

## **Alice Park Community Garden Project (APCG)**

### **September 2021**

The committee have some requests to make with regard to the future of the project in Alice Park

- APCG be allowed to continue to run autonomously as an asset of the Park until such time as the management committee relinquishes responsibility to the Trust Sub-Committee.
- Commercialization of the Barn be restricted, prioritising activities in line with the mission of the project, to allow access for all.
- Bookings for the barn to continue to be managed by APCG. This would include groups with access to the garden who should be approved by APCG & subject to established terms & conditions.
- APCG to be defined as not for profit community Group.
- Annual financial contributions should be subject to available funds.
- The barn is recognized as an asset of the APCG project in Alice Park by permission of the landowner.

Informal correspondence with Trustees from the management committee has revealed that they are tasked by the sole Trustee, the Council, to move to a more financially balanced position. To address this park users are required to give a contribution to the upkeep of the park. This is set out as part of a 10yr plan. An amount of £50/yr has been suggested to the community project to 'demonstrate fairness to other commercial users'.

### **About Alice Park Community Garden**

APCG is a volunteer-led, not for profit community project, the definition of 'commercial' does not apply to us, in fact this would go against our status in relation to grant criteria.

The community garden has been running for the last 10 years in a previously undeveloped and wasteland area. In that time, unassisted, we have fundraised over £30,000 towards development including capital items such as the oak barn, sheds, greenhouses and seating.

This year alone volunteers have overseen £3,000 worth of maintenance improvements & development particularly with regard to the Oak Barn.\*

We have paid approx £3,000 over the years in insurance, securing the barn and users since it was commissioned. This is now an ongoing expense of £200/annum. Barn hire for private use was created to alleviate this & maintenance costs but as a community resource offered at favourable rates, very little has been taken as a contribution & it could be replaced with a donation system. Last year hit a record high of £200 just breaking even with the insurance payment.

The project is independently financed & governed in a sustainable model.

All money raised for the project is put directly back in for community benefit; there is no commercial gain or profit made.

### **In principle support for The Alice Park Trust**

As an integral part of the park APCG would like to contribute towards the managements' financial plan. However APCG **does not** consider itself to be 'commercial' so would ask that this category be reworded. We would also seek reassurance that any payments due to the sub-committee could be renegotiated if we did not have available resources. ( A volunteer-led community project should not be required to prioritise fundraising for this.)

However we agree in principle a £50/year contribution is achievable.

### **The Community Barn**

Alice Park Community Barn & Garden is a Community Asset, commissioned, funded, built, maintained and managed by APCG successfully for the last eight years. It is part of Transition Larkhall, an Unincorporated Community Group (which is a less formal version of a Charity), with no profit-making incentive, and a loyal group of hard-working volunteers.

The group is not looking to capitalise on income from the Barn as it is first & foremost a community resource with the founding principle of access for all; fee paying systems impose economic exclusivity that is against the mission statement and grant conditions for the project.

There is a booking system in place with terms & conditions that give consideration for neighbours, local residents, park visitors and user groups of APCG. All monies from hiring the Community Barn go into maintenance and particularly to pay for insurance for the Barn.

To support vulnerable groups that work in the garden, bookings need to be appropriate and adhere to the Terms and Conditions that APCG requires. We are best placed to deliver this. Therefore **we request that all bookings for the Barn are handled through the current APCG booking system.**

There is concern with regard to priority access to the Barn. User groups paying the Trust SC for access to the Park, have been encouraged to see the Barn as part of their agreement, resulting in double booking, confusion & damage to reputations.

**This is not workable** and highlights the need for clarity with regard to barn hire administration. The Trust's Terms and Conditions for Hire of the Park should exclude use of the Community Barn and direct hirers to contact APCG. Groups may of course book the Barn through APCG if it is available.

### **Regular User Groups**

We want to encourage regular use of the garden and its facilities by appropriate user groups such as Forest School group 'Foxgloves' that uses the wider Park and the community garden. If there is a loss of income to the project through user groups hiring space through the Trust committee this way or through regular garden use by Forest School group 'Foxgloves', perhaps this could be used in lieu of the proposed annual fee? This would be one way to resolve the commercial payments problem.

### **Insurance of Asset**

It has been noted that in the minutes of the AGM for the Trust management sub committee that a 'Wooden Gazebo' is listed as an £14,250 asset i.e: *belonging to the Trust*, If this refers to the APCG Community Oak Barn this should be corrected. If there is duplicate insurance then it would be valuable to address this too.

### **Closing statement**

APCG is a highly regarded, much valued, award winning project, an active resource, which, along with the physical spaces, includes contributions in kind to the community eg: free educational workshops, a wellbeing space and produce. We hope that the committee recognises with pride the contribution the project makes to the profile of the park as a whole & that it is a successful model deserving the continued support & collaboration from the Trust and committee.

This letter is written in a week when the project has received another commendation. The Bath in Bloom judges from the RHS awarded us Gold and overall Champion winner of the Community Category. Representing excellence in horticultural achievement, environmental responsibility & community participation.

This reflects the success, vision and dedication of volunteers over the years and a system that is working well to deliver the very highest standards, championing health, wellbeing, biodiversity & low carbon lifestyles while making a significant contribution to the council's commitment to tackling climate change & providing physical proof that B&NES is genuine in its mission to be actively promoting health for residents and the environment.