

Nature Towns and Cities



**Working More Effectively with the Voluntary,
Community and Social Enterprise Sector**
Thursday 7 November 2024



National Trust



Heritage
Fund



Helpful Information

- If you have any questions for speakers, please submit them using the Q&A feature throughout the presentations.
- Automatic captioning is turned on, you can adjust this in the settings at the bottom of your screen.
- If you have any technical questions or issues, please let us know the details in the chat and we can help you.
- This session is being recorded and will be available in the coming days.

Find out more about Nature Towns and Cities, sign up to future events and the mailing list via the website:
www.naturetownsandcities.org.uk



Nature Neighbourhoods

Cymdogaethau Natur



Supported by



Green Spaces in Urban Places





About us

Sow the City is a Manchester-based social enterprise, established in 2009.

Established with a few packets of seeds and some compost, we're now a team of 8.

We are on a mission to create greener cities and connect people with nature.

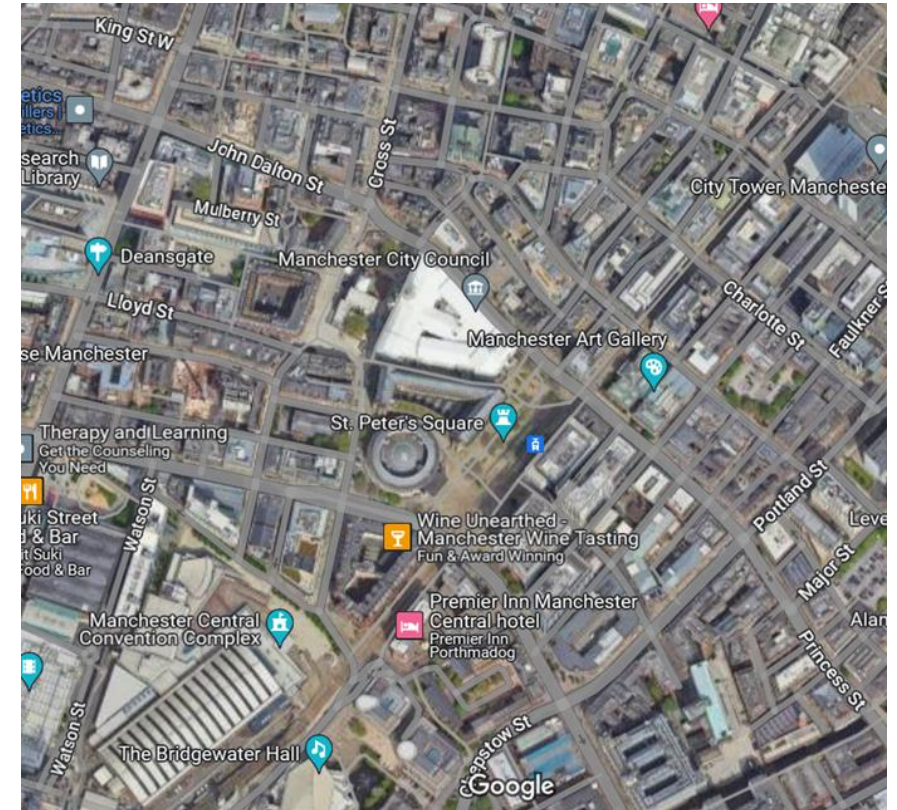
Why are we needed?

These are
challenging times
for the
environment/ cities.
Inequality is rising.
Climate change is
causing heatwaves.
Many thousands of
people are in food
poverty.

Many city dwellers have little or no
connection with the natural world
in their daily lives and there are
**inequalities in access to
greenspace.**

Key benefits of green spaces:

- Improved air quality
- Reduced flooding
- Food production
- Mitigated climate change
- Enhanced mental and physical health
- Stronger communities



Green Spaces Fund

“We will improve our green spaces and open them up to more people.

In support of this...we will create a new ‘Green Spaces Fund’ to give small grants to communities to clean up and improve pocket parks and local green spaces or create new ones where they are needed.

[We will] increase the amount and quality of accessible nature-rich green space, particularly for our poorest residents.”



New green space where it's needed most



Not everyone has equal access to quality green space - got an idea for a community project that could help?

Apply for Green Spaces Fund support at:
gmenvfund.org/green-spaces-fund

Studies in Netherlands,
Japan and Canada show
10% increase in exposure
to green space translates
to living 5 years longer.
(King Fund, 2016)



5 ways to well being



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



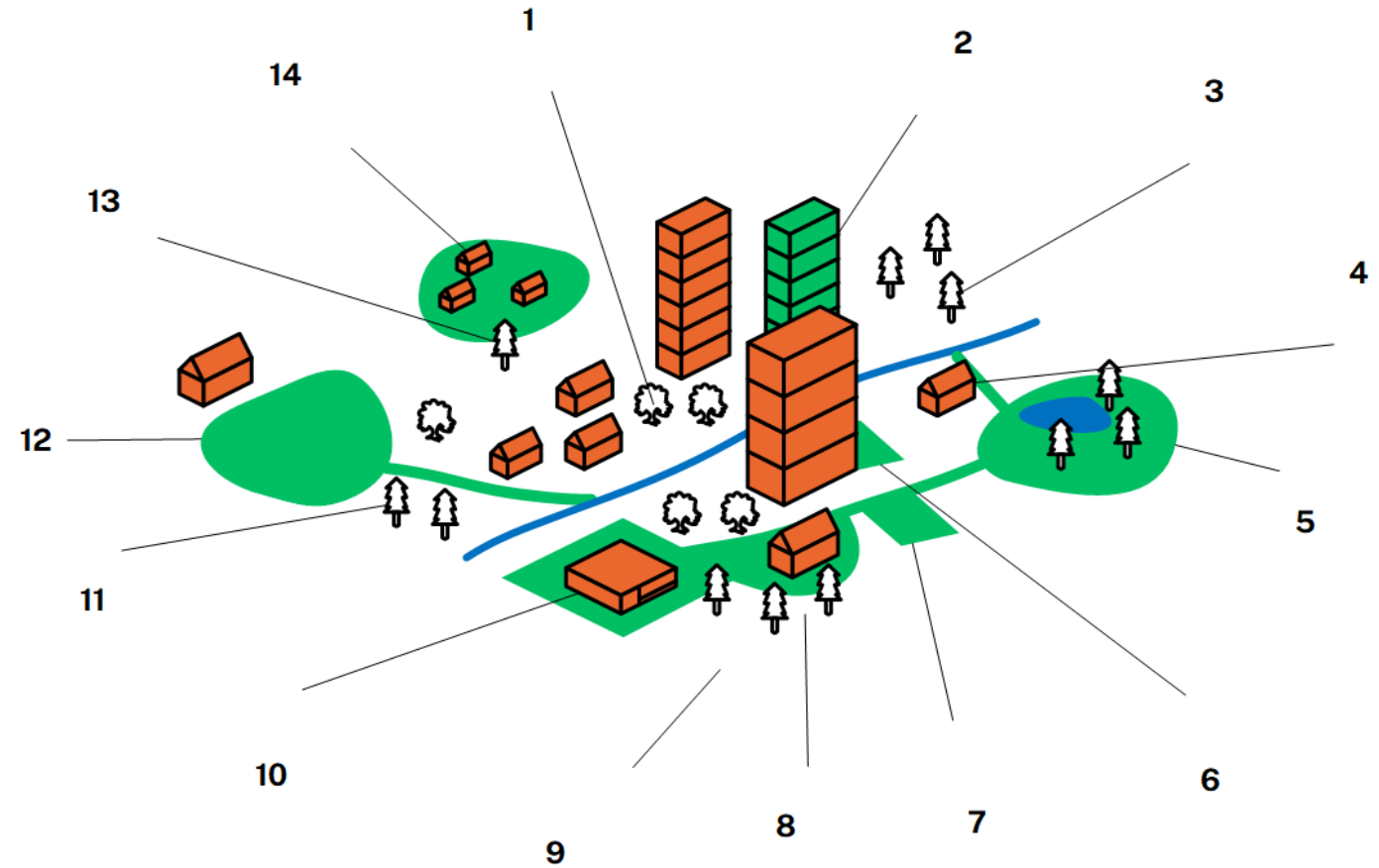
EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



Your time,
your words,
your presence

Our vision

1. Street trees, providing shade, habitats and reducing air pollution and flood risk
2. Green roofs provide space for food growing, and reducing the urban heat island effect
3. Jobs created through food enterprise
4. Investment in green infrastructure
5. Parks used for relaxation and socialising .
6. Community gardens created to provide local food reducing food-related carbon emissions.
7. Protecting urban soil to improve its quality
8. Schools, hospitals, and GPs used for food growing
9. Unused land repurposed for food production.
10. Urban farms used to provide seasonal food
11. Good quality domestic green spaces
12. Community gardens are used as social spaces, creating stronger communities.
13. Blue Infrastructure created to provide key habitats.
14. Connected green spaces encourage wildlife movement, supporting biodiversity.



Our impact

Since we were founded, we have provided courses and workshops for 21,000 people, facilitated over 15,000 volunteering hours, and transformed almost 14,000m² of unused and derelict land into useful community greenspace and green infrastructure.

21k workshop attendees

15k volunteering hours

14,000m² land transformed

• Our Manchester •

It details the goals that everyone in our city – our public, private, voluntary and community organisations and our residents – will **work on together** to put Manchester in the top flight of world cities by 2025.



Nature Neighbourh^{oods}

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People's Plan for Nature

Nature Neighbourhoods

- Partnership project between the National Trust, RSPB and WWF, working with 18 diverse community organisations across the UK and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and the Co-op
- Co designed action plans, capacity and ideas for tackling some of the biggest challenges around nature and climate in the 18 neighbourhoods.
- STC in Newton Heath



Nature Neighbourhoods

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**The most
deprived ward in
Manchester, if not
the country!**  sowthecity.org



Theme 1: Green and Blue Trail

- With 'stepping stone' hubs including canal, former botanical garden in park, forest garden, community garden, orchard and Green Hub etc
- If nothing else happens, a Green Hub for Newton Heath is the overarching project
- A warm and engaging building, with community garden / green space
- Green Hubs Paper considered by Natural England
- Preferred sites being considered, with 'interim / acting' Green Hub the local Library
- Green Trail linking assets, with QR codes / waymarking
- Strategically, fits with GM moving aims



NEWTON HEATH NATURE NEIGHBOURHOODS

GREEN TRAIL & POSSIBLE GREEN HUB LOCATIONS



GT HUB 1
ROCHDALE CANAL

- History: Everest of canals
- Nature
- Leisure



GT HUB 2
NEWTON HEATH LIBRARY

- Interim green hub



GT HUB 3
GASKELL STREET PARK

- Forest garden
- School



GT HUB 4
STOTT LANE ALLOTMENTS

- Community gardening



GT HUB 5
BROOKDALE PARK

- Heritage botanical garden
- Bowling green
- Gardening



GT HUB 6
NEWTON HEATH CRICKET CLUB



GT HUB 10
ALL SAINTS ECO CHURCH



GT HUB 9
TENANT ECO SHOW HOME

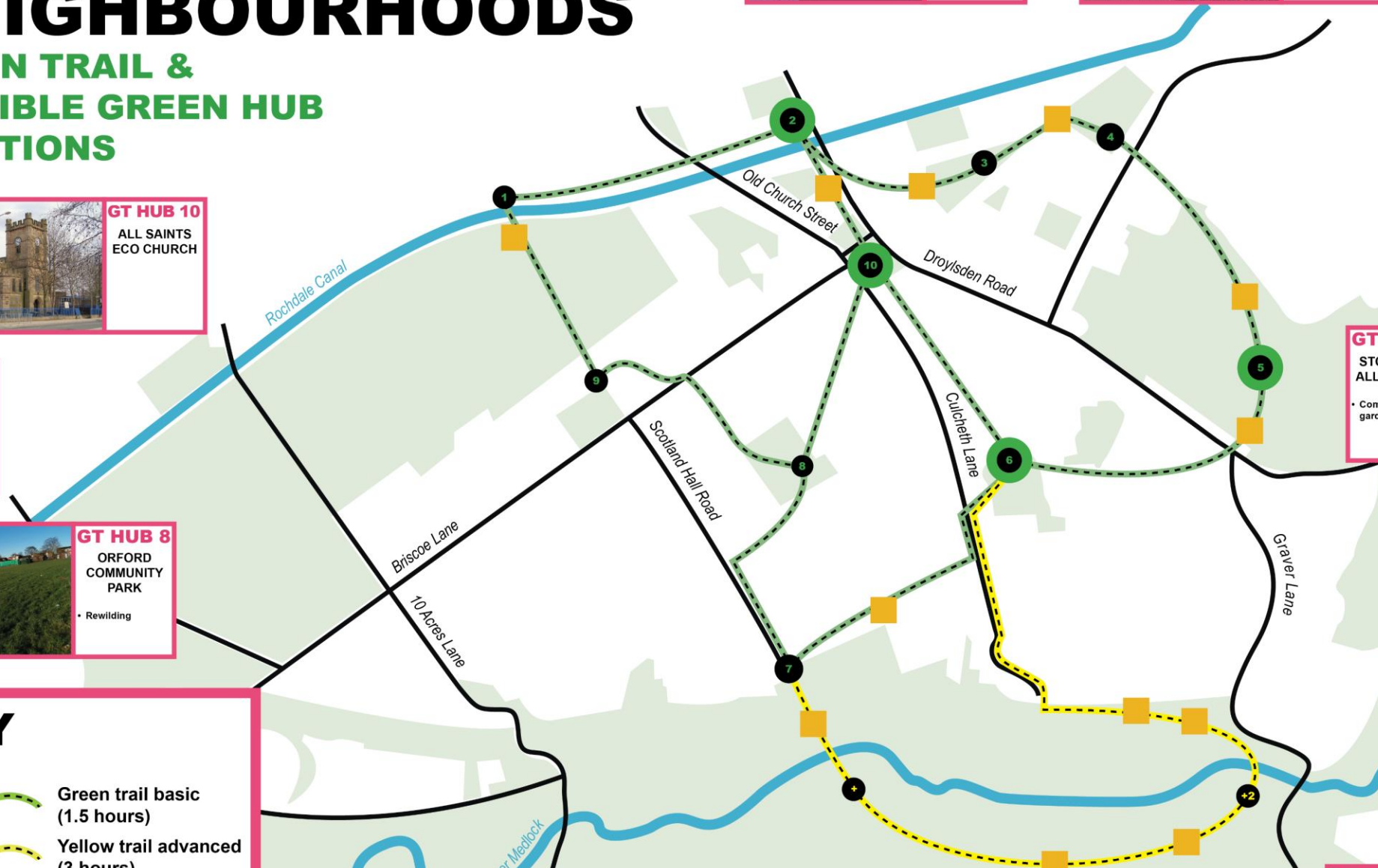


GT HUB 8
ORFORD COMMUNITY PARK

- Rewilding

KEY

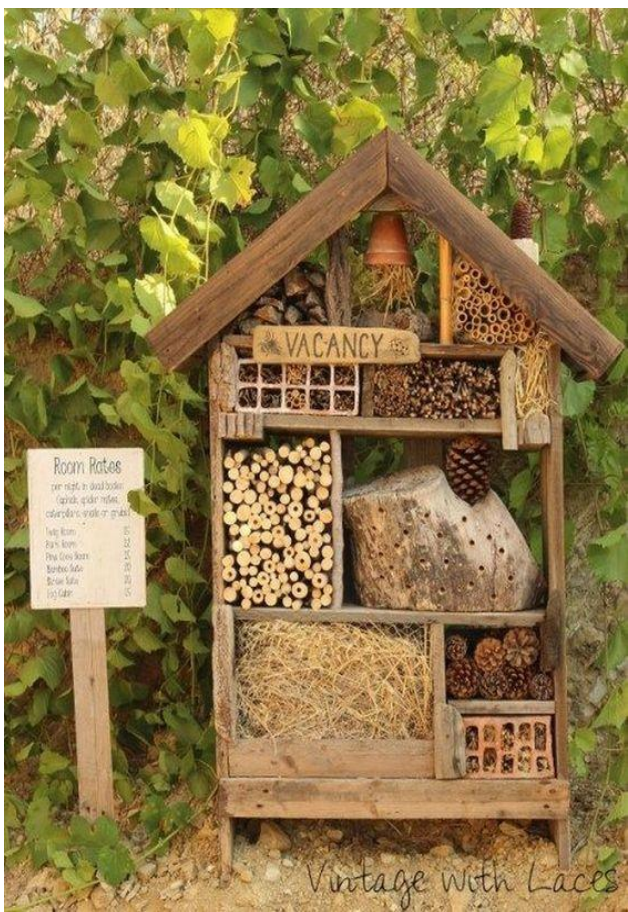
- Green trail basic (1.5 hours)
- Yellow trail advanced (2 hours)







BUG HOTEL



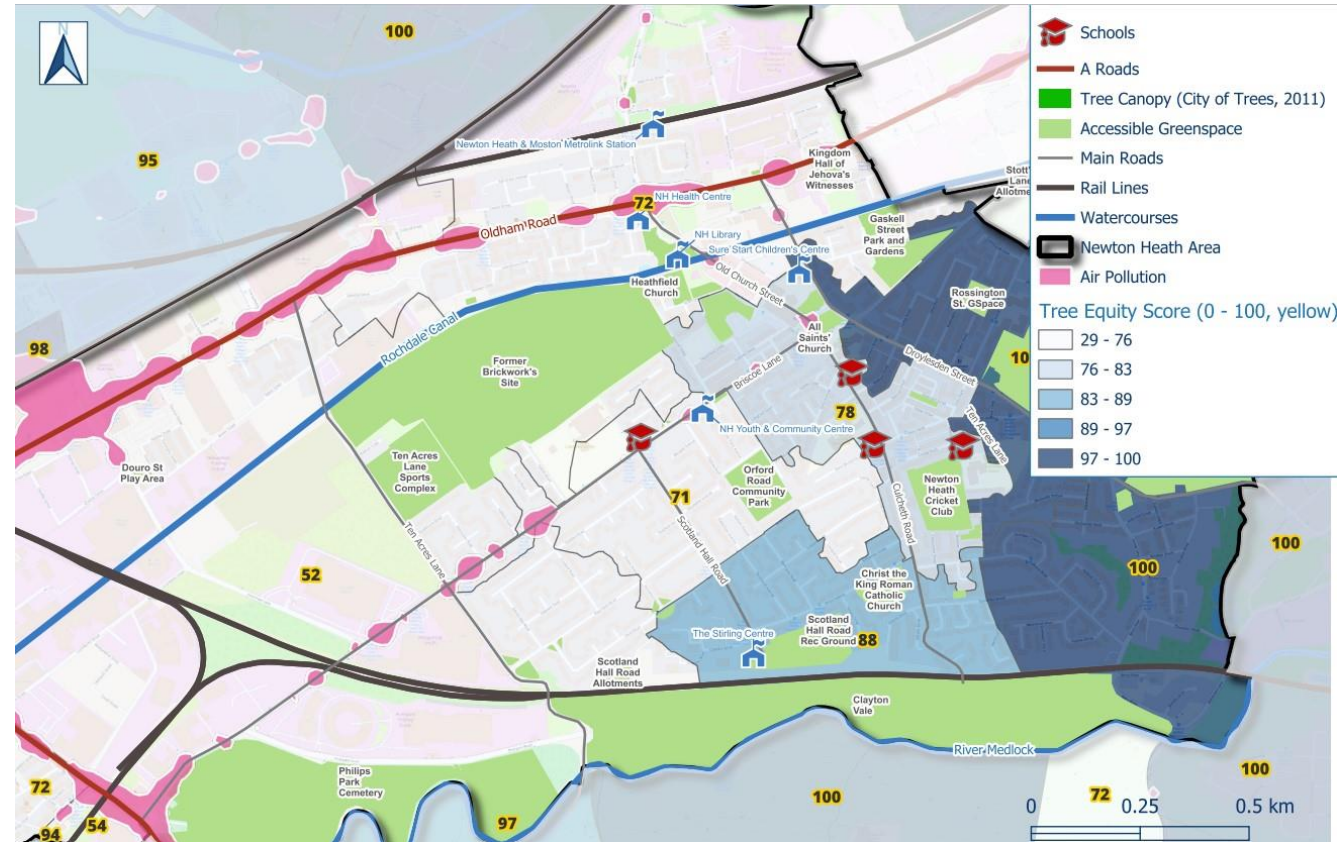
Vintage with Laces







Theme 5: Tree Planting





Working with Population Health



**growing
mcr**



Supporting community food-growing projects in Manchester to grow and live sustainably

manchester.gov.uk/growingmanchester

 GrowingManchester



 **sow the city**



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New green space where it's needed most



Not everyone has equal access to quality green space - got an idea for a community project that could help?

Apply for Green Spaces Fund support at:
gmenvfund.org/green-spaces-fund

Community Assets



From this



To this!





Community Engagement







**10
MILLION**



Approach to Risk







18 months for
permission?



• Our Manchester •

It details the goals that everyone in our city – our public, private, voluntary and community organisations and our residents – will **work on together** to put Manchester in the top flight of world cities by 2025.

Thank you

🌐 sowthecity.org
✉ info@sowthecity.org
☎ 0161 465 6964
📱 @sowthecity

Sow the City CIC Ltd,
Boiler House,
Manchester,
M16 7DA





Zebra Collective

Plymouth



Devonport
Plymouth



Our Organisation

- Small worker co-operative with 8 employees – half part time
- Driven by social and environmental justice
- Values driven

Zebra 6 Core Principles

- Inclusive
- Strengths-based
- Trauma-informed
- Promoting social & environmental justice.
- Conducted reflectively & reflexively, and with humility.
- *(Our community work only)*
Embedded in the communities in which we live and/or work.





Our work

Training/Reflective
Learning in:

- Trauma Informed Practice
- Solution Focused Practice
- Asset Based Community Development Work
- Equalities



Our work

- Running a community centre
- Youth work
- Nature Connectedness
- Community Cancer Champions

My experience – Debbie Freeman

- 10 years working in larger charities and 1 small user led organisation
- 15 years working within a Council – over half of this as a Strategic Commissioner
- Last 3 years working for Zebra Collective

Our work with Plymouth City Council

- Good relationship and close working relationships with some departments/individuals in the Council e.g. leasing of building, work with youth work team etc.
- Formal partnership on Council led Green Communities project – partners are National Trust, City Council, Zebra, Real Ideas. Nature Neighbourhoods funds our involvement.



Green Communities project

- 3 areas of city
- Plymouth City Council employ Natural Infrastructure Officer and National Trust employ Ranger for each area who work in partnership with the partner community organisation and the community
- Project Board made up of Plymouth City Council, National Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Zebra Collective and Real Ideas.



What's working well

In general

- Having positive relationships with some individuals/departments - plus knowing who to go to/how the Council works
- The concept of working in partnership with community organisations is valued by the Council and time is assigned to it
- Community Asset transfer of building – CAT policy exists and is used

What's working well

Green Communities project

- Being a formal partner in the project including on Steering group
- Involved in recruitment of Council staff
- Workers being based in communities
- Regular meetings

Thoughts to Share

- The Community and Voluntary sector – a hugely varied sector with differing relationships to communities
- Valuing our distinct position, experience and expertise
- Sharing information/discussing plans in a timely way – not being 'done to'
- Equality of relationship in the context of power differentials

Thoughts to share

- Recognising when offers are not easy to accept
- Recognising our funding situation
- Being willing to be flexible where possible



Many Thanks

**Granton Community
Gardeners:**

**Local people growing,
cooking and eating food
together.**

We are a community led charity
based in North Edinburgh.

We create and cultivate
community gardens, host
community meals and events.







planting tatties







































Some very helpful things:

In 2010 a Council officer wrote us a 'letter of comfort', meaning we could reassure neighbours that we had spoken to the Council and had sufficient permission (though no lease etc), to begin cultivating corners.

Access to small grants (£2-3k) through a Community Grants Fund.

In 2018 Being given the keys to our big garden, a gap site following the demolition of a building.

In 2020 -Provision of a 'welfare unit' with a toilet, handwashing, and electricity for a kettle and a small fridge.

Council agreeing to the creation of Lauriston Community Farm (a separate organisation, but with whom we do lots of partnership work).

Agreement for a Community Asset Transfer for our main garden in 2023 (we received funding from the Scottish Land Fund -Scottish Govt. in order to purchase the garden from the Council).

-Serious consideration of our calls for the 'Estate Improvement Program' to be redesigned so that local Community Organisations can be paid to deliver work when they are best placed to do so.



Some challenges:

In the early days there was an attempt by a Council officer to start charging us rent for the privilege of cleaning up poorly maintained Council owned street corners. Many residents were furious at this suggestion.

While we were in many ways happy being 'left alone', we are now more aware of the extent of the resources (£100,000s/year) the Council have been continuously spending (from our housing rent money) on the type of land we were working hard with our own resources to improve. We are completely excluded from accessing this. We've been making the argument for 10years that this needs to change -this takes a lot of effort! (hopefully we're getting there).

Entrenched disempowerment among our community. -This is a long term challenge, but it's especially disappointing when things happen that reinforce this, eg. consultations done badly, or that don't lead to clear benefit. People who are really struggling can feel fierce anger or damaging resignation when large amounts of resources are perceived to be badly used, especially when this happens very locally..

Glyphosate spraying our gardens (as indicative of lack of operational communication/understanding with some Council workers/contractors..)

The overriding of an advanced community co-designed plan for a new garden. (due to different departments not communicating).







It's taken us a long time to understand enough about how the Council works, to figure out who we need to persuade, to make specific decisions that will create the change we need. It can be a very complicated institution, even when elected members are trying to help us, and we have gained good cross party support.

Photo: after making a deputation to Council Committee.

GOOD COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

Good communication leads to understanding, trust, respect and opportunity.

One good Senior Officer or Councillor, can make a huge difference with this, LAs can be hard to know how to relate to!

THERE MAY BE SYSTEMIC BLOCKAGES THAT REQUIRE WORK FROM ALL SIDES TO REMOVE.

It's important to recognise key opportunities, when it is worth investing effort to try to change something.

POWER DYNAMICS ARE IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE

Grassroots Community Organisations tend to be very action oriented, use resources very efficiently, but have limited capacity to navigate LAs.. LAs may have a lot to gain in reaching out, but this needs to be done with respect and being prepared to go at the speed communities are wanting to.





Questions?



Find out more

Our website – www.peoplesplanfornature.org/nature-neighbourhoods

Nature Towns and Cities website – www.naturetownsandcities.org.uk

Sow the City – www.sowthecity.org

Kieron McGlasson - kieron@sowthecity.org

Zebra Collective – www.zebra.coop

Debbie Freeman - debbie@Zebra.coop

Granton Community Gardeners – www.grantoncommunitygardeners.org

Tom Kirby - tom@grantoncommunitygardeners.org

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