

Spreading the Patchwork – Hackney's Growing Urban Farm

Hackney residents Jo Wilson and Julie Porter dreamt of transforming derelict land into flourishing gardens, and growing fresh organic food for local people to eat, right here in the city. But they didn't have the expertise or the land. So in 2011 they took part in Growing Communities' volunteer Apprenticeship Scheme, learning how to run a small urban market garden, and a year later they are part of the Patchwork Farm project, selling their produce to hundreds of Hackney households. Jo and Julie are growing salad on part of the Landfield housing estate in Clapton after residents asked them to make use of a neglected and overgrown space.

On Sunday 9th December we planted Apple, Pear and Plum trees in the communal area's of the Estate with the help of Lewis Mcneil of the London Orchard Project. Our Estate manager Tony Williams, residents and members of the TRA helped plant the trees.
Article by: George McGee, Chair of the Landfield Estate.



Nightingale's outing to Clacton

On 22nd August 100 adults and children from Nightingale Estate had an outing to Clacton on Sea. The weather was lovely and everyone had a great time.



It was a full coach with several families looking forward to the day in the sun. This was the 3rd outing last year as we have already been to Southend and Brighton during the summer.
Article by Carole Baines



Julie (left) and Jo (right) harvesting their first crop on Landfield estate

Mavis McGee from the Tenants and Residents Association said: "It's great the way Jo and Julie are transforming this old piece of ground. You know it was just full of weeds and rubbish before, and now look at it! The estate residents are excited about it, and quite a few are getting involved and helping out". Jo and Julie are excited too: "It's early days, but we're determined to make this work as a social enterprise producing local food in Hackney," said Jo. "We've got big plans for involving the local community, and we'd love to hear from any restaurants who would like us to grow for them."

The Patchwork Farm is run by Growing Communities with funding from the Big Lottery's Local Food. It is currently made up of five sites, where trained Apprentices grow organic salad leaves to sell. Another four sites are about to be set up in the spring, and Growing Communities is looking for more. The aim is to produce sustainable, fresh local food that only travels a few metres from their plot to your plate.

Growing Communities will be recruiting another four volunteer apprentices in February to start in April. The apprentices will spend one day a week learning how to grow salad and run a market garden, and at the end they may have the chance to run their own Patchwork site. Check the website for details: www.growingcommunities.org And you can follow Jo and Julie's progress at: <http://hackneyfarmers.wordpress.com/>



Photo: the panel at Westcliff on Sea last year. We stay at hotels with appropriate training facilities within 50 miles of London. This year's training centre is yet to be decided.

Clapton Panel weekend away training

Each year the panel offers training to its members to better deal with the issues at hand. The issue that had the potential to have far reaching effects and impact on service delivery was of course the reorganisation of Hackney Homes after the five Neighbourhoods let go the management partners and everything was brought back in-house. To enable us to understand what the proposed changes meant we

had to have an understanding of the current structure, along with it's faults (which we were only too familiar with) and the effect changes have at each level of management. The knowledge we gained was critical to our effective "holding to account" senior staff.

Photos of recent training locations at: www.claptonpanel.wordpress.com

Join your TRA & come to the next weekend away training with me, Lockhart Murdock and the panel. Contact us at: claptonpanel@gmail.com



The Hackney Street Property Forum

Hackney Street Property Forum was set up in May 2010, with elected committee members, with a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary & Treasurer and 12 ordinary committee members. We hold our meetings bi-monthly. There are over 1,500 street properties in Hackney and it is the Forum's intention to represent the interests of all these residents' living in a Hackney Street Property and to address the neglect of street properties and other issues that residents' have been experiencing in Hackney for many years.

The issues that the Forum have raised with Hackney Homes in 2010/2011 include: Housing Management Contracts, Decent Homes Works, Hackney Homes Performance Reports, The Housing Benefit Reports, Rent Increases, Street Properties on the Open Market, Sound Insulation, Anti Social Behaviour, Repairs & Maintenance, Noise Pollution, The New Tenancy Agreement, Tree Cutting on Street Properties.

The Forum conducted a survey in 2011 to find out how residents' feel about their homes and the Service they receive from Hackney Homes and about their experiences when contacting Hackney Homes. Also to find out how residents' felt about the Hackney Street Property Forum representing the issues affecting residents that live in street properties. The Forum wanted to find out if street property residents would be interested in attending Surgeries to have their say about issues affecting them and received a good response from the Survey. More than half of the residents' that completed the Survey said they are interested in attending further surgeries, so we plan to hold more in the near future. This year the issues the Forum has raised with Hackney Homes include: tree cutting (Street Properties), the 184 programme, communal lighting on street properties, the Stock Condition Survey, Decent Home Works & Welfare Reforms.

We are in the process of developing a Website and producing a Newsletter to raise the profile of the Forum in the community and to keep residents' informed of the issues that affect Hackney street properties residents'.

The Forum is planning a **National Family Week Day** in June 2013 and an **Open Day** in August 2013. All street property residents' are welcome. If you are interested please send us an email to: hackneystreetpropertyforum@hotmail.co.uk

We feel residents need to be computer literate to be involved and with the changes to the Welfare Reform the Forum is working on a project to offer computer training to street property residents with little or no experience with computers. If you are interested please send us an email.

The Hackney Street Property Forum would also like to hear from any Hackney Homes street property resident that may have any concerns or issues in relation to their street property please contact chair Sue Rolle on hackneystreetpropertyforum@hotmail.co.uk

The restructuring of Hackney Homes resulted in the deletion of the Resident Participation Posts and this meant that the Forum lost their Resident Participation Officer Derek Mckenley. The Forum would like to say a very big thank you to Derek, who played a significant part in the setting up of the Forum and attended all the Forums meetings. His dedication, commitment and support have been invaluable to the Forum over the years and he will be badly missed.

by Sue Rolle (chair Street Property Forum)