

LOWER CENTRAL GARDENS TRUST BOARD



Report subject	Lower Central Gardens Trust Board Spring Meeting
Meeting date	23 March 2026
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 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment process for Co-Opted Members for Trust Board • Events programme • Arts & Makers market • Urban Forest Strategy and Nature Recovery Strategy application within the Gardens. • Council Directorates updates <p>The report provides information to note whilst also seeking support and approval to proceed with workstreams.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>(a) The Trustees approve the advertisement and commencement of recruitment of new Co-Opted Board Members</p> <p>(b) The Trustees approve the formation of a sub group to develop site plans for the gardens to support deliverables of adopted Council strategies building sustainability and improving nature and health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>(c) The Trustees approve the approach for the 2026 Art & Makers market.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>To ensure the Trust Board operates effectively.</p> <p>To enable the development of plans to support the sustainability of the gardens for future generations and wildlife.</p> <p>To enable Officers to progress with an offer that enables the makers market area to have an offer for the 2026/27 season.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Hadley Portfolio Holder for Climate Response Environment & Energy Councillor Richard Herrett – Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton – Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Kate Langdown – Director of Environment Amanda Barrie – Director of Commercial Operations Helen Wildman – Head of Leisure & Events Martin Whitchurch – Strategic Lead for Greenspaces & Conservation
Wards	Bournemouth Central
Classification	Update & 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 for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Appointment process for Co-Opted Members for Trust Board

3. In accordance with the Rules of the Trust Board and in line with current vacancies, the Trust Board may in addition to the maximum number of five elected Trust Board Members appoint not less than three nor more than four co-opted Trust Board Members.
4. Each appointment of a co-opted Trust Board Member shall be made at a meeting of the Council Cabinet acting as Trustee for the Charity and shall take effect from the end of that meeting.
5. Co-opted Trust Board Members shall not be members of the Council but shall be entitled to vote on resolutions of the Trust Board. An initial term of appointment is restricted to three years. Notice of intent to resign from the role can be given at any time, no 'period of notice is required'. This is a voluntary role with financial reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses to attend Board and any other associated supporting meetings.

6. It is proposed that the opportunities should be advertised on the BCP Council recruitment website and promoted through Community Action Partnerships, Bournemouth Town Centre Citizen Panel and other suitable routes as examples.
7. A draft advertisement and role description has been produced, see Appendix 1. Officers seek comment on the documents and consideration of approval to proceed.

2026/2027 Events programme

8. As per previous years there are a number of small minor events planned such as duck races and bandstand performances dealt with by the events team under the delegated authority for Commercial Operations.
9. In addition to these points 10 – 14 detail the larger events planned.
10. South Coast Makers Market (1 day monthly 2026) – new small event proposal for 6 stalls within the tunnel path of local businesses and charities as an extension to the Bobby's market using hardstanding.
11. Bournemouth Bay Run (22 March 2026) – annual running event with the race village in front of the bandstand.
12. Arts by the Sea Festival (26 March / 25 & 26 September 2026) – annual festival with arts installations and performances throughout the Lower Gardens, Seafront and Town Centre. 26 March will see a single artist performance as a promotional event.
13. Run Bournemouth (10 & 11 October 2026) – annual running event primarily along the seafront between Bournemouth and Hengistbury Head with some elements utilising Pavilion Terrace, Street Food Corner and Pinewalk Bandstand.
14. Bournemouth Christmas (Nov & Dec 2026) – annual Christmas event consisting of ice rink and lighting through the Lower Gardens.
15. Members of the committee recently met to discuss future events they would like to see within the Lower Central Gardens.
16. Following this, the events team are taking forward a targeted promotion of bandstand opportunities to include both dance and musical performances with an aim to increase usage throughout the summer.
17. The Events Framework is now in place with a public guidance document for organising events on Council land for any community organiser looking to utilise the Lower Gardens.

Arts & Makers market

18. Following the discussion at the last meeting, Commercial Operations took forward the part year review with the trial operator for the Arts & Makers market.
19. The operator has decided not to continue past the trial and therefore there is not currently an operator for the 2026 season.
20. One of the existing artists who exhibits, has come forward with a proposal to run the market on a year's trial as an individual. Due to a procurement exercise already having been undertaken previously, we are able to work on an expression of interest basis and have received no other expressions to date.
21. The artist would pay a small site hire fee, taking all the booking income, marketing the offer and managing the site on a daily basis.

22. Any surplus from the bookings would be invested into the promotion and maintenance enabling a cost neutral operation for the Council.
23. This proposal enables the community to manage and run this valuable asset in the Lower Gardens.
24. The alternative options would be to either close the market or manage it in house which is resource intensive and a staffing cost to the council.
25. A review will be taken after the 2026 season on the operation.

Urban Forest Strategy and Nature Recovery Strategy application within the Gardens

26. The Council has adopted key two Greenspace Strategies (details of which can be found within Background papers). As a key part of BCP's historic public parks and open spaces LCGT could play an important role in realising these priorities and ambitions for the future sustainability of the gardens, its wildlife and ecology alongside wellbeing health benefits to its users.
27. The Board is asked to support the establishment of a subgroup to develop on site plans for the gardens to support the aims of the adopted strategies, aligned where appropriate to support the national goal of protecting or managing 30 per cent of land, rivers and seas for nature by 2030.

Council Directorates updates Grounds Maintenance

28. The team are just concluding the annual Winter works programme as part of planned maintenance activities.
29. Following the dismantling and removal of the Ice Rink and associated structures, the process of grounds reinstatement commenced in mid February when weather conditions permitted. Compressed air decompaction has been carried out across the entire site to open the soil structure up and increase drainage along with repairs and reinstatement to benches and knee railings removed to facilitate the event.
30. Teams have now commenced work to level the ground where needed, selective weed spraying, seeding, and fertilising. This work will be supported by ongoing watering and hand seeding any patches that don't take from the original sowing as required. Full restoration timelines will be subject to ongoing weather conditions.

Summary of financial implications

31. All reinstatement/repairs to the gardens following an event are paid for by the event organisers including specialist contracted services.

Summary of legal implications

32. The recruitment of co-opted members of the Trust will be undertaken utilising the Council's recruitment system. Interviews will be undertaken by Trust Board Members and Officers will recommendations for appointment made to Cabinet for appointment.

Summary of human resources implications

33. Resource within the existing Strategic Greenspace team will be allocated to support the development of delivery plans for tree planting and wider nature recovery activities to be co designed with Trust Board Members.

Summary of sustainability impact

34. The land contained within the Trust continues to be managed in a way that seeks to protect its future with sustainable planting to improve biodiversity and growing impacts of climate change.
35. The development of a delivery plan to replace and increase tree canopy cover alongside wider nature recovery initiatives will further support the environmental sustainability of the gardens

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.
37. The implementation of deliverables within LCG to support the Council's Urban Forest Strategy and Nature Recovery Strategy will bring positive evidenced public health benefits.

Summary of equality implications

38. There are no equality implications from this report, the LCG remains a public open space for the benefit of all to enjoy.

Summary of risk assessment

39. A decision not to progress the Arts and Makers Market expression of interest received would result in no current operator being identified for the 2026 season.
40. Previous expressions of interest in the independent board membership roles have not realised formally interest, the Board has historically received limited interest in the roles available. Interest levels in this formal process will be back to a future board meeting.

Background papers

[BCP Council Urban Forest Strategy](#)

[Dorset Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

Appendices

Appendix One – Draft Advertisement and Role Description for Co-Opted Board Member