

The [National forest gardening scheme](#)

"Bringing Forest Gardens to Life in Urban Settings"

Saturday 29th to Sunday 30th September

Saturday 29th

Part 1 Conference and exchange (Held in [Florence park community centre](#))

13.15-13.25	Welcome, the purpose of our gathering and the timetable
13.25-13.50	Introducing ourselves to know who is in the room and what has brought us here
13.50-15.20	A brief look at public Forest Garden initiatives in urban areas; 1. A look at urban Forest Garden "entry points": Richard Luff 2. Oxford and other projects: Rachel Hammond 3. Older FGs including Leaf St & Birchfields: Tomas Remiarz 4. Worthing/Adur: Andy Edwards 5. West Lydford, Somerset: Mike Pauley 6. RICS Reading: Dave Richards 7. Getting land for forest gardening - working the planning system: Dan Scharf
15.20-15.45	Break
15.45-16.45	Open Space session with 3 working groups exploring topics of mutual interest
16.50-17.00	Captivating technology to engage young people in particular and spread the planting of forest gardens: Open University (OU) technology - Andrea Berardi
17.00-17.25	Training Pathways: how do I/my community group learn more and progress: Tomas Remiarz / Dave Richards / Rachel Hammond

The conference part of the meeting was attended by 26 people (12 Female, 14 Male), with people from several parts of England (no one from other parts of UK) and 1 participant who flew in specially from Germany that morning. The gathering was initiated over lunch with food contributions brought by participants, with some delightful home-grown food dishes shared. After lunch we introduced ourselves to learn more about who was in the room and what had moved us to attend. The conference and exchange started with a series of succinct, engaging and very different presentations giving a very rich and diverse range of perspectives and experiences. This helps us to build a more holistic picture of what the forest gardening experience in publicly accessible urban areas is, and might be in future. This rich food for thought was reflected upon during a break, then allowing us to collectively identify what we wanted to discuss in the groupwork session. 3 groups then worked concurrently on 3 topics: a) community b) how to influence policy, c) how to design forest gardens to support well-being. The synthesis of the discussions is shared in the pictures of the flip charts below.

Group a: Community engagement



The 4 initial questions grouped together under the overarching community engagement question



Group output from discussions

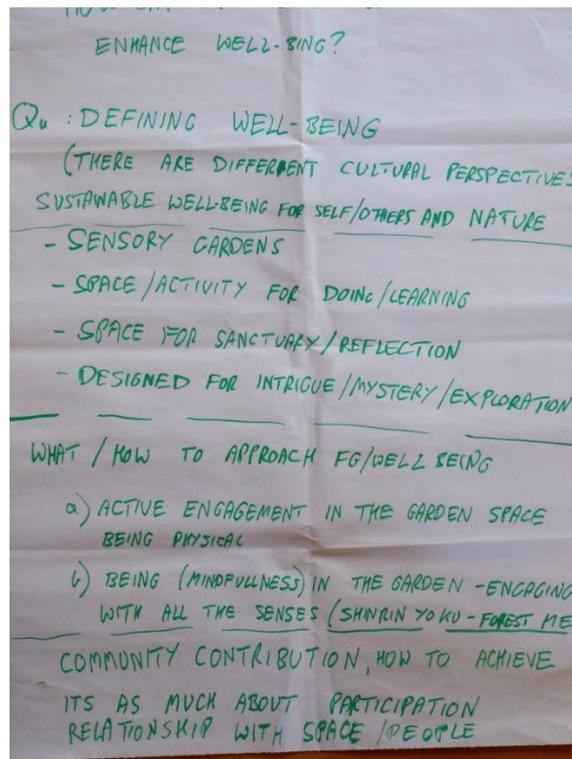
Group b: influencing policies

Influencing policies group:
Issues
 * Access to local authorities
 * Lack of interest in some Housing Associations
 * Lack of planning in planting schemes
 - lack of edible planting.
 * How do we unlock the potential and possibilities?
 * Getting the balance right between people's needs
 & other environment pressures etc.
 * Is there a place for a bigger picture in the plan?
Notes
 On National level some understanding of bio-
 regions eg Watersheds. Influence what you can plant
 where.
 Influence policy - who to contact?
 How do you find out what space is available? -
 Mapping exercise of spaces.
 Biodiversity regions meetings - 18th October Oxford mtg

Information may give evidence to a group who
 wanted to influence policies:
 Case for change Planning for a Toolkit for groups
 Need to read
 • 25 year environ plan -> Evidence - Collect on Supp. Planning Document (SPD)
 • Green growth strategy -> Biodiversity - bioregional Community voice
 • Sust Goals 606s
 Police Crime Social Cohesion -> P
 Clinical Commissioning Group -> L
 Public Health -> A LA
 Natural Environment Service -> N => Housing Association
 Conservation -> E Councillors
 Planning R
 Third Sector
 RISC
 Group decided to see if a Toolkit can be designed to help.

Group output from discussions

Group c: how to design forest gardens to support well- being



Group output from discussions

Connecting/mindfulness walk between our 2 meeting venues

The purpose of the mindfulness/ connecting walk was to introduce participants to the forest garden planted last November in the Oxford city council managed Florence park and connect with nature. Isobel led us through a process of slowing us down so we could immerse ourselves in a more complete sensory engagement with the forest garden space, in essence allowing us to “be” in nature. Our inspiration for this comes from the Japanese practice of [Shinrin Yoku](#) or forest medicine/bathing and is very much in line with the well-being theme which one group had worked upon in the afternoon.

Part 2 AGM for NFGS (Held in [Flos in the park](#))

18.25 - 19.20	AGM. Key elements; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shadow board extension (re)nominations. • Membership. • Constitution overview. • AOB
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The AGM was attended by 16 people, with over half of these currently members of the NFGS Loomio exchange platform. Formal notes are included as the last two pages of this document.

Part 3 Social event (Held in [Flos in the park](#))

19.20-20.45	Light Finger food buffet
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Immediately following the AGM, we stepped into a social space in order to share food, continue our discussions and engage with each other more deeply. Catering was undertaken by the fantastic team of the [Flos cafe](#), “a socially positive café hub promoting ecological sustainability”.

Sunday 30th

Part 4 Hands on engagement in forest garden practice (Held in [Florence park, Oxford](#))

10.30-12.30	Work within the forest space within Florence Park Android phone technology demonstration – the Open University Raspberry
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Another fine autumn day dawned on the Sunday drawing out 16 participants to work with Rachel Hammond of [Incredible Edible Oxford](#) to clear silver weed and grass, plant lower canopy species and mulch around the plants.



During our work we had chance to learn more about the Open University technology and see how an information community and knowledge hub can be created for a particular forest garden space. The work session was rounded off by Tomas Remiarz who asked us what could be included for a proposed forest garden session at the June 2019 [Evolving the forest](#) event. A brief summary of our stand-up discussion follows;

Closing Reflections Participants shared their thoughts on:

- Influencing policies, particularly those of Oxford City Council;
- Biodiversity (Silverweed could be great groundcover);
- Mapping across places and sectors;
- Toolkit(s) and resources – a book?
- Forest gardens and wellbeing via both physical activities & mindful engagement (detachment from stresses of everyday life);
- Resilience of ourselves, groups and Forest Gardens and the need to practice resilience and work with others for diversity and on/near the edges;
- Build accessibility-legibility and revisit the brainstorming of the Launch event; will the associated Networks of the NFGS become a movement? (yes NFGS is a Scheme)
- Engagement and succession via learning, application of principles including mutuality to increase diversity and funding and reduce the reliance on volunteers, increasingly exchange and develop resources to communicate
- 'Facing outwards' from our Forest Gardens to connect to all sorts of people from passers-by and those who have nowhere to go, to the foresters, planners and housing providers ++;
- Attracting people to Forest Gardens via
 - Good Fresh Food (and other yields)
 - Engagement with Nature, Wellbeing and Stewardship of the Environment & Biodiversity;
 - Defending/mending (the climate and life on) the planet, thinking globally & acting locally.

We found this to be an inspiring event where we were able to gather our diverse experience and interests in a way that was mutually supportive and which will act as a springboard for further exchanges. With the work behind us we returned to the Flos in the park café for lunch and to continue our conversations.

NFGS AGM Sat 29th Sep 2018 (18.25-19.20)

Present

Members i.e. registered on Loomio	Non-members
Paul Pivcevic (shadow board chair)	Joe McCrohon
Jane Morris (shadow board)	Phaedra Hardstaff
Philippe Grebert (shadow board treasurer)	Bruce Laurence
Andrea Berardi (shadow board)	Jennifer Schulz
Richard Luff (shadow board)	Rhian Cadvan Jones
Tomas Remiarz	Ella Sparks
Daniel Scharf	
Dave Richards	
Michael Pauley	
Naomi Pauley	

Apologies: Hannah Gardiner (shadow board)

Ben (no response)

Note: It was agreed that membership is effectively initiated by joining the Loomio platform (by invitation from Paul Pivcevic). As we proposing adopting an open to all approach to membership with donations invited it means we considered non-members present to have a voice and voting rights during AGM.*

** (Providing individuals are committed to purpose/principles of NFGS and practice respectful inclusive behaviour.)*

AGM agenda

1. Shadow board/trustees.

- There is a need to continue shadow board (rather than formalise a full board at this stage) as NFGS is still developing its roots (constitution, principles, developing its purpose/added value registration, application for funds).
- The proposed shadow board is continued for another 9 months to allow time to develop deeper roots and affirm the type of organisation we want and need
- (If they are all willing) can current 6 shadow board members continue in their role?
- Dan Scharf proposed all 6 current shadow board members continue, motion seconded by Jane. Motion voted upon with 13 in favour (3 abstention's).
- Additional nominations. Paul Pivcevic invited others present and willing to self-nominate and be seconded. Phaedra Hardstaff nominated herself - Richard Luff seconded her, Joe McCrohon nominated himself - Dan Scharf seconded.
- Duration shadow board should be continued. Paul Pivcevic proposed a 9-month extension. Motion voted upon with no opposition.

2. Review of drafted NFGS charity objects.

- Paul Pivcevic presented these. There were some suggestions made to enhance/adapt these. In particular, relating to the **Purpose** a wording change so that it reads: **To promote and advance Forest Gardening in UK and beyond** (so that it is broader than just planting of Forest Gardens).
- Regarding issues of whether organic should be included or not, it was agreed keep the objects high level, and explore the organic/or not organic debate under principles.
- Paul Pivcevic proposal: accept **objects** in principle, while noting some wordsmithing can be finalised via Loomio. 11 people in favour, 5 abstentions, as shared, **To:**
 - Protect and enhance accessible green space in a way that improves soil health, uses resources responsibly and efficiently, and increases biodiversity;

- Inspire communities with a fresh approach to growing and eating;
 - Explore the impact of these spaces and how they are gardened on well-being;
 - Explore the potential of these spaces as outdoor classrooms;
 - Provide a model for community action that advances SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals); &
 - Contribute to wider debates around practices that support greater food sovereignty.
3. Membership.
- Categories of individual (voting) and organisation (non-voting) proposed with a suggested membership contribution, rather than fees.
 - Travel and time contributions for shadow board members (who currently pay for their own travel costs and contribution to meeting room hire, could also fairly be considered as de facto membership contributions. (We hope funding in future will remove need for shadow board members to pay these costs from their own pocket).
 - Loomio is the de facto membership and is effectively the way we manage membership.
 - Discussion around removal of people from NFGS (and so Loomio). There is a need for a code of conduct and mechanism widely agreed for removal/disciplining people.
 - There have been 2 people removed from Loomio to date. Rather than go through somewhat sensitive matters, Paul will explain more about this at next shadow board meeting. (Please note that Shadow board meetings are open for all members to attend, though clearly it is expected shadow board members will attend and work on business matters on behalf of NFGS.)
 - Membership means you need to aspire to NFGS principles and working with others. However, we need to be careful that we don't constrain ourselves to just having polite conversation, there needs to be an element of robust exchange and differing views heard. Being easily offended by differences does not help us but we need a way to manage difference of opinion,
 - Andrea will share code of conduct from OU. Suggestion that there is a need for more work to be done on this and make proposal about how to handle this on Loomio. (This was not formally voted upon but those that expressed a view wanted this looked at further).
4. Constitution. Anni Kelsey and Paul Pivcevic worked with on this. It has been shared on Loomio. It is a long dry document (laid out in accordance with Charity commission legal requirements). Paul Pivcevic requested others to look at it and comment.
5. AOB
- Loomio as a platform. Some find this hard to work with. Noted but no agreement on how we handle this.
 - Do we need a secretary as a board member? Discussion and agreement; no perhaps not, rather it's about sharing workload between shadow board members/trustees.
 - Next shadow board meeting will be before Christmas. Action: Paul Pivcevic to convene.
 - As some of us will attend the [Oxford Real Farming conference Jan 2019](#). We could plan to hold a side meeting of the NFGS (details to be shared later). Please let us know what we should be thinking about discussing /working on when we meet.
 - Martin Crawford's maintains a forest gardeners' network too. What is the relationship with NFGS and how do we not compete with him but rather complement? (The key difference is that NFGS focusses on publicly accessible FG, rather than privately owned.)
 - Proposal: thanks for organising this whole conference/AGM/social/practice 1-day meeting.

END