

LOWER CENTRAL GARDENS TRUST BOARD



Report subject	Lower Central Gardens Trust Board June 2026 Meeting
Meeting date	29 June 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 • Concessions update • Changing Places facility access • Anti social behaviour update • Gardens maintenance updates • Officer action on planting plan options • Utilities request – rerouting of gas main <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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The board notes the operational activities underway within the gardens 2. The board approve officers progress easement with SGN to re-route a gas pipe. 3. Agree meeting dates for working group to bring forward greenspace planting scheme for the gardens.
Reason for recommendations	To ensure the Trust Board operates effectively and statutory utilities can maintain service infrastructure.

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 Claire Seymour – Anti Social Behaviour & Nuisance Manager
Wards	Bournemouth Central;
Classification	For update 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 for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Appointment process for Co-Opted Members for Trust Board

3. Following the last board meeting an advertisement for the vacant roles of Co-Opted Members was advertised between 14 April – 31 May 2026 and promoted by Communities Directorate. Seven expressions of interest have been formally received which are currently being considered by officers and the trust board.

Events and Bandstand programme update

4. In line with the objective to increase bandstand performances, the Events Team have now contacted all previous performers and sent out awareness through the Bay Run event reaching 4,000 residents.
5. Artwork is currently being finalised to promote opportunities through the Community Action Network newsletter, and BCP Council social media posts are being developed.
6. Work is ongoing for a sponsorship package to assist with longer term funding of performances.
7. We currently have 44 bookings for 2026 which is over double the performances from 2025.

8. Bournemouth Writing Festival have applied as a new event for 2027 (23-26 April) requesting permission for their poetry marquee to be sited on the space used by the ice rink. This will include poetry performances and drop in workshops.

Art and Markers Market

9. A tree came down over the Art and Makers market on 9 April 2026 which caused damage to some of the canopies and stalls. The market was not open at the time.
10. Work has been undertaken to make the market area safe including a check of the remaining structure.
11. There are 9 stalls out of action and costs to replace these are being sought however, it is noted that funding will need to be found for this.
12. There are 29 stalls remaining in use and the market reopened on 30 May 2026.

Concessions update

13. An internal operational decision has been taken to centralise management of concessions across the Council. Kiosk 2 & 3 and Picnic Park Deli within the gardens will be transferred from Environment to Commercial Operations.
14. Kiosks 2 & 3 are due to be retendered in 2027. Picnic Park Deli is currently operated on a tenancy at will arrangement, whilst resources are identified to take retendering processes forward.

Changing Places facility access

15. The Lower Gardens public toilets have been subject to repeated incidents of anti-social behaviour, including alcohol and drug misuse, rough sleeping, and vandalism.
16. In particular, the Changing Places facility (accessed via a RADAR key) has been increasingly misused. RADAR keys have become more readily available, resulting in unauthorised access. This has led to genuine users frequently finding the facility either locked from the inside or vandalised to the extent that essential equipment is not operational.
17. To address these issues, a new video-enabled door entry system has been installed and is currently undergoing testing with the out-of-hours team. The intention is for the facility to be fully operational and available for legitimate users from early July 2026.

Anti Social Behaviour team update

18. The Councils Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Team currently has two new ASB Injunction applications listed for court, relating to some of the issues identified in the Lower Gardens. Operational capacity has recently been enhanced with the recruitment of two additional CSAS Officers and two Transport Support Officers, funded by Morebus and accredited with CSAS powers.
19. Over the past three months, Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Officers (CSAS) have undertaken a number of engagements in the area, and attended incidents as follows:
 - 5 general ASB incidents
 - 3 Community Protection Warning (CPW) breaches
 - 1 service of legislation

- 2 drug/alcohol-related incidents
 - 3 begging incidents
 - 3 rough sleeper incidents (including 1 referral to support services)
20. Dorset Police are currently investigating a reported rape in Bournemouth's Lower Gardens. The incident took place in the early hours of Friday, June 5, 2026. Suspect has been located and arrested.
21. The Gardens remain a regular hotspot for patrols, with a minimum of two patrols per day connecting the Square to Pier Approach.

Gardens maintenance updates

22. Health & safety hi visibility re-painting of steps (step nosing and edging) throughout the gardens is currently being progressed. The service is awaiting final quotations from providers before awarding works. The service is working towards completing works ahead of the summer holiday period.
23. An audit of the lights within Lower and Central gardens has been undertaken at the end of May 2026. Of the 120 lights within the gardens 12 faults have been reported for actioning by the councils appointed contractor.
24. The grassed area temporarily utilised by the Ice Rink has recovered well this year. Improvements to the aeration system used has improved the ground which has aided the recovery.





25. Temporary summer litter bin provision enhancements have been sited throughout the gardens to support anticipated addition waste volumes. A Project Officer has been appointed to deliver Phase one of the wider BCP Council Litter Bin Provision review, this will include a review of litter bin, types, sizes and locations within the gardens for the future.

Officer action on planting plan options

26. Further to the last board meeting. Officers across strategic greenspace, grounds maintenance and arboriculture met in the gardens to commence draft plans for future planting. These plans will be presented to the working group to develop further.

Utilities request – rerouting of gas main

27. Southern Gas Networks (SGN) need to re-route a gas main and are looking to do this through Lower Gardens as per the rough route below (subject to detailed searches for other utilities). This will be an easement, a right in perpetuity, to access, repair and replace the main. Once laid there would be no impact on the public's use of the Gardens
28. SGN have approached the Council to start the process and have been advised that their work would need to be carried out between Jan-Mar 2027 to avoid busy times and events.
29. Officers ask that the Board notes the project and agrees for it to go ahead be subject to final legal approvals including a Disposal of Public Open Space notice. The one-off premium for the pipe would be at the national rates with our reasonable fees and disposal notice costs covered by SGN.



Summary of financial implications

30. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
31. Costs for repairs to the Arts and Markers Market will be brought back to the board for further consideration.

Summary of legal implications

32. Any agreement to an easement will be subject to appropriate legal processes.

Summary of human resources implications

33. The recruitment of co-opted members of the Trust is in process. Interviews will be undertaken by Trust Board Members and Officers will recommendations for appointment made to Cabinet/Council for appointment.

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, which will be developed by a working group before being presented back to the Trust Board for decision making.

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 work underway with the working group 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. Officers continue to work with Dorset Police to ensure visitors can safely enjoy the park.

Summary of risk assessment

39. The Council continues to work with partner organisations to support ensuring the gardens remain a safe and welcoming place for our communities and visitors to enjoy.

Background papers

None

Appendices

None