

# Public Document Pack

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**THURSDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER, 2019**

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

**Agenda No    Item**

5.    **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Pages 3 - 22)**

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

*Please note that speakers should register their interest to speak by midday two days before the meeting.*

*The Chairman has requested that a written submission of the content/subject of the presentation be submitted to [committee.services@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@north-herts.gov.uk) by the above deadline.*

*Those selected to make presentations will be advised the day before the meeting.*

Please find attached written submissions

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## Presentation to NHDC Environmental Panel On Biodiversity and Food



Transition Town Letchworth supports people to Grow their own food, promoting **organic** methods.



**Grower's Market** – a monthly stall for swapping or selling home grown food surplus or simply buying very fresh local fruit and veg. Small plants are also sold at the start of the season.



**Letchworth Organic Gardeners**  
(affiliated to Garden Organic)  
- a support and social group for people growing their own produce

**Community Apple Pressings** – the local community is invited to bring apples they've picked from their garden, community orchards and get involved in scrapping, pressing and bottling.

**Educational Allotment for Families** - With the support of NHDC, and, if TTL are successful a grant from the Heritage Foundation, TTL are converting a vacant allotment on the Woolgrove site into an Educational Allotment where at any time up to four local families will be supported by TTL volunteers to start growing their own food using organic methods.

## Letchworth Heritage Foundation is an EdiCitNet Partner

Examples of some of the expertise accessible through this European Programme



EdiCitNet.com



Brighton and Hove Food Partnership – Community Growing / Cooking Courses



Brighton University – Food Strategy and Town Mapping



Nabolagshager, Oslo

Tackling urban challenges by facilitating green job opportunities for youth, creating rooftop gardens, integrating vulnerable groups, and increasing urban biodiversity.



Andernach – started its Edible City project in 2010

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# Supporting Local People to Grow Food

## NHDC Allotments / Compost Access



- Information available on NHDC website suggests there are plenty of vacant NHDC allotments.
- In Letchworth the Heritage Foundation also have allotment but no vacancies.
- Heritage Foundation allotments are £46 a year, the NHDC rate is £140.

Produce a strategy to increase NHDC allotment uptake. The strategy could consider:

- A marketing campaign to raise awareness of existence of allotments.
- Addressing issues, like vandalism, if these exist and are deterring people from renting allotments.
- Review if the price is set too high (supply is exceeding demand).
- Consider if more half size allotments could increase take-up.
- If TTL educational allotment proves successful consider setting up educational allotments on other sites with high vacancy rates.

Consider setting up local compost sites on estates where gardens are small, allowing residents to

- Avoid the brown bin charge for taking what may be very small amounts of garden waste.
- Provide a local source of compost for people to use in pots, gardens and allotments.
- Reduce the carbon associated with collecting and transporting garden waste.

# Council Planting Schemes - Wildlife



In the city of Trier many green strips of lawns are no longer regularly mowed but instead are left to resemble flower meadows. This is not lack of care, but a redesigning of green spaces in order to protect the climate.

Here as in many areas of the town they split a cycle lane from a busy road using these scenic verges to, bring 'country' to 'city'.

<https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/rheinland-pfalz/trier/Stadt-Trier-will-Gruenflaechen-fuer-das-Klima-umgestalten,av-o1141240-100.html>

Develop a new strategy for managing the council estate that includes areas left to support wildlife.

# Planting Schemes - Edibles



## Sunnyside Hitchin

See small spaces big dreams series 2 episode 5



## The Wynd - Letchworth



Local examples of sites where food is grown for the benefit of the community.

# Council Planting Schemes - Edibles



## Essbare Trier



## Incredible Edible Todmorden



Follow the example of other councils, both in the UK and Abroad, by becoming actively involved in community food growing with the first step being the identification of council spaces that can be used for this purpose.

# Council Practices - Pesticides



Change council practices to become pesticide free

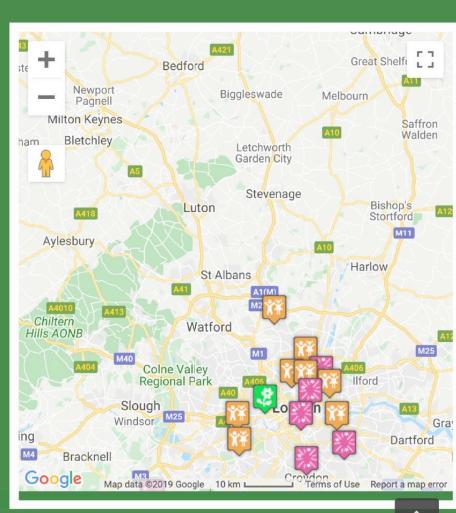
I WORK FOR A LOCAL AUTHORITY AND WANT TO KNOW MORE



## Active Pesticide-free Towns Campaigns

Campaigners and councils across the country are working to make their towns pesticide-free. Search the map to find out if there is an active pesticide-free campaign where you live. Click on any flags to read more.

- ☛ **Green** committed to going pesticide-free
- ☛ **Pink** has partly committed to going pesticide-free
- ☛ **Orange** there is an active campaign but no commitments have been made



## Council Practices / Regulatory Activities – Water



- North Herts is home to many chalk streams and approximately 60% of the water for public supply comes from local chalk aquifers.
- The upper reaches of a chalk stream naturally dry out as groundwater levels decline but flow should return to them as rain replenishes groundwaters and the aquifers in Autumn and Spring.
- Affinity Water are working with partners to try and enhance and restore a number of chalk streams locally in an effort to protect these globally rare habitats which are rich in biodiversity.
- Affinity water has recently notified customers that over the last three years we've had insufficient rain and they may need to introduce water restrictions in spring 2020.
- In our area the average person's daily water use is 158 litres (nationally the average is 141 litres). This needs to fall to 100 litres according to the Environment Agency.

Review council practices and regulatory activities to minimise water use, reduce flood risk and allow local aquifers to be replenished by rain. For example:

- Check that toilets and taps in council premises are low water flow / flush.
- Implement and encourage water permeable solutions for paths, cycle ways and driveways, adjusting NHDC Planning Requirements to discourage unnecessary hardstanding.
- Review Environmental Health guidelines with the aim of achieving the required Health Standards whilst minimising water usage.

For TTL (one or two errors)

Submission by Diane Ketcher and sue Lines on behalf of Letchworth Organic Group  
NHDC Climate Panel Meeting 11 Sept 2019

Diane Ketcher and Sue Lines have lived much of their lives in Letchworth and have interested themselves in local issues especially with those that are about the environment. They have a good idea of the other towns and surrounding countryside in North Herts. The following paper is intended to support the contributions made by the different environmental groups at the Panel on 11th Sept but is too detailed to submit for presentation.

Our main thrust is about how at local level the green environment must contribute to mitigating the climate emergency and in particular, start the reverse to the demise of insect life. The following proposals are intended to highlight the need for changes to practices carried out by NHDC on land in its charge and that it looks after for HCC and local Housing Associations.

We believe that local people simply taking their environment for granted, allotment holders accustomed to using weedkillers, paid staff and volunteers carrying out horticultural work under old regulations will not necessarily understand the kinds of managed changes we outline. It will be a tough job for NHDC to work out how best to communicate quite great changes to practices. Articles in Outlook, holding screenings of suitable films, installing information panels in areas no longer gardened conventionally, staff talking to the public at public events while horticultural staff will need training and support to get on board and be the ambassadors speaking up for changing practices.

As British people we have a strong relationship with grass; lawns, bowling greens, green verges, recreation grounds, tennis courts and football grounds. However, with climate change, hotter summers and intense rain storms, where grass is simply a convention, mown simply from custom and practice. It can quickly become sodden and populated with moss or laid bare in droughts.



Put together these are large green areas that can help substantially to bring back our insect life by changing them bit by bit to wildflower meadows and some can be peppered with glades of trees, bringing in other insects and birdlife. It has been found that trees will take surface water deep into the ground and help to deal with some of the flash floods after rain storms.

In recent years small islands of wild flowers have been planted at Letchworth Gate and on the Cambridge Road leading into Hitchin (among other places). Don't most people welcome these splashes of colour? Surely this is the beginning of planting for wildlife; however, mixes of British wild flowers would be even better because amazingly it has been found that insects in Britain prefer British wild flowers probably because species thrive in particular weather and soil conditions. Much has to be learnt about how to help this approach- there is plenty of experience and information on line to look at to learn for example how when regular mowing is reduced, what other horticultural practices will need to be taken on; when to mow and how to rake up and remove the hay. Interestingly, where wild flowers have been grown, insects are quickly attracted and on large areas, little tunnels indicate the presence of mice and voles and very quickly barn owls and other predating birds will complete the food cycle. We don't underestimate that as a long term policy if the soil is rich, it will need rotavating and a seeding programme undertaken.

Many cities and towns have made decisions not to use pesticides and herbicides; including Vancouver, Toronto and Paris. Many French towns have sought an accreditation for banning pesticides. The word 'pesticides' is often used in this context but it includes fungicides and herbicides ignorer to create a comprehensive change to the culture of caring for the green environment. We are used to road edges and cracks in pavements being sprayed with herbicides which are very likely to contain glyphosate.

There is a wide-scale acceptance of this very dangerous chemical which must be stopped as there is evidence that it is responsible for a lot of damage to human health. Glyphosate is rarely used on its own but is part of a cocktail . Dr. Robin Mesuage, Kings College London claims that as a cocktail 'Roundup' is 1000 x more toxic than on its own. The other chemicals include Arsenic, Chromium, Cobalt, lead and Nickel. The European Food Safety Association (an organ of the E.U.) claims that these chemicals are safe but most of their research is provided by industry. Flame guns for small weeds and firing hot steam are ideas that can be used and with the present awareness of the climate emergency, there is a greater energy to develop other non

harmful methods. As a potter Sue Lines knows that these chemicals are kept locked away, so great is their risk assessment and yet we permit these chemicals to be walked over and tracked into our homes on animals paws and our shoes. Traces of glyphosate is found in our food and there is increasing evidence that many serious illnesses and conditions can be attributable to glyphosate.

The E.U. wearing a different hat recommends for its use:

“to minimise its use in specific areas such as public parks and playgrounds. it is so far unclear if the British government has accepted these recommendations. “



This photograph is of a friend in a suburb of Berlin. Later the verges caught my eye that they have not been cut short and there are weeds at the pavement edge.



This photograph shows a party of people, quite accustomed to sitting and playing in the uncut grass in a public park in Berlin. Grass is cut at a specified time to enable the regeneration of grass and flowers. This is important as there are grasses and flowers that will tend to take over otherwise.



Summer planting outside  
Letchworth town Hall facing  
the Broadway Gardens

Traditionally, major roundabouts and focal points in our towns have had seasonal plantings of annuals that are removed at the end of each season and the plants are probably disposed of. This kind of annual planting plan while enjoyed by many people for the splashes of colour in otherwise uninteresting townscapes and traffic laden roads are not chosen for being insect-friendly. Hardly a stone's throw from the bed in front of Letchworth Town Hall, there are two beds spilling over with perennial plants chosen for being insect friendly. they have lasted throughout the spring and Summer and probably will continue late into the Autumn. Currently isolated from other such planting they are an exemplar rather than a solution at present.

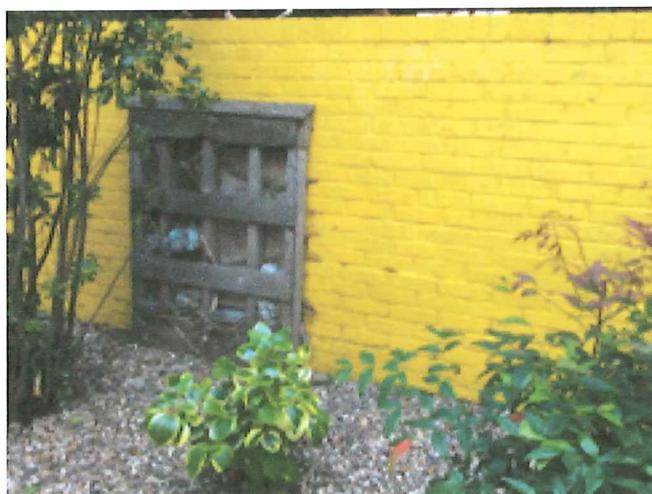


'Prairie' type planting outside  
the Broadway Cinema,  
Letchworth

Indeed, some towns, parks and land owners have been experimenting with prairie planting for some time. While they need annual maintenance the plants are intended to be permanent. Friends of the Earth have an on-line document "Helping Pollinators Locally"- Developing a Local Pollinator Action Plan or Strategy. Another valuable leader in this movement is Piet Oudolf, a well known Dutchman mainly responsible for bringing prairie planting to public attention; his "High Line Walk" on a disused railway track becoming a path in New York city becoming famous world wide.



Why are there metal grills or resin-based gravel set around town trees? Is this to stop the trees being uprooted and stolen? If horticultural workers are going to do less grass mowing, they should in the future have the time to explore the kinds of shrubs that could be planted around the trees that would need to be both drought and frost resistant and if possible they should be evergreens



A bug hotel in an unlikely spot. Along the outside of a building next to Guy's Hospital in the city.

Dave Goulson, Professor at Sussex University talks and writes about the insect side of the conversation both knowledgeably and lightly in *The Garden Jungle*. We have given you a copy to pass round. It's a great read!

Broadening the conversation to the use of pesticides, Diane relates her experience several years ago when she was teaching at Norton St Nicholas School. She witnessed several incidents relating to the use of herbicides in the school grounds where the edges of raised beds were sprayed. These beds were used by the gardening club and on one occasion the spray was used on paving half a metre away alongside the butterfly garden. On both occasions the gardens were decimated and the children missed out on an active piece of learning.

Many gardeners are not converted to the idea of hand weeding, using barriers methods of suppressing weeds or of actually letting them live! We understand that the practice of NHDC is to spray vacant allotments with herbicides before handing over to new tenants. We realise that there is a whole culture about keeping ground clear of 'weeds' and there is a massive job to convert allotments and staff to understand the part they currently play in ecocide. We believe it is no longer a question of choosing how one maintains green spaces; the time has come to understand that alternatives have to be understood and adopted.

The ideas that have been presented here are a beginning to a discussion between those with knowledge, experience and an understanding of biology so that in future towns and their outskirts in North Herts may not look so spruce but they will be better able to withstand climate changes, help to bring back our insect life, add oxygen to the air we breathe and we will be part of the solution, not the problem.

**The following is taken from Pesticide Network UK**

PAN UK has looked at the health effects associated with the fifteen most frequently used active substances in the amenity sector and presented the findings in the table below. The classifications are taken from a **wide variety of sources** and different regulatory authorities around the world.

Active	KG applied in 2016	Use	Acutely Toxic	Carcinogen	Developmental or Reproductive Toxin	Endocrine Disruptor
Glyphosate	61,249	Herbicide		Probable		
2,4-D	4,757	Herbicide		Probable		
MCPA	3,983	Herbicide	Yes	Possible		
Mecoprop-P	3,929	Herbicide	Yes	Possible		
Triclopyr	1,610	Herbicide				
Diflufenican	1,212	Herbicide				
Fluroxypyr	891	Herbicide				
Dicamba	685	Herbicide	Slight		Yes	
Trinexapac-ethyl	177	Growth Regulator				
Aminopyralid	158	Herbicide				
Iprodione	141	Fungicide		Yes		Suspected
Flazasulfuron	131	Herbicide				
Ferrous sulphate	130	Herbicide				
Clopyralid	99	Herbicide	Yes			
Azoxystrobin	92	Fungicide				

## What are the health hazards?

In the most recent UK-wide survey (dated 26th April 2018), there were a reported 38 different types of pesticide used in the towns and cities of the UK.

### Herbicides

2,4-D, Acetic Acid, Aminopyralid, Asulam, Carfentrazone-ethyl, Citronella Oil, Clopyralid, Cycloxydim, Dicamba, Diflufenican, Ferrous Sulphate, Flazasulfuron, Florasulam, Fluroxypyr, Glufosinate-ammonium, Glyphosate, Isoxaben, MCPA, Mecoprop-p, Pinoxaden, Propaquizafop, Propyzamide

## Fungicides

Azoxystrobin, *Bacillus sutilis*, Carbendazim, Chlorothalonil, Fludioxonil, Fluopyram, Fosetyl-aluminium, Iprodione, Prochloraz, Propiconazole, Pyraclostrobin, Tebuconazole, Trifloxystrobin

## Insecticides

Diflubenzuron, Imidacloprid

## Growth Regulator

Trinexapac-ethyl

Glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the world and has been focused upon in recent years as a result of its classification as a ‘probable human carcinogen’ by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). However, pesticides are poisons designed to kill living organisms and many of the others are also associated with harmful human health effects.

## Chalk Streams and the River Ivel

There are 210 Chalk streams in the world of which the Ivel is one with 160 in UK (Guardian 1). ie 76% of the worlds chalk streams are in the UK! Yet the vast majority of these are impacted on by the human race largely through over abstraction. Chalk streams are a unique habitat and a biodiversity hotspot. We cry out when the Amazon is cut down yet turn a blind eye to the loss of internationally important chalk streams.

The river Ivel in Baldock is a chalk stream and through lack of rainfall and abstraction the head waters have dried out and the river has migrated downstream. The remaining river has very reduced flow.

To counter this Affinity Water have conducted a study on the Ivel with a view to improving its condition (Through the EU WFD). To improve flows they propose the installation of a BH at the springs to pump water out and release it into the river.

The question is why further pump an already over abstracted aquifer? This was even quoted on a FB comment on the FOBGS FB page! There is a disconnect between Affinity Water (Potable water supplier), and Anglian Water (Waste Water supplier). As Affinity Water have are the licence holders and abstracters it falls to them to mitigate the impact of their abstraction. My question is how involved have AW been in this process? There was a STW at Ivel Springs that released its treated water into the Ivel and maintained flow. Sewerage is now pumped to Letchworth for treatment and released into the Pix. Whilst more expensive could some of this water be pumped back to Baldock and released into the Ivel?

Now we are grateful for the proposed support scheme but feel it is a poor solution. In Cambridge all chalk streams are supported by such schemes. In some cases, they are supported by multiple BHs and these are running dry with the EA questioning how effective this solution is. At other sites this water simply disappears down the spring holes. In the Ivel will this water even make it over the weir downstream of Ivel Springs or past the large mill pond at Radwell?

What we need is more rain but we can't influence the weather. With climate change rain fall is likely to become even more un-predictable. What we need is for people to realise these unique habitats and reduce their water usage dramatically. Could we start installing smart water meters and encourage friendly competition between neighbours to use less water as has been done elsewhere!? With groundwater already over abstracted and large new developments proposed could these be supplied by surface water from Grafham in a closed supply network (to counter the water quality problem of mixing ground water and surface water)? These are just a few ideas but Im calling on you to join the conversation and help conserve these endangered habitats.

- 1: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jul/24/threat-chalk-streams-unique-contribution-global-ecology>

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## **Construction and Infrastructure CO2 Management Planning**

The council will develop a set of requirements which aim to manage and reduce the CO2 emissions created by all construction and infrastructure projects, which require planning and are approved by the council.

The objective would be to make these construction activities as close to being carbon neutral or ideally carbon negative. Applicants would be required to submit a CO2 Management Plan as part of their planning application.

These CO2 management plans would initially comprise two elements -

- 1-Management of arboricultural features at the site
- 2-Management and control of CO2 production

1-Management of arboricultural features at the site –

Background - The UK is one of the least wooded areas of Europe, with just 13 % woodland cover (Forest Research report 2019) compared to around 37 % for European Union (EU) countries. The UK is also currently going through a significant period of house building and infrastructure projects. Millions of trees, hedgerows and bushes are being removed to facilitate these developments.

At the same time the need to reduce CO2 emissions is now an urgent environmental crisis recognised worldwide. Current planning guidelines require landscaping and tree planting on these schemes - however what they do not require is for the replacement of the CO2 absorption properties of the trees and existing plants that have been removed. A mature tree absorbs many more times CO2 as small replacement saplings. It will take decades before these replacement plants can begin to remove the same amount of CO2 as the felled mature trees. The UK has not got that time and we need to replenish and accelerate the carbon reduction/absorption quantities from now on.

Some examples

**photo of felled trees taken as construction started.**



ref – planning application 17/02812/1DOC - a new development of 19 houses in Turnpike Lane Ickleford. Approximately 59 trees with an average height of 10 meters are being removed and are being replaced with 48 new trees with an average height of just 2.8metres - a net reduction of the original carbon absorption at this site - and this does not take into account all the other bushes, shrubs and hedgerows which have been removed which also contribute to CO2 removal and absorption.

ref - planning application 18/01635/FP Walnut Tree Road Pirton. -

This development plans to remove 30 trees, the majority of which are in excess of 12 metres high and replace them with 33 new trees the size of which is unspecified, however looking at the size and scaling on the applicants drawings they will be small saplings perhaps a metre or two high - a net reduction of the original carbon absorption at this site.

Current planning rules do not require like for like replacement of trees and shrubbery. All over the UK CO2 absorption is being lost as insufficient trees are being planted to replace those lost on construction sites and infrastructure projects,

A like for like CO2 absorption requirement will help stop this decline.

Obtaining planning permission needs to incorporate a condition that all building developments, construction and infrastructure projects are required to replace the CO2 absorption rates lost by the removal of trees, saplings and hedgerows due to the proposed works - by the end of the project.

This also presents an opportunity for the council to improve amenity spaces and protect our precious countryside. If you look at a map of North Herts you will see that the space between towns and villages has been declining over many decades such that there now only exists one or two fields or wild areas that prevent our towns and villages from becoming one large urban sprawl.

Look at Hitchin and Ickleford, Gosmore and Hitchin, St Ippolyts and Gosmore, Little Wymondley and Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth - all only separated by one or two arable fields or pastures.

If this new policy is adopted developers will be looking for sites to plant the additional trees required to offset their CO2 activities on their sites. If the council can influence the landowners these spaces could be planted and become new forests keeping the identity of these settlements separate and would also improve the outlook and landscaping for many residents whose current view is houses from the next settlement.

## 2 – Management and control of CO2 production

As part of the planning application the applicant will submit a CO2 Management and Control plan. This plan should deal with practices both on and off site which generate CO2 and include plans to minimise this so as to generate the least CO2 as possible.

Diesel and petrol powered equipment is used extensively on construction sites, - quite often these machines will be left running for hours or all day even when not being used. It used to be that diesel engines used less fuel being left running rather than being switched on and off through the day. The technology to make it efficient to switch these machines off and on when not required is readily available, and there is a need for a perception change here. This plan should look at the use of electric machinery and vehicles where possible, and include electric charge points on site. These charging points should be incorporated into the development for the end users. Where no electrical supply is available renewable energy should be used where possible to provide temporary site electricity rather than Diesel generators.

An example of a current construction site

<https://youtu.be/nPRViK1cuW4>

The video in this link relates to a current construction site being operated by Cala Homes in Pirton

It shows a blue container, which is a diesel generator required to provide electricity for the site offices. This generator has been running for in excess of a year – sometimes continuously 24 hours a day. You will also see the site offices have large flat roofs which could accommodate solar panels for electricity generation. There is also space in the compound for a wind turbine. Finally, you will see existing power lines running adjacent to the site, which could have provided temporary electricity for the site offices.

The front of this site has had permanent electrical supplies connected to the new properties for several months so again a temporary electrical supply could have been installed from here to the site offices rather than relying on the diesel generator.

The final part of this plan should identify what CO2 reduction opportunities the applicant has built into their development.

These should consider and include where possible –

- Charging points for electric vehicles
- Solar panels for electricity generation
- Wind turbine for electricity generation.

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## **'RON'S PLOT' COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT GARDEN**

Getting Rooted C.I.C. was set up by Aletheia Mashiri to create, demonstrate and teach models of sustainable and regenerative practice in order to foster resilience within communities using permaculture design principles (rooted in horticulture: local food production and wild life protection); drawing from the permaculture ethics of 'care of the earth' (recycling and care of the environment); 'care of people' (social and therapeutic horticulture); and 'sharing fairly' (surplus seedlings and produce shared within communities and between local green projects).

As well as our Sunnyside Community Front Garden and raised veg beds at Our Lady's Church/Hitchin Foodbank we run an outdoor learning and sharing garden Ron's Plot Community Allotment in Westmill. We also share surplus produce with the Hitchin Food Rescue Hub led by Emma Goulding and try to support and encourage outside local green projects by way of plant and seedling donations.

Mary Marshall is a regular volunteer at Ron's Plot and will be kindly representing and sharing about this project and other green initiatives she is involved with locally.

On the topic of trees helping biodiversity:

Forests and trees provide ecosystem services  
Trees provide soil and water conservation, facilitate carbon sequestration, improve biodiversity and increase the number of pollinators and natural pest predators, like birds. ... Forests also provide bridges to aid wildlife movement through agricultural lands.

We are in the process of applying for trees from the Woodland Trust for the 'canopy' layer of our developing miniature food forest at 'Ron's Plot' community garden with the possibility of sharing with other green projects. Some of the trees will produce food for both humans and wild life as well as hazel for coppicing for use in our garden work.

As we have noticed the impact of climate change producing extreme weather patterns we are creating a more resilient planting scheme.

Three of the native species chosen to thrive in urban environments include crab apple, rowan and hazel which are also attractive to pollinating bees. In this regard we aim to support our allotment site

neighbours Buzzworks at their Burford Way Allotment site 'Honeyworks' in monitoring and preserving wild bees.

We hope by demonstrating and modelling more sustainable practices and encouraging biodiversity that we encourage other people to do the same.