

LOWER CENTRAL GARDENS TRUST BOARD



Report subject	Lower Central Gardens Trust Board May Report
Meeting date	20 May 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The report provides service update information to the Lower Gardens Trust Board to demonstrate the Council commitment to maintain the public gardens known as "The Lower Central Gardens" in Bournemouth for the recreation and enjoyment of the public in accordance with the terms of the Charity Scheme made by the Charity Commission on the 13 May 2011.</p> <p>Items as requested by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed Scheme of Officer Delegations - Events programme updates & new proposal - Concessions cashless payment accessibility - Planting - Operational service updates
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that the Trustees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) approve the Officer Scheme of Delegations for operational activities. Any policy changes or new activities are to be referred to the trust board for discussion. b) note the annual events programme, including those already approved by the board and continuation of other annual activities. c) provide a recommendation decision on the proposed Summer Skate trial event. d) review the established perennial planting noting BCP Council budgetary, resource and facility changes and advise on any supplementary proposals the Board wishes to pursue.
Reason for recommendations	To allow the smooth running of the gardens, continued public enjoyment of garden events and for time sensitive matters to be dealt with by officers.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Hadley; Councillor Mike Cox

Corporate Director	Interim Vacancy
Report Authors	Kate Langdown – Director of Environment Amanda Barrie – Director of Commercial Operations Helen Wildman – Head of Leisure & Events Matti Raudsepp – Director of Customer & Property
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For update, information and decision

Background

1. The Lower & Central Gardens Trust (LCGT) was created in 1873 under an Indenture (legal agreement) between BCP Council's predecessor body the Bournemouth Commissioners and Sir George Eliot Meyrick Tapps Gervis. The day-to-day control and management of the Lower Central Gardens and hence the charity, was varied by s.29 Bournemouth Borough Council Act 1985. This vested in the Council the general power to use, control and manage the Lower Central Gardens.
2. The object of the charity is the provision of open space, and public building for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Delegation of authority

3. Further to the Draft Scheme of Officer Delegations shared with the Board in March 2024. The LCGT board is asked to feedback and advise on any further amends with the aim of reaching formal authorisation of the delegation of operational activities as laid out in Appendix 1 to the relevant directorates within the Council to support the timely operational delivery of functions and services that reflects the way of working since the Charity was established.

Concessions cashless payment accessibility

4. The BCP Council concessions within the Lower Gardens (1 catering kiosk and 1 mini-golf course) are operated by its Seafront Service, using cashless payment systems. Over recent years we have seen a significant reduction in the number of people wanting to pay with cash and like many operators, 4 years ago the Council adopted a card only payment system at Seafront outlets.

Most of our customers prefer to pay by card or phone, which has proven to be more efficient, with contactless payments enabling faster transactions and reducing queues. This also means we do not incur the costs or security risks of storing and handling cash, enabling us to operate a more efficient service for residents and visitors. To help inform visitors, our websites advise that we only accept card payments and signage is displayed at each of our outlets and payment stations.

Following a successful motion to Council asking for a review of cash-only payments across Council services, we will be working with colleagues in finance to understand accessibility implications for those without regular access to banking services.

LCG 2024 Activities and Events

Changes Are Made - 19th June

5. Event raising awareness of Knife Crime, details are still being confirmed but planned activities within the Lower Gardens is entertainment from the bandstand.

Bournemouth Air Festival - 29th – 31st August

6. No change to previous years with Beat Retreat and unarmed combat as well as a small bar with entertainment in the bandstand

Arts By The Sea Festival – 27th – 29th September

7. Installations and walkabout entertainment as well as a program of music from the bandstand.

Christmas Tree Wonderland – 14th November 2024 – 1st January 2025

8. Ice Rink and Christmas lighting installations throughout the Lower Gardens as in previous years.
9. As per previous years there are few smaller events planned such as duck race's or bandstand performances.

Trial Event Proposal Summer Skate

10. A proposal to BCP Council has been submitted for a summer roller rink with bar, big screen and catering for six weeks during July and August in the Lower Gardens. The proposed dates for this are Friday 19th July – Monday 26th August 2024.
11. Summer SKATE aims to be an inclusive event, which supports Dorset Mind. It activates health, which matches the Bournemouth Gardens heritage. Not only SKATE but a supporting calendar of events includes yoga mornings, a big screen to show a family movie nights, free to attend SKATE sessions for local school's and hospice charities and plus events such as 80's nights, Motown/soul nights, and even SKATE with film nights.
12. The proposed event aligns with the ambitions of Bournemouth Town Centre Partnership Group. A multi-agency initiative aimed to deliver action for the town centre, made up of key partners including BCP Council, community groups and organisations.

Site and grass protection

13. Environment Directorate have been initially consulted and have raised concerns as to the proposed area within gardens, which will still be recovering from ground damage from the ice rink given the extended wet ground conditions experienced meaning the grass won't take the extra use. It is likely to kill off the new growth and be detrimental to the look of the gardens leaving a large area of dead grass. The events and parks team have however proposed a potential alternative site within the gardens for consideration.
14. The event proposer has composed a grass protection plan, and a tree protection plan.

Big Screen

15. The big screen is proposed to show family friendly films with a classification of U and promotion of local events and businesses.

Catering

16. The catering proposed is a catering unit serving tacos to include vegan and vegetarian options

Bar

17. The proposed bar operating hours are from 1100hrs to 2200hrs offering a mix of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks as well as free drinking water.

Gardens Planting

Background

18. BCP Council moved to perennial planting across its managed parks and open spaces following a decision made by Council in February 2023 to remove funding for annual bedding and alternatively invest in a perennial planting approach to support

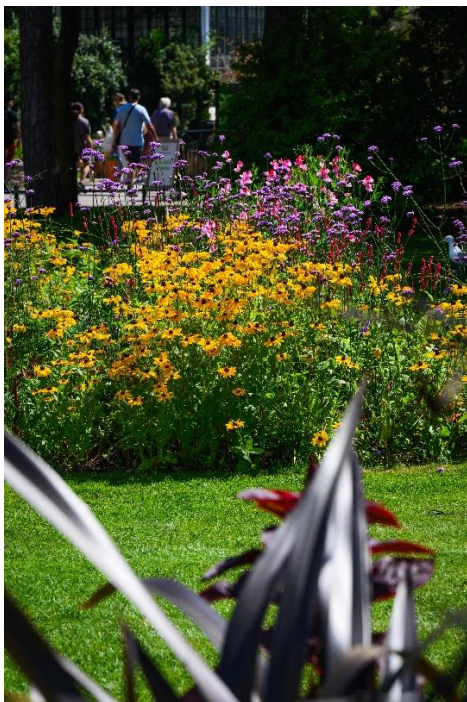
alignment with the Council's Climate and Ecological declaration across council-maintained flower beds in all our destination parks and spaces including LCG.

19. No formal legacy Council or BCP Council policy for planting is known to have existed planting having historically been designed and delivered as part of operational decisions within approved Council budget with styles and themes changing over years in line with The Bournemouth Borough Act 1985 Section 26 (3) stating *The Council may purchase or acquire botanical specimens and exhibits*.
20. In December 2023 a decision was taken to permanently cease the operation of a plant nursery at King's Park Drive (King's Park Nursery) which prior to the decision to move to perennials in February 2023 was the subsidised provider of LCG bedding plants, and instead seek alternative community uses for the site in line with the Bournemouth Borough Council Act 1985.
21. Perennial planting was introduced in LCG alongside other parks in Spring 2023 with planting continuing to establish itself.
What do we mean by flowering perennial planting?
22. Perennial herbaceous plants, shrubs and grasses that have a long life-cycle and are more suited to the climate and ecology of the site. BCP Council is not alone in its approach with many Council's having already or seeking to make the change which much of the horticultural industry is moving towards. Chelsea Flower Show showcasing the interest created through perennial planting schemes.
23. We understand this change may not have been to everyone's taste, however similarly many others understand and support the need to think about sustainability, the way we look after our planet and the importance of providing habitat as well as year-round interest in our beds. We will continuously review this as these beds mature and thrive, adding additional colour and interest with bulbs. In Autumn 2023 5000 bulbs were planted to enhance the colour show of the new planting including Daffodils and Crocus.
24. A further 5000 bulbs are proposed for planting for Spring 2025, Tulips as examples to provide enhanced Spring/Summer vibrancy to the beds and surrounds.

Benefits	Disadvantages
Improves ecological biodiversity throughout the town, helps pollinating insects	Some garden users may prefer the aesthetics of bedding plants
Provides flowers, foliage and texture throughout the year	Period of establishment required
Opportunity to engage our place shaping GI strategy and support realisation of BCP's Climate and Ecological declaration	
Greater spectrum of plant choice e.g. foliage, flower, seed head, height from and seasonal variation and sensory impacts	
Robust and adaptable to changing weather patterns	
Positive impact on our carbon footprint. Reduced watering, minimal topsoil replenishment required, less plastics	
Plants can be kept, divided, and reused	

25. Summer 2023 Photos – First season of establishment





26. Should the Board wish to explore further self-funding enhancements to the existing planting and beyond that proposed to be funded by the Council opportunities include identifying and working with community groups, volunteers and organisations to enhance provision and/or exploration of a flower bed memorial scheme initiative to compliment the current bench, plaque and tree memorial policy.

Public Conveniences

27. Evidence of drug related anti-social behaviour in the Lower Gardens public toilets, particularly affecting the Changing Places facility has been identified. This can regrettably result in the facility not being available on occasions or left in a condition that is unacceptable for the needs of legitimate users. Increased cleansing visits are now being introduced and additional support from the anti-social behaviour team and Police is being sought in order to address the issues arising.

Graffiti Removal

28. Work has commenced within the LCG in line with summer preparations to remove graffiti from Council owned assets and with agreement from utilities assets. Work already completed includes the bandstand and the cafe building with works now underway to action the green (power) boxes in the shrub borders and the old underpass walls and gates leading to Bobbies.

Litter Bin Provision

29. The lease agreement for the provision of litter bins within LCG has come to an end. The existing bin stock is now largely beyond economical life and in a poor visual condition with an annual cost of the provision is £20,800.
30. Following the success of the introduction of the 1100lt euro bins in 2019 which reduced the levels of uncontained waste, enabled the ability to service bins more frequently via RCV collections, coupled with a forthcoming Litter Bin policy across BCP to standardise bin provision, an interim operational decision has been taken to not renew the contract at this time. The site will be monitored this Summer for any adverse impact and any additional capacity needs actioned.
31. Officers are working with Planning Services to explore the use of wooden casing surrounds to house the 1100lt bins to improve their aesthetic appearance whilst maintaining the enhanced capacity these units provide the gardens. This also benefits from a lower cost of replacement in the event of vandalism or fire. Explorations are also underway to consider the feasibility of a housed bin storage area along Exeter Lane to resolve the current unsightly lines of bins outside the BH2 entrance to Lower Gardens.

Summary of financial implications

32. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

33. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Operational changes applied are not in conflict with the overall objective of the Trust, that being the provision of open space for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Summary of human resources implications

34. There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

35. The land contained within the Trust continues to be managed in a way that seeks to protect its future with the implemented move to more sustainable planting to improve biodiversity and growing impacts of climate change and weather conditions.

Summary of public health implications

36. Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can help to improve physical and mental health by encouraging individuals to walk more, to play sport, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment. Parks create important opportunities for social integration and health and wellbeing outcomes. Lower Central Gardens positively contributes towards this outcome.

Summary of equality implications

37. Safe access to the Public Conveniences including the Changing Places facility will be monitored following additional activities and investment as outlined in the paragraph 27 of the report.

Summary of risk assessment

38. Access to public conveniences to be monitored.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Scheme of Delegations