



The Green Backyard

YOUR Urban Green Space

Background

Established: January 2009

Type of organisation: Not-for-profit social enterprise, entirely volunteer run in years 1 & 2

Land: 2.3 acres, designated as allotment land at the time of commencement

Licence: 3 year licence granted in May 2010 (expires May 2013), previous usage covered by interim agreement

Rent: Annual rent of £500 paid since licence granted

Public accessibility: Open a minimum of 2 days per week plus regular public events

Funding: A mixture of grants, donations and paid income

About Us

The Green Backyard is a community growing project in central Peterborough run by volunteers. From this urban base we are working to transform a once-derelict former allotment site into a beautiful and productive green space. We promote sustainable lifestyles and raise awareness of environmental issues through practical demonstration and community involvement. With regular workdays, events and activities we aim to bring people and communities across Peterborough together to be a bit greener, healthier and happier.

Education and Community Engagement

Workshops and events held since January 2009, volunteer days also shown @ 2 per week

	Small (1 – 50 ppl)	Medium (51 – 100 ppl)	Large (101+ ppl)	Total	Total + vol days
Year 1 (Jan – Dec '09)	8	2	1	11	115
Year 2 (Jan – Dec '10)	63	2	3	68	172
Year 3 (Jan – Dec '11)	67	17	4	88	192
Total	138	21	8	167	479
Total + volunteer days	450	21	8	479	

Examples of small events: Green woodwork skills, woodcarving, introduction to poultry keeping, performances by the Eastern Angles Theatre Company, wild food workshops, children's natural craft events, monthly drum circles, mixed martial arts.

Examples of medium events: Conker championships, monthly craft fairs, allotment skills workshop for the Environment Network, Dig for Victory garden launch.

Examples of large events: Beatroots (music and arts festival), Overground (live art event), Community 'Pitch-In' Picnics, community orchard planting.

Value of Volunteers

A conservative estimate of the number of volunteer hours which have been invested in the Green Backyard project since January 2009 (not including project set up time) is just over 155,000 hours. This is the financial equivalent of over £1 million in wages at average UK rates of pay. See further breakdown in Appendix 1.

Projects and working relationships

This is a sample rather than an exhaustive list

Probation Services

Since 2009 we have held an excellent working relationship with the Peterborough Probation Service and have benefited significantly from their support. In the first two years of the project we hosted two work parties per week and have since gone on to supervise and support numerous individuals on personal work orders. Many offenders have continued to volunteer with us following the completion of their work order, including one who went on to receive an award from the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) for his part in teaching free Greeniversity courses at the Green Backyard.

Peterborough Primary Care Trust

In 2009 we ran a series of 'Wild Food Workshops' aimed at overweight and obese children and their families. The workshops were designed to be a fun introduction to growing and cooking healthy food.

Froglife

The national wildlife charity Froglife has been a regular contributor to the Green Backyard. Staff and volunteers from their Active Conservation Team – a project delivered on behalf of the Peterborough Youth Offending Service – regularly visit for inspiration and ideas. In 2011 two groups of Wildlife Ambassadors – a training scheme getting people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) involved in reptile and amphibian conservation - continued and completed the installation of two large wildlife ponds, complete with dipping platform. Froglife also donated pond dipping equipment and identification guides to enable educational sessions to take place once the ponds are established.

Care and Support Workers

The Green Backyard receives a large number of volunteers who require additional support, particularly during the warmer months. The Green Backyard represents an important opportunity to benefit from the therapeutic, social and educational environment, and in return these volunteers and their support workers form an important and valued part of the Green Backyard community.

Dig for Victory

Costing £25,000 funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and managed by Change Agents UK (formerly Student Force), the Dig for Victory project was a 6 month intergenerational initiative carried out in 2010/11 which worked with young people to carry out a number of activities relating to the Second World War. The project culminated with the construction of a recreated wartime garden at the Green Backyard, complete with a reproduction Anderson shelter.

Peterborough in Transition

A £16,000 project being managed by the Green Backyard and funded through Peterborough City College's Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) fund, Peterborough in Transition is supporting the establishment of a Peterborough Transition initiative with the provision of a series of funded workshops and facilitated meetings. The training is being provided by expert practitioners from across the UK and is unique to this programme in Peterborough. The project supports both individuals and community groups from across Peterborough in actively making Peterborough a more sustainable, resilient and happy city, as well as linking it with the thousands of other

Transition initiatives around the UK and across the world. The programme is largely based at the Green Backyard and is set to culminate with a public launch event and showcase of all things sustainable in June 2011, to be held at the Green Backyard.

Peterborough Food Co-op

A project currently in development in partnership with PECT, the Environment Network, Transition Peterborough, Peterborough Fair Trade City and Sustain, a food co-op is proposed to support local food producers and to encourage healthy eating across the city. A project base at the Green Backyard has been proposed, as has the possibility of engaging young people in creating a mobile food co-op outlet using materials and an ex-display trailer donated to the Green Backyard.

Permaculture – LAND

In 2011 the Green Backyard became Peterborough's only accredited LAND Learning Centre, which aims to support and enhance the food growing and land design skills and knowledge of permaculture practitioners and the general public through the development of an England wide permaculture learning and demonstration network. The project has also received national media coverage in Permaculture Magazine which led to numerous visits to the site from interested people from further afield.

Anglia in Bloom

In 2010 the project was awarded 'Best Community Project' by the Anglia in Bloom committee following their visit to the site, and in 2011 the city was awarded its first ever gold award in the competition.

Buildings and Structures

When the Green Backyard began operating from the London Road site in 2009 the land was designated as allotment land and as such we were informed that any planning permission for structures would be impossible to obtain until this had been changed. PCC were at that time in the process of seeking a change of usage for the land. We were not informed either at that time or when the licence was granted in 2010 of the water main or power cables which we now understand to run underneath the site.

Without toilet facilities it was impossible to operate any kind of acceptable volunteer activities or events and so we applied for permission to construct small composting toilets, this was refused. Without these basic provisions the project would not be able to continue and so we took the decision to construct them in such a way to make them temporary and relatively simple to remove, and apply for retrospective planning consent at a later date. The same approach was then applied to the construction of another building to act as shelter, and a workshop and teaching space followed. During the entire construction phase we were visited by numerous City Council representatives and were at no point asked to stop.

In December 2009 we were visited by Astrid Hawley from PCC's Planning Services to discuss planning requirements for the structures. She inspected the buildings, deemed them safe and advised that we apply for retrospective planning permission once the issue of the lands designated use was resolved. To date we have not received notification that this has taken place.

The construction of the existing structures was carried out due to necessity rather than any desire to go against the conditions of our licence. Since (and even before) their completion the buildings have been used regularly for numerous community workshops, events,

performances, film screenings and private functions, as well as simply to provide shelter and warmth for our volunteers. Now completed they are providing an income source for the project, with bookings from local and national groups including the Guild of City Farms and Community Gardens.

Since receiving the news that they are likely to need to be demolished we have had an architect inspect them. He estimated the time and materials involved in their removal and reconstruction to cost around £60,000.

True Vale

The value of community projects such as the Green Backyard is notoriously difficult to estimate or quantify, due to the high proportion of 'soft' outputs and preventative (as opposed to reactive) measures. The benefits to health, community, wellbeing and economics are however better documented.

The 2007 report 'True Value' by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens clearly demonstrate the contribution made by community farms and gardens to increasing the well-being of individuals and communities. The report highlights the role that such projects play in facilitating action at a local level on global issues, acting as 'stepping stones' to future possibilities for disaffected young people and the role they play in encouraging local people to become more socially active and develop stronger ties to their community through environmental improvement. The report advises that 'harnessing this energy and increasing opportunities for participation across the UK could have a big impact on the behaviour of residents.

The report continues that 'the study into the true value of community farms and gardens demonstrate the significant contribution that these projects are making towards social, health, environmental, education and economic government agendas relating to social inclusion, tackling obesity, biodiversity, unemployment and youth disaffection and regeneration'.

The report advocates the involvement of communities by local authorities in strategic planning to 'ensure that new developments meet the needs of local people, particularly by providing areas of green space. The opportunity to design and alter surroundings has been proved in this study to promote well-being and generate a sense of ownership, thus reducing the risk of crime and/or vandalism'.

The findings from this study also suggest that a move to incorporate community-growing spaces into planning would have a positive impact on both the physical and mental health of local people. Such a strategy could potentially help address certain conditions such as stress, unhappiness and obesity before further medical assistance is required, which could have a dramatic impact on stretched NHS resources.

The full report is available to read here: <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications/290-true-value-research->

The Future

The Green Backyard aims to continue to grow in its role as a provider of community based education, supporter of community projects (see Mark Smith's testimonial in Appendix 2) and an exemplar demonstration centre for sustainability in Peterborough.

The removal of all of the sites structures represents an enormous outlay in time, energy

and resources in an environment where these are already stretched, as well as a significant set back in terms of achievement and ability to be a self sustaining enterprise.

The possible relocation of the project represents complete destruction of the work carried out over the last three years and a irreparably negative impact on the volunteers and community who have nurtured the project with their time, hands, faith and money.

If further security was obtained on the existing London Road site the Green Backyard would grow into a modern, professional, community-led organisation which will help demonstrate Peterborough's significance and place on the map as an Environment City. Increased security would not just represent 'business as usual' for the project, it would open up an entirely new level of opportunities which to date have been unobtainable due to the site's ongoing situation, which has severely restricted the projects ability to apply for funds or establish itself.

In the three years that the Green Backyard has been open the project has received a huge number of requests for visits and advice from both local and national groups who would like to emulate in some way the work that we carry out. With extremely limited resources the project is already making a name for itself and for Peterborough, something that will only continue should a more permanent solution to our location be reached.

Appendix 1 – Volunteer Values

Estimated volunteer values: Year 1, January – December 2009

Volunteer Title	Equivalent wage p/h	Average vols per day	Hrs per day	Days per wk	Average hrs per week	TOTAL HRS	TOTAL £
Project Coordinator	£13.57	1	7	5	35	1820	£24,697.07
Teacher	£35.00	1	5	2	10	520	£18,200.00
Carpenter	£12.86	1	5	3	15	780	£10,029.76
Gardener	£12.30	2	5	2	20	2080	£25,592.43
Unskilled labourer	£6.08	5	5	2	50	13000	£79,040.00
Community Service	£6.08	6	6	2	72	22464	£136,581.12
						40664	£294,140.39

Estimated volunteer values: Year 2, January – December 2010

Volunteer Title	Equivalent wage p/h	Average vols per day	Hrs per day	Days per wk	Average hrs per week	TOTAL HRS	TOTAL £
Project Coordinator	£13.57	1	7	4	28	1456	£19,757.66
Teacher	£35.00	1	5	2	10	520	£18,200.00
Carpenter	£12.86	1	5	3	15	780	£10,029.76
Gardener	£12.30	2	5	2	20	2080	£25,592.43
Unskilled labourer	£6.08	7	5	2	70	25480	£154,918.40
Community Service	£6.08	6	6	2	72	22464	£136,581.12
						52780	£365,079.37

Estimated volunteer values: Year 3, January – December 2011

Volunteer Title	Equivalent wage p/h	Average vols per day	Hrs per day	Days per wk	Average hrs per week	TOTAL HRS	TOTAL £
Project Coordinator	£13.57	1	7	4	28	1456	£19,757.66
Teacher	£35.00	1	5	2	10	520	£18,200.00
Carpenter	£12.86	1	5	3	15	780	£10,029.76
Gardener	£12.30	2	5	2	20	2080	£25,592.43
Unskilled labourer	£6.08	10	5	2	100	52000	£316,160.00
Community Service	£6.08	4	6	1	24	4992	£30,351.36
						61828	£420,091.21

Total Estimated volunteer values: January 2009 – December 2011

Volunteer Title	Equivalent wage p/h	TOTAL HRS	TOTAL £
Project Coordinator	£13.57	4732	£64,212.39
Teacher	£35.00	1560	£54,600.00
Carpenter	£12.86	2340	£30,089.29
Gardener	£12.30	6240	£76,777.30
Unskilled labourer	£6.08	90480	£550,118.40
Community Service	£6.08	49920	£303,513.60
		155,272	£1,079,310.98

Appendix 2 – Statements of Support

Dear Sophie,
Please forward this e-mail to anyone concerned with the proposed alteration/closure of the Green Backyard in its present location.

I got involved with the project because I thought it was exactly what I needed for myself and my two children who were still living with me (then aged 15 and 10) to spend time outdoors and learn some hands-on skills to do with growing vegetables etc. In the beginning, everyone used to spend a lot of time just digging. No weedkillers were used and all the weeds and roots were taken up by hand. Since that time, I have learned a great deal about almost every kind of vegetable (and some fruit.)

My daughter, now 18, is a keen amateur photographer, and has a beautiful portfolio of photographs of the Green Backyard throughout the course of its (and her own) development. My son, now nearly 14, is growing up without his father or grandfathers, who have all passed away. Since going to the Green Backyard, he is now very interested in woodwork: he understands about tools and how to look after them; he has done lathe-work and he can chop wood and keep a fire going - none of which he could have learned at home. Also, there has recently been a Tai-Chi and Wing-Chun instructor attending, and he has developed an interest in that.

Although I try to get to the Green Backyard on a Sunday, I sometimes might not get there for 3 weeks. Every time this happens, I am absolutely amazed by the growth and development of the project since I last saw it. When I first arrived, there was a lean-to hut made out of tarpaulins, where we used to get a cup of tea. Then, very soon, there was a cookhouse, sheds, composting toilets, expertly built poly-tunnels... There have been many tree-plantings. There is an events building. There are hen-houses, chicken runs, rabbit run, wildlife ponds, live willow fencing (dividers, arches and domes) raised vegetable beds, a water filtration system for recycling rainwater and a clay oven for baking pizza. It is organic in every sense - ever-improving and inspiring to the people who work there. It gave me a great feeling of satisfaction to see the story of the Green Backyard in Permaculture magazine. I felt that this truly recognised the extent of Renny and Sophie's achievement in creating such a thriving green urban project. (It is not often that you feel proud to be Peterborian.)

There have been lots of outside projects who have benefited from the Green Backyard. I have been impressed by the positive and constructive use of time by the CPS (Community Payback) workers who have attended. It is not an easy thing to occupy and delegate tasks to unpaid workers who may not always have a willing attitude, and I don't feel that Renny and Sophie have had enough credit for this. Also there is Frog-Life, drum-circle, the Dig-for-Victory WW2 garden, skills workshops, craft fair, Overground Arts and various art and music (and conkers!) events hosted by the GBY. Many of the people I regularly meet at the GBY are disadvantaged or disabled in some way, and it is an inspiring thing getting to know them and realising how much benefit they get from it.

The Green Backyard has given us some very happy and constructive times. We have had big bring-and-share community meals on special occasions (this has really helped with the Christmas spirit for those of us with no family around.) We are a low-income, non car-owning family living in Fletton, and it is very hard to see how it could be replaced in our lives.

Lesley Chambers

Dear councillors

we offer our support and our thanks to Sophie and The Green Backyard,

The Green Backyard is a unique place in this overcrowded city of ours a place of tranquillity to relax and absorb the rays of the sun.....but more importantly it is a place to learn and to teach a place to seek help and to share knowledge a place where people such as myself can go on a Sunday lunchtime and ask for help with our own community projects and the help is given

The help we have received from all the team at the Green Backyard has been and will continue to be invaluable not just to our community but to the city as a whole and not just for this generation but for many more to come. We could not have developed our project to the stage it is without the help from the Green Backyard

Mark Smith, Site Manager, The Olive Branch Community Garden & Allotments



Working and learning for a
sustainable future

CHANGE AGENTS UK
Oakham Station
Station Approach
Oakham LE15 6QT

Peterborough City Council
Town Hall
Bridge Street
Peterborough
PE1 1PJ

5th January 2012

Dear Peterborough City Council

Support for the Green Backyard

Please accept this letter in support of the fantastic work and activity that takes place on the Green Backyard site, London Road, Peterborough. I have been involved both professionally and personally with the site since it began.

In 2011 we worked with Sophie and Renny to run a highly successful *Dig for Victory* project with 16-19 year olds in the city. The site and the support provided by the team and volunteers was invaluable and the *Victory* garden on the site is a legacy to the hard work of the young people involved in the project, a real success! I am also delighted to see that Transition Peterborough has grown through Sophie's hard work with many families, young people and residents making use of the site and the training being provided. I have run a number of very successful events such as Peterborough Green Drinks on the site and the energy and buzz around the place is a testament to the hard work, effort and commitment of the Antonelli's and the volunteers. Personally I have spent many happy hours at the Green Backyard and completed a hugely enjoyable Woodcarving course there last year.

I am well aware that the Green Backyard has touched the lives of many in a short space of time, providing hope and enjoyment to the visitors and volunteers alike. It is a hub of the arts and culture scene in the city (I know the RSA Citizen Power project are huge fans of it!) and is the beating green heart in a largely urban city centre.

I am a realist and I understand that the site may be re-developed for housing (as part of the Carbon Challenge site) and for the provision of utilities. However, I would urge you to ensure that none of the energy, good work and enthusiasm of the Green Backyard is lost in the wake of such development and that you would work closely with the team to ensure the long term sustainability of this vital activity in the city.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Goodman".

Nick Goodman
Charity Leader

6th January 2012

Peterborough City Council
Town Hall
Bridge Street
Peterborough
PE1 1PJ

RE: THE GREEN BACKYARD

Dear Peterborough City Council,

I write in support of the Green Backyard Project, which Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) has had the pleasure of working with over the past three years. I consider this project to be of great value to the city, and a contribution towards our aspirations to become the UK's Environment Capital.

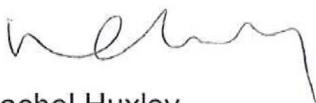
In the three years since the projects inception, we have worked with their team on a number of successful projects, including Greeniversity and the Forest for Peterborough. They are active members of the Environment Network and recently successfully applied for funding to establish Peterborough's very own Transition Town initiative, something we at PECT very much support and are actively involved with.

The benefits that are brought by grassroots, community-led projects such as this are difficult to quantify but must not be under-estimated. The Green Backyard promotes healthy lifestyles, sustainable living and pride in Peterborough in a way that is accessible and inclusive to all. It would be a great loss if their good work was not able to continue.

I understand that their current location may become untenable in light of proposed development works, and whilst I understand the need for investment I do feel that the Green Backyard's position in the centre of an Environment City such as ours seems like a perfect location for such an inspiring and wholly beneficial project.

I hope that a solution can be reached in which the good work and enthusiasm for environmental issues which the Green Backyard has created is preserved.

Kind regards,



Rachel Huxley
Chief Executive