prosecutions; free waste disposal by council. Keeping gates locked. Repairs to boundary. CCTV.
Accumulation of other waste	Skips on a regular basis (3x per year). Encourage composting with bins supplied (plotholders own/communal). Enforce agreements re hoarding by plotholders
Asbestos	Old asbestos removed by specialist teams
No electricity	Renewable energy, wind turbines

Security, boundaries and community involvement

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
Vandalism - Lack of communication with young people. Lack of community involvement	Can you extend Neighbourhood Watch area to include Allotments? Involve residents. Know your neighbours. Insurance. Introduce CCTV. Rangers through LA/Community. Schools/ Youth Groups in Allotments (small numbers of people, not large class). Limited power to prosecute.
Boundaries - No fencing at all. No	Does fencing stop vandals? Improve image – fence needs to look good and look secure. Does not need to

money for fencing – image.	be palisade: hedging; sculptures; thorny growth. Involve local people with fencing. Make site attractive.
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Structures, community buildings, sheds and greenhouses

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
No toilets	Eco-toilets, composting loos. Find info from water co website. Grants. ARI info. Hand washing.
Sheds in poor state and order	Take them down if attracting disaffected youth.
Lack of communal buildings/facilities	Have communal polytunnel or Community Building in container/ old railway carriage. Develop good community contacts. Need business plan when applying for grants. Make sure accessible for disabled. Consider other facilities, e.g. wildlife area, children's play-area, sensory garden, maze.

Drainage, water and soil

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
Drainage	Create wetland area. Drain other plots into it. Put in pond if allowed (make sure child safe). Mend any leaks (look for soggy patches, low water pressure) - get a recommended contractor, get estimates, skilled plowholders (plumbers, electricians). Install soak hose → divert water for disabled plots.
Water supply and hosepipes.	Stop people leaving hosepipes on, regular checks, cisterns, taps with keys, don't cut corners. Stop tap for each tap. Non-return taps (legal requirement). Hold-down taps. Meter water. Timing of use: on/off times.
No water on site	Save rainwater. Consult plowholders. Publicity at local council election time. Mulch. Raised beds. Close planting. Mats. Improve paths. Manure from police stables, riding stables, city farm, pigeon lofts. Community composting.

Organisational infrastructure, partnerships, taking control

Problem/ Issue	Suggested solutions
Apathy of committee members	Build common interest – harvest crops and have eating parties. Be bold and resolute. Name and shame. Recognise that change is threatening.
Allotments still being owned by councils and not the people	Find out how much council budget is. Collect info and catalogue it. Take power from council. Recognise that young people and women have different priorities and help them!

Closing Plenary

The plenary opened with further presentations of allotment regeneration success stories from:

- Henry Doubleday Research Association
Jowanna Lewis, Project Co-ordinator, gave an update of the Organic Food for All and its team of food growing mentors. More details can be found on: <http://www.hdra.org.uk/foodforall/index.php>
Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Kim Paterson, Community Projects Co-ordinator for The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and N Merseyside, gave an account of the activities of the Trust and their work on allotments. More details can be found at: <http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/lancashire/html/aboutus.htm>
- Sandall Beat Allotment Association
Phil Rymer, association secretary gave an illustrated step by step account of how their compost toilet was installed. Funding was secured from: The South Yorkshire Key Fund, The Central One Community Forum, The Shell Better Britain Campaign, Spade (Local Agenda 21), Awards for All, The Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest.
Phil gave the following advice:
 1. Make sure you have a Constitution
 2. Business Plans are not difficult to draw up.
 3. Developing your site in phases is more likely to receive funding.
 4. Always try to link the next phase of your development with the success of the last.
- Leeds Organic Growers (ARI pilot project)
Cancelled due to illness. For info about the project visit:
<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/aripilots.html>
http://www.lmusu.org.uk/club_homepage.asp?clubid=7313

Bethan Stagg then summarised the key points from each of the five workshops and thanked all those who had attended for making it such a successful day.

Resources

Allotments Regeneration Initiative

The GreenHouse, Hereford Street, Bristol, BS5 4NA

Tel. 0117 963 1551

Fax. 0117 923 1900

Email ari@farmgarden.org.uk

Website www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

Growing in the community

To order a copy write to:

LG Connect Publication Sales, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ, enclosing a cheque made payable to "Local Government Association" for £15 (local authority, not-for-profit organisation, allotment association or individual plothead) or £20 (all others). Quote the title and publication number: EN012.

Networking Forum

A variety of organisations with links to allotment gardening were represented at the seminar in the Networking Forum. During the lunchtime session, representatives hosted stalls and information stands so that delegates could informally chat and take away resources.

ARI would like to thank all of the representatives for their very hard work in making the Forum a success.

Contact details for the organisations that took part are given below. Please show consideration when making contact as many of these organisations are run on a voluntary basis.

Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens

The GreenHouse

Hereford Street

Bristol

BS5 4NA

Tel. 0117 923 1800

Fax. 0117 923 1900

Email admin@farmgarden.org.uk

Website www.farmgarden.org.uk

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)

O'Dell House

Hunter's Road

Corby

Northants

NN17 5JE

Tel. 01536 266576

Fax. 01536 264509

Email natsoc@nsalg.demon.co.uk

Website www.nsalg.demon.co.uk

Continued over.

HDRA – The Organic Organisation

Ryton Organic Gardens
Coventry
CV8 3LG
Tel. 02476 308 218
www.hdra.org.uk

Leeds Organic Growers

153 Silk Mill Drive
Leeds
LS16 6PU
Tel. 0113 217 4761

Penall Environment Network

15 Duke Street
Winewall
Nr Colne
Lancashire
BB8 8DA
Tel. 0779 195 7337

Sandall Beat Allotment Association

319 Lonsdale Avenue
Intake
Doncaster
DN2 6HW
Tel. 01302 818 580

Arid Lands Initiative and Asian Community Healthy Network

Machpelah Works
Burnley Road
Hebden Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX7 8AU
Tel. 01422 843 807

Lancashire Wildlife Trust

125 Blackburn Road
Bolton
BL1 8HF
Tel. 01204 361 847

Sheffield Allotment Federation

35 Fitzalan Road
Sheffield
S13 9AW
Tel. 0114 269 6365

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Grants and fundraising handout

Any fool can spend money

Spending money is only one of the ways your project can acquire what it needs. Obviously money is essential for some things, but it is important to remember that your most valuable resource is the people who are involved in your project. Your second most important resource is access to up to date, quality information.

Three steps to fundraising:

1. How to reduce your need for money
2. How to raise money within your community
3. How to raise money from other sources such as Charitable Trusts and companies etc.

A. How to reduce your need for money

Ask yourself the following questions :

- With so many worthy causes, why should anyone give money to your project?
- Are we efficient - using money wisely and effectively?
- Do we pay too much for any of the goods, products or services we regularly use?

Reducing your need for money comes down to forward planning, organisational systems and negotiating skills.

Don't spend it in the first place :

The Five good reasons rule: If you can't think of at least five good reasons for doing something (spending money) then it's probably not worth doing!

Be clear about:

- What you want to do
- Why you are doing it
- Who is going to do what
- The order in which it is going to happen / setting priorities

Can you achieve what you want without spending money?

Donations in kind:

- If you don't ask you don't get (publicising your needs)
- Materials
- Labour: Volunteers, Secondments, Placements

- Expertises / advice and guidance
- Sponsorship

Other ways of reducing your need to spend money.

Consider the following:

- Do you pay bank charges?
- Do you have clear financial controls that help prevent wasteful expenditure?
- Are your records and maintenance systems effective?
- Do you have efficient and cost effective insurance?
- The 5 R's: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, Repair and regularly Review
- Discounts, free delivery
- Bulk buy
- Partnership purchasing with other groups, consortiums or co-ops

B. How to raise money within your community

This has three complementary elements:

1. The donation of services and resources
2. Income generation through sales of services and goods
3. Local fund raising activities

See ARI fact sheet 'The Money Maze' for more ideas

www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

The donation of services and resources – five ideas:

1. Set up a volunteers' notice board saying how people can get involved. Put up cards for specific skills that are needed.
2. 'Wants list' board, asking for donations in kind e.g. plant cuttings, tools, timber etc.
3. Publish these wants in your own and other local organisations newsletters and distribute to local companies and groups that might be willing to help – also a good way of attracting new plot holders.
4. Put 'wants' in a press release / invite local radio to record an item about your site and what you need
5. Attend other local events and publicise where you are, what you do and what you need.

Income generation through sales – five ideas:

1. Most allotment sites are wonderful locations for a whole variety of social events like barbecues, harvest events, picnics, games and treasure hunts etc. These can be community events and, by having an entrance charge, generate income for your project. Events can relate to the seasons and include a wide range of income generating elements
2. The sale of surplus plants, cuttings and produce
3. The sale of related products e.g. window boxes, bird boxes etc
4. The sale of a product processed on your site, like liquid feed made from comfrey or jams made from soft fruits

5. Provide some practical training sessions and charge a fee e.g. make and plant a herb hanging basket, how to build a compost bin or wormery.

Local fundraising activities – five ideas:

1. Run a money-raising stall at other local events, fetes etc. Try to develop a novel idea
2. Set up a donations box with an enticing notice when you are holding events on your site
3. Set up a “Friends of our Allotments site” who are volunteers willing to give some time to run your fundraising activities
4. Consider all the usual fund raising activities and critically consider which are best for you and whether the time and effort will raise enough money to make them worthwhile: - such as jumble sales, car boot sales, stalls at other events, fetes, carnivals, tombola, sunflower growing competition, vegetable and flower show – the list is endless
5. Target local businesses with requests for help.

C. How to raise money from other sources, such as Trusts, the Council, the Community Fund and companies.

- Fund raising is hard work, time consuming and has costs – set aside the necessary time and resources
- Over 90% of fundraising is careful preparation, planning and record keeping
- Prepare a realistic plan, including costings, budgets and if appropriate a cash flow
- Remember that it is much harder to raise regular revenue funding (running costs) than capital funding (e.g. land buildings) your plan should take this in to account
- Research thoroughly potential funders (see ARI factsheet ‘The Money Maze’ for sources of information about funders). What do they require? Is there an application form? What are their criteria? When do they accept applications? See the step-by-step guide to applying for grants on the back page of the Money Maze and additional handouts for further information.
- Applications. If no specific application form is provided: - Send a short letter, no more than one side of A4, including an invitation to visit or meet. The application should include the “5 Ws”: Who, What, When, Where and Why; and the “Big 2 Hs: How and How much. Enclose some relevant support information (not too much), including where possible good visuals e.g. photos or drawings, details of the project to be funded with budgets etc
- Only seek money to meet your needs – don’t change your plans or project just because money is available
- Keep funders informed and develop a relationship e.g. send updates, invitations to events etc.

Charitable Trusts

- There are over 5000 grant giving trusts in the UK, giving millions of pounds each year, but relatively few donate amounts over £5000.
- You can find out more about these from;

- The Directory of Grant Making Trusts published by the Charities Aid Foundation, and the Directory of Social Change publications provide more detailed information. Your local library may have them, or ask other local organisations
- See ARI factsheet 'The Money Maze' for other organisations that can provide information
- A number of lists of grant making organisations are now also available on computer disk; check whether other groups in your area have access.

Other funding bodies

For further information see 'The Money Maze'.

What do Companies give?

Local companies and local branches of major companies may be willing to support you. There are a number of ways in which they can help, such as: sponsorship of an event, preferential discounts on goods you buy from them etc. Some companies give cash grants or make covenants to groups and some will provide use of their facilities or access to services and equipment, and some loan a member of staff on a short-term secondment to help with a particular project or problem; others may pay for some advertising in your newsletter or brochure, or supply donations in kind.

Five stages in fundraising

1. Agree what it is you want to do and develop a plan
2. Research all appropriate funding sources
3. Prepare suitable funding package
4. Submit application in accordance with the specific requirements of the Trust / Company being approached
5. Develop a relationship with existing and potential funders. Keep good records and evaluate your ideas

Organising Your Project

Some key questions when planning / developing a funding strategy:

- Where are we today?
- Where do we want to be in five years from today?
- Where do we want to be one year from now?
- How are we going to get there?
- What needs to be done?
- Who is going to do what?
- What resources are needed?
- How will we monitor and evaluate our developments?

Other Resources

www.bvsc.org – Birmingham Voluntary Service Council website. Go to "funding – steps to greater success in fundraising".

Appendix 2 – Partners in Allotment Regeneration handout

Partnerships

Most successful groups will have successful partnerships; they may be with local or national bodies. We will only be speaking about local partners however, deep down at the bottom partnerships start at the grass roots of any organisation.

Partnerships within your own allotment society should/could exist between:

1. Society officials and committee
2. Committee and society members
3. Plot holders
4. The society and local communities.

Allotment groups and associations need drive and enthusiasm on the ground, and should reach out to the local communities to bring people in and create more interest. By attracting more people, groups can benefit from the transferable skills and experience brought in. The sharing of information is most important. Not only does it abolish the "them and us" attitude, it helps to make people feel part of the partnerships and so promote your cause at every opportunity; share your information as widely as possible. For example, join local allotment federations, make contact with site representatives and group secretaries on other sites near yours, and keep your local councillors plus other key members of your local community informed: barriers between allotment holders and the local authority need to be broken down and trust created.

Forming a local partnership – need to address the following questions:

1. Who with
2. For what reason
3. For what activities
4. For what outcome

Who with?

Local bodies, e.g. Sure Start groups, Day centres, local schools, uniformed organisations (e.g. girl guides and boy scouts). These are just a few examples of the endless list of possible local partners.

For what reason

- Partnerships helps to bring the benefits of allotment gardening to a wide selection of people that would not otherwise be involved.
- Educational and therapeutic schemes
- To play a role in the regeneration of sites
- To increase interest and create new opportunities.

Some allotment site officers fail at the first hurdle by asking the question "what help can you give us for our site?" It is much better to take the approach "what can we give to our community?"

For what activities

- Planned community work days can be very successful and good fun
- Organise links with local churches for projects, e.g. harvest festival
- We organised a project with schools on the growing of daffodils. Each child presented these to their mother at a light-hearted service arranged by the local church on Mother's day. This is what local partnerships are all about – as well as creating excellent community spirit.

For what outcome

Allotment societies need the support of partnerships and associations to help project a positive image of allotments and the different activities that take place on them. The sharing of information is most important: in publicising ourselves we should think about the added value of allotments. It is not just about growing flowers and vegetables but also improving health through exercise, improving the environment and contributing to sustainability and healthy living agendas. We need to tell everyone what we can give to the community.

Involve your council and local councillors to create a positive allotment strategy. Individual plotheolders must take some responsibility for the creation of these.

Self-management allows communities to develop their sites as they see fit. It is a solution for some sites but not for others. It is a new way of working but it is not a new partnership.

Associations must reach out to potential partners both within and outside, national and local. It is a hard, slow job and sometimes we don't get the help we need, but the rewards in the end are worth the effort put in.

Appendix 3 – Site infrastructure workshop handout

Get Everyone Involved

- Before beginning any work, get as many people involved as possible.
- Hold a meeting in a place that is easy to get to and at a time that is convenient for people.
- Make the meeting fun, so offer refreshments, a seed swap, a guest speaker, something to attract people along.
- Ask people for their ideas, get them to fill in a 'site wish list' - what they feel needs doing and why.
- From all these ideas get people to prioritise what is important for your site.
- Then ask for ideas on what to do next:
 - Will you set up a committee?
 - Will you contact your council for support e.g. community development worker to help develop an association, your council officer for support with site development?
 - Will you have working parties to clear overgrown plots for new tenants?
 - Will you contact the police for support and advice?
 - Will you organise an Open Day to publicise your site?
 - Will you have a fund raising group?

Tip: The more people you can get involved the easier any site infrastructure developments become.

What next?

You have had your meeting, you know what the problems are on your site and what your priorities are, what do you do now?

- Choose your first priority and imagine the task was completed e.g. that you had a new fence.
- Work backwards from this point looking at how you achieved this. You can write down all the tasks you think were involved in achieving the end product:
 - Did you have a contractor carry out the work or did you do the work yourselves?
 - How much did the work cost?
 - What materials did you choose and why?

By working from the completed task you can look at all the things needed to do to make that idea a reality. This can then give you your plan of action.

Site Security

Many sites suffer from vandalism and theft. Involving as many tenants as possible can change the morale of a site. If people feel that things can be done, then things do change for the better. There are number of steps that can be taken:

- Carry out a site security survey to see exactly how bad the problem is and if there is any pattern to the incidents.

- Liaise with your council officer and your community police officer as well as your neighbours to assess the level of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area and pool resources in tackling it.
- Join your local federation - pool knowledge - someone else may have had the same problem and has successfully tackled it.
- If you suspect young people are causing trouble contact local schools, youth working teams etc and see if you can develop a scheme where young people can have an allotment garden or carry out some environmental work on your site.
- Contact your community police officer and arrange to hold a meeting for all tenants and invite the police officer along to talk about security.
- Set up an 'allotment watch' scheme — liaise with the police and your council to gain support. Under such a scheme the local community is encouraged to keep an eye on your site, signs advertising 'allotment watch' are put around the site, in local shops and tools can be security marked and colour coded.
- Ensure that all tenants know what to do if they suffer vandalism or theft — provide them with a police telephone number to report crime and encourage them to do this for every security incident.
- Some associations produce a credit-sized card that people can keep in their purse/wallet telling them who to contact for different situations.
- Encourage tenants not to keep valuable tools on the site if the site has regular thefts.
- If your site suffers from serious theft look into developing a secure site tool shed where valuable items such as rotovators can be stored securely. There may be funding available for an allotment tool library. One allotment association inherited an old railway carriage that was too expensive to remove, yet a potential target for arson. So they clad it in galvanised metal sheets, painted it and now have a secure tool store for rotovators and strimmers.
- If your site has a public footpath, provide members of the public with police contact numbers and ask them to report any incidents.
- Dog walkers who clear up after their dogs can be an allotment gardeners ally because they can walk around a site and this in itself deters vandals etc. There have also been situations where they have reported security incidents to the police.
- If your site is overlooked by houses, pop a leaflet through people's doors asking them to help you by keeping an eye out and reporting any incidents. Invite these people along to any site meetings on security. These people are usually very supportive because a safe, secure allotment site helps provide them with safe, secure boundaries.
- Attract new tenants —the busier a site is the more it deters theft and vandalism.
- Finally, for any incidents of arson, fly tipping or damage, etc get the site tidied as quickly as possible. Signs of damage and neglect attract vandals.

Tip: High, locked fences are not always financially possible, however other solutions do work. Reducing hedge heights has helped on some sites. If there are low hedges and fences then vandals etc can be seen more easily.

Attractive, well-kept sites also seem to attract less vandalism. So if you cannot afford fencing, have a tidy up and ensure that all of the site can be easily seen.

Boundaries

First impressions count, and the boundaries and entrances of sites give the surrounding community a sense of your allotment site. Sites have a difficult task in attracting some people and deterring others!

■ An attractive notice board with eye catching up to date notice creates a good impression. Details with how to get an allotment garden on that site are also useful. Other information can include a plan of the site, what to do if there is any vandalism or theft, how to contact your council officer and what to do in the allotment garden that month. If you need a new notice board could the technology department of a local school design and build one for you as a project?

■ A welcoming entrance is important in creating the right impression. If the local community sees your site as an unwelcoming place that cuts itself off and looks run down and neglected they may make less effort to support you in keeping your site safe and attracting new tenants. An attractive, well cared for entrance gives out a completely different message. Ask a friend who isn't an allotment gardener for their first impressions.

■ Although high, metal fences may seem an ideal solution to any security problems there are drawbacks to them. The first being the expense and secondly the impression they can create. A six foot high grey fence with spikes may not be the most welcoming sight if you are doing your best to attract new tenants and make links with the local community (if you are buying steel fencing, green or dark coloured palisade looks much better). For many sites the cost of such fencing is prohibitive, so alternatives may be required.

■ A native hedgerow is a lower cost alternative to security fencing. A thick hedge made from hawthorn, holly and rosa canina will keep people out and provide a shelter for birds and invertebrates and will improve the biodiversity of your site. There are often funds available for planting native hedgerows.

■ If you decide on a hedge you will need to consider protecting it as it grows and its short and long term maintenance.

■ If money is short, well-trained bramble grown along a wire fence also makes an excellent prickly barrier.

■ If your boundary fencing is looking neglected can you get help to tidy it up?

- Try your probation service or youth offending team; they are often looking for appropriate community projects.

- Could you have a working party to collect the litter and cut back the weeds that often accumulate along boundary edges?

■ Do you have a problem with overgrown hedges on your site?

- How about a 'hedge care day' for the site. A tree surgeon can help tenants reduce hedge heights and provide a professional shredder to dispose of cuttings, providing tenants with free wood chippings. Ask a local tree surgeon if s/he would be willing to work on the site for a day at a reduced rate for free publicity. Let your allotment gardeners know about the day and invite the press along. Maybe the adult education department at the council would fund a training day in hedge care. A

professional hedge layer could then teach people how to maintain and care for their hedges.

- If you carry out hedge laying –inform people eg put up posters to let people know what you are doing and why. People can get alarmed about hedges being laid because they don't understand what is happening and why.
- If you have a local horticultural/agricultural college they may be willing to undertake hedge cutting or hedge laying as a student-training project.

Water

Does your site have sufficient access to water? Tenants may complain about not enough taps, yet a site may not have the water pressure for more taps. Also water costs money and with demand on our water supplies forever increasing we all need to use water wisely.

- Will your site allow unlimited use of hoses and sprinklers?
 - Can you show people how to use water wisely? For example, mulching, gutters and water butts on sheds.
 - Are dripping taps & leaks mended promptly?
 - Are pipes insulated and do taps have anti-siphon valves?
 - Let people know how much is spent on water, this often surprises them.
- You can contact your local water company for advice and information, they may even be prepared to offer your site sponsorship, supply low cost water butts or sponsor an event/information leaflet that promoted wise watering techniques.
 - The environment agency offers leaflets and information on water saving gardening techniques.

Paths

Poorly maintained paths detract from the appearance of a site and can hinder access. There are a number of ways you can tackle problem paths:

- Overgrown grass paths
 - Are your tenants aware which paths they are responsible for cutting and which the council/association are responsible for cutting?
 - Provide maps showing who is responsible for cutting which paths.
- Are paths badly cut/forgotten about?
 - Ask the contractor responsible for the path cutting for a grass-cutting schedule. This will help tenants keep track of when a cut is due and any missed cuts can be reported immediately (remember there may be delays due to bad weather).
- Overgrown path edges?
 - Maybe the budget does not cover strimming the edges of paths.
 - Is there an environmental voluntary group who might take this on as a project?
 - Could you offer a free/reduced rent plot to a person willing to trim path edges on a regular basis?
 - Could some of the edges be left uncut as a means of improving your sites biodiversity? Long grass and nettles are an important wildlife

habitat. Maybe signs could be put up to explain that some areas of long grass are being retained for this reason. However a volunteer may be needed to trim off the seeding heads of plants such as nettles.

- Paths unusable in winter?
 - Is this due to people using vehicles on the paths in wet weather?
 - Is there sufficient parking for tenants? Can you have a quiet word with the culprits?
 - Is there an underlying drainage problem?
 - If paths become unusable one solution may be to cover them with a porous membrane (such as that manufactured by Terram Ltd) and 150mm crusher run. This provides a hardwearing path that is easily made. Your council may be able to provide you with road finings from the highways department.

Overgrown plots, neglected sheds etc

Many sites when searching for new tenants have come against the problem of people not wanting to take on overgrown allotment plots and structures that are falling to pieces. One solution is to clear plots and unwanted structures in order to attract new tenants.

Lack of money can be a problem, however there are ways of overcoming this:

- Can you work with your council?
 - Can you contact your council officer and support them in approaching the council committee for funding for a one-off project such as the removal of hazardous substances & structures eg Asbestos, dangerous green houses?
- Could you have a working party to tackle an overgrown plot?
 - See if your council will pay for a skip in return for your labour. Contact as many people as possible to join in your working party. Give a fixed time e.g. 10am to 12.30 and make it fun. Advertise it as a 'lose weight and look great for your holiday' session, have a barbecue afterwards or a trip to the pub.
- Can you set up a job-sharing scheme?
 - If a new tenant is struggling with their allotment garden can a working party help them in a task and in return they agree to provide X hours for the next working party?
- Can you prevent plots becoming overgrown?
 - If you are clearing plots either clear them to order e.g. if you have a tenant ready and waiting. Or clear them and cover them with a weed suppressant membrane.
 - Will your Adult Education department run a gardening course for new gardeners? Plots may be cleared and become overgrown because the new tenant knows very little about gardening and the weeds take over again.
 - Giving advice and support to new gardeners, or those attacking an overgrown plot is invaluable. Get experienced gardeners to pass on helpful advice.

- Could you join together and buy a large roll of weed suppressant membrane or agricultural black plastic that tenants could buy to cover their plots?
- Can you remove neglected structures?
 - Neglected structures need to be removed as soon as possible. They attract vandals and provide shelter for people who you may not wish to attract onto your site. They also make a great target for arson and one burnt shed soon sends out a very negative message.
 - One solution that worked well on a site in York is the weekend before November 5th they pulled down all their abandoned sheds. They then held an allotment bonfire for tenants and the surrounding community. It provided a good community event, got rid of unwanted sheds and ensured the site was full of people to deter any would be arsonists on bonfire night!
 - For large buildings and a severe build up of rubbish, a JCB and lorry to dispose of the waste may be your easiest solution.

Tip: Removing asbestos is a specialist job and you should contact your council officer about removing any asbestos. Provide people with clear information about what they should do if they need to remove any asbestos. Also put signs on your skips so that asbestos does not get put in skips. Disposing of skips with asbestos is an expensive business.

Drainage

Many sites have old drainage systems that are no longer working well. Replacing drainage systems is an expensive business. If you are unable to fund new drainage systems look at alternative measures.

- Write to local landscape architects or a local agricultural project to see if they would be willing to provide free advice in return for publicity.
- If certain plots flood, digging a ditch along the length of the plot can provide somewhere for the water to run to.
- If a certain area of the site always floods then could this be taken out of use and turned into a wildlife wetland area? There is often funding for such projects and it helps alleviate a site's drainage problems. A JCB can excavate an area of soil down to 900 mm which is known as a 'scrape' This provides somewhere for water on the site to go. It isn't a pond needing an expensive liner. Instead it becomes a wetland area that can be sown with appropriate wildflowers. In winter it may retain some water and in summer it may dry out. However it does help alleviate the problem of water retention on sites where the drainage is inadequate.

Disabled access

Some of your older tenants may have difficulty accessing the site or you may have tenants who wish to garden and have a disability. Under the Disability Discrimination Act that is being introduced in October, sites will need to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled access. Disability does not just mean people in wheelchairs, so it is important to get specialist advice for this. Your local council disability officer should be able to help. There are funds available

that can help sites create access for those with a disability so that a site can offer the fun of allotment gardening to everyone. BTCV (the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) may be able to help support a 'people and places' funding application, to upgrade paths or build a disabled access plot. Thrive is an horticultural therapy charity that provides very useful information on this issue.

Car Parks

Although car parks may be a contentious issue, in order to provide access for people with disabilities you do need to consider parking. If someone has limited mobility they will need to have easy access to their plot. Families with young children may also appreciate easier access. The surface of your car park will need to be firm, level and free draining. This will probably rule out grass and concrete is very expensive. A low cost alternative may be a porous, weed suppressant membrane (such as that manufactured by Terram Ltd) with 150mm of well-compacted crusher run, or hardcore with road fining topping.

Toilets

Providing a toilet on site is very useful, especially if there are families with young children or people with disabilities. However a toilet creates a number of issues which need to be carefully considered:

- Where will it be sited?
- What type of toilet will you have e.g. compost toilet, mains water?
- How will it be kept safe and secure?
- Who is going to clean it?
- Is it suitable for people with a disability?

Composting

Composting and recycling areas can be a very useful addition to a site. Before they are created, the following need to be considered:

- Is there vehicle access for the delivery of green waste?
- Have you carried out a risk assessment to ensure the waste doesn't pollute watercourses or groundwater? You may need to install appropriate drainage.
- How will the compost bays be constructed - on concrete or directly onto the soil?
- How can you educate your tenants to use the compost bays properly? You need to ensure that people do not put non-compostable waste or pernicious weeds.
- Can you protect your composting areas from fly tipping?

If your site is not able to create composting or recycling areas there are still opportunities to 'go green'.

- Many councils are now producing their own compost or soil conditioner.
- Could you arrange the delivery of a skip full of compost to share on your site?
- Will your adult education department pay for a composting workshop to teach your tenants how to compost effectively?
- Can you make links with your local recycling officer for ideas?

Other Points

- Plot numbers: Some tenants do not like plot numbers being displayed, however they can make a difference to a site. New tenants find them welcoming because they can find their way around more easily. They are invaluable if you have contractors working on site and they are also very useful for your allotment officer. Numbered plots can prevent warning letters going to the wrong tenants!
- Publicity: Whatever changes you make, publicise your achievements. Let tenants, the surrounding community, and the media know. Get your local councillor/MP involved with your site.
- Biodiversity: There is often funding available for environmental projects that improve the biodiversity of open spaces. Is there a local wildlife or environmental group that can give you advice on how to improve the biodiversity of your site? Could you find volunteers to carry out a wildlife survey of your site? Showing funding groups action plans for improving the wildlife value of your site can help attract certain types of funding.
- Community initiatives: involving your community helps your site in two ways. The immediate benefits may be greater support for your site with more people coming forward to help out with site projects. Other benefits are that funding bodies often look for community involvement when awarding funding.

Useful Contacts & Information

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ The Environment Agency | Tel: 0845 9333 111 |
| ■ Thrive | Tel: 0118 988 5677 |

NB For any work that takes place on your allotment site please ensure the following:

- **You have adequate insurance**
- **You have any necessary planning permission**
- **You ask for three quotations and always have contractors work to a job specification that gives detailed information about what materials will be used, how the work will be carried out and when it will be completed by.**

There are ARI leaflets available for these topics:

- Toilet paper: How to install an affordable allotment toilet
- Safe sites: Prevention of vandalism and other crime; site security and fencing
- Allotments for all: Improving disability access on allotments.

Appendix 3 – Promoting allotments workshop handout

ACTION PLANNING SHEET

Title:

Aim:

What event/campaign/other is planned?

List at least first 5 steps to make it happen	Who will do each?	By when?	Predicted problems and how to deal with them
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			