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(further information on our blog: londonrdstationpartnership.wordpress.com)



1. Tell us about your residents' involvement in your street/community garden.

Local residents founded the London Road Station Partnership (LRSP) in 2011 under Southern Rail's station partnership scheme. We have created two gardens (1 ornamental, 1 edible), set up 2 public herb planters, 3 ornamental planters on the platform, and planted up tree pits at the front of the station. We also adopted 4 abandoned municipal planters at nearby Preston Circus and maintained these until their removal in February 2015.

Our gardening at London Road Station is very visible, so local people frequently **drop by** for a chat, gardening advice or simply to see how the gardens are growing. Several children from the local primary school come by regularly to sow seeds, water and try produce. Residents frequently **bring plants and surplus garden supplies** for us; our garden is full of 'gifts': Granny Joan's geum, Marlene's marigolds and hanging baskets, David's 'rescued' fuchsias. We rarely garden now without visitors dropping in, which reinforces our belief that the most important role of our activity is to provide a **positive community meeting point**.

Local people **get involved in different ways**: e.g. many neighbours do not have gardens but want to compost so we set up a **community composting facility** in 2012. Many of our 30 registered composters are younger people living in small flats who also don't have the time to get involved with direct gardening.

Neighbours, friends and visitors also get involved in our **regular 'open' events**: e.g. in June 2014, we organised a celebration of our railway line's 150th birthday in June attended by around 150 people; we opened for The Garden Gadabout; and organised a tea party in August for neighbours with a group of young volunteers from National Citizen Service (NCS/Albion in the Community) who had created a mosaic in the station underpass. At all of these events, the gardens are open for visitors to explore and we offer cakes and biscuits made with garden produce. Residents and others thus get involved in a wide variety of ways, according to their skills, interests and motivations.

2. How many residents/ businesses are part of your group

A group of around **10 local people** comprise the **regular gardening group**; a much wider group of around **30 registered friends and supporters** are involved in composting, helping with events or coming by when they can (e.g. relief watering).

We work in partnership with **Southern Rail**. We collaborate with **our local pub**, *The Signalman* (we plant their mini-planters, they loan us tables for events). Our **local joinery** (A A Taylor) donates wood and has helped with e.g. construction of tree pit surrounds.

3. How regularly do you meet?

- We meet regularly on **Tuesday afternoon**, usually **once a week** during the gardening season.
- We have a **watering rota** for LRSP gardens.
- We have regular **get-togethers** (Harvest supper in Sept/Oct, Xmas party in Dec, AGM in Jan/Feb, Planting Plans over tea in March, plus our **public events**: see above)

4. How does your group fundraise?

- We have continued with **self-funding**, with occasional **support** in kind from Southern Railway.
- Since 2013, we have benefitted from **awards** from Southern Railway (Best Community Station 2013) and BH City in Bloom (2nd place Best Community Garden 2013, 3rd place Best community Garden 2014).
- We received funding to support volunteers as part of Brighton & Hove Food Partnership/Big Dig scheme (2013-14).
- We also invite **small donations** from visitors at Open Events, and have received some unsolicited donations from neighbours.
- We benefit from **donations in kind** from local residents and businesses.
- In the past, we have applied for **small grants** for various projects, e.g. 2012 funding from Brighton & Hove Food Partnership for public herb planters and support for mini-orchard planting; 2013 Community First for Preston Circus planters and water butt.

5. How does your group make decisions

- We continue to make day-to-day decisions together **informally at our Tuesday sessions** (over a cup of tea after gardening) or by e-mail consultation. We use **e-mail** to canvass views on decisions generally.
- The **Coordinator** may take decisions, usually **after e-mail consultation** with the gardening group or wider LRSP membership, or discussion with the **other two members of the LRSP Committee**.
- Based on our constitution, we hold an **AGM for all LRSP members** once a year to review decisions taken and undertake forward planning.
- We use **our blog, Twitter** and **email** to let everybody/anybody know what we are doing.
- We **consult regularly** with Southern Railway and Sussex Community Rail Partnership (umbrella organisation for station partnerships) and **report** on our activities to the local

residents' association **DRARA**, to **Brighton-Seaford Community Rail Partnership** (stakeholder group bringing together local councils, rail users and other local transport providers) and to **London Road Local Action Team** (in particular in connection with Preston Circus). Neighbouring **Southdown Rise Residents Association** (SRRRA) relays our blog-posts on their website.

6. How does your group contribute to community spirit?

- As noted above, the spaces we garden have come to function as points for **positive community interaction**: people enjoy the planting, talk to the gardeners, come to our events, give something back (compost, plants, time), creating a virtuous circle. When people see care, they care. We frequently get thanked for 'making the area such a nice place to live'.
- Most importantly, the gardens provide an opportunity for **different people** to interact *as people*: a lady from a local supported group home gardens with us; we garden outside our local pub, joking with patrons about not feeding cigarette-butts to the begonias; we've chatted regularly with 'our' local street-drinkers who help us with lifting and carrying; we've worked with a group of 16 year olds to create a mosaic at the station (NCS/Albion in the Community project); we are often visited by parents with very small children; station users from all walks of life pass the time of day. It may be a cliché, but gardens and gardening do seem to **bring out the best in people** and this is what we try to nurture.
- We also try to contribute to community spirit by **celebrating our local 'sense of place'** and the traditions within which we work. We have **broadened our activity** from just gardens to helping maintain and generate interest in the wider station area, e.g. through painting out graffiti, sweeping up at the station and planting up tree pits in Shaftesbury Place. We've developed a **local history** group, which has researched local railway history and the history of gardening at stations. Our 8 posters (on our blog) will shortly form a permanent display on station platforms, we have also given talks to local residents' groups (SRRRA, NLCA) and our station/gardens will feature in a guided walk for Heritage Open Day 13/9/15
- We also try to develop community spirit by **sharing knowledge and experience with others**: e.g. we've talked to other local people wishing to set up community gardens (Stanford Avenue Community Garden 2013, Rosehill Terrace residents 2014, Hollingbury residents 2015, Francis Street residents 2015), and we've got involved with other projects and other groups, e.g. networking with Harvest; working with BHCC and Duke of York's cinema on the design of a new planter at Preston Circus; and setting up a 'Friends of ...' group to maintain and promote Brighton Greenway.
- We **welcome all people and all contributions**. We do what we do with who, and what, we have. We may have faced some of the perennial challenges of community gardening: participants' bad backs and shoulders, pressures from other commitments, limits on resources (e.g. we don't have access to mains water), occasional damage (from people sitting on our planters while waiting for their train) but we still delight in the positive responses we get from our neighbours and visitors, and the sense of local ownership, camaraderie and motivation the gardens continue to generate.



Shared challenges: building bean poles and the weekly 'to do' list.



Sharing knowledge: (left) young participants on NCS scheme learning about community gardening, August 2014; (centre) learning how to prune apple trees with Bryn from Brighton Permaculture Trust, February 2014; (right) planting late lettuce seeds, August 2014.



Achievement and celebration: (top left); planting at *The Signalman*, May 2014 ; (top right) celebrations for 150th line anniversary, June 2014; (bottom left) participants on NCS scheme with their fruit/veg cakes and installing tree pit surrounds, Aug 2014.

