

Solihull Green Scheme and Kingshurst Jubilee Community Gardening Group



Back in the summer of 2001 a group of people from Kingshurst Parish Council, Kingshurst Allotment and Solihull Council's Green Scheme got together to try and come up with ways of improving a neglected, under-used area of their local allotment site. It was agreed to try and get some funding which would enable the group to clear the area of rubbish, create new raised beds for food growing, renew the crumbling, uneven paths, create a relaxing seating area and develop areas where wildlife could flourish. The overall aim being to encourage more local people, especially individuals with special needs, to get involved in food growing.

Coming up with ideas was the easy bit – getting the funding proved more difficult! After a couple of unsuccessful bids, in July 2003 the scheme was awarded £26,750 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and became one of the ARI Pilot Projects. The ball could finally start rolling.

Once the area had been

cleared of accumulated rubbish, work began on creating a new access path and foundations for what the group hope will become a training room from which courses on food growing can be delivered.

Much of the work has been carried out by the Green Scheme's Community Development Team, made up of local people who for various reasons experience social and economic exclusion. Some of the trainees have problems associated with drug and alcohol dependency, others have learning difficulties or lack basic skills and work experience. The funding has enabled a project to develop where the trainees gain valuable skills which help them overcome some of the barriers they face. A vital element of the initiative is that it demonstrates to them and to others the positive part they can play in helping to improve their local area.

Work is about to start on the raised bed area and other food growing plots. Plans for the next six months include the creation

of a wildlife area, orchard and community garden.

The project is co-ordinated by a group of keen individuals who meet every month or so to discuss progress. In fact the group are so keen they are working on another funding bid to enable yet more features to be incorporated into the project. ♦

