

Northampton Hope Centre: Report to the Nineveh Trust

June 2018

In our bid, we said we would use the funding as follows:

'To part fund the salary costs of a garden trainer/grower, who will lead the training of people in horticulture. This post is crucial. We have land, we have all other set up funding for polytunnels and equipment, we have our own recycled tools, and we have a volume of funding for training which requires match funding to draw down. We need to kick start this project with paid time to train people and get it going. We anticipate paying a salary of up to £28000 for the grower at full time and anything you give will be spent entirely on this item.'

Project Timeline

Land acquisition and clearance (September 2017 – Jan 2018)

The project was slower to start than anticipated. We had difficulty sourcing land as land identified at the time of our bid was withdrawn, requiring us to find an alternative. In the end we obtained use of a neglected allotment plot of 0.4 acres in September 2017 but it had growing on it eight feet of brambles:



From October onwards we cleared these (with funding for earthmoving equipment at cost, from the Community Union), and dug over the land (it had been unused for many years, except as a rubbish dump), in several stages, with help from corporate groups, including from Travis Perkins and Nationwide, below:





Recruitment

We attempted to recruit a gardener from October onwards, once the land was secured, but not until the third advert did we recruit, James Boddington, Level 3 qualified from Moulton Agricultural college and whose father was previously chairman of the allotment site we are based on, and he a former plot holder. He started on Feb 5th 2018 full time on a salary of £23,000 as he will need additional training to be accredited to teach up to level 2. Having failed to recruit anyone with existing accreditation to each we had to make this compromise to get the project underway. Given he has now been in employment for five months at a cost, (including on-costs), of £10,733 we have fully spent the grant awarded to us by yourselves.

Spend

We have spent in total on the project, including salary, £22,000 since October 2017, using funds from other trusts and donors and covering land clearance, and purchase of sheds and polytunnels. Our match funder to yourselves (the Valerie Finnis Trust) gave their grant without specifics to its purpose, but including salary, and they intend to re-fund for another year at a further £8,000 this year (their grant is £8k per year for two years).

Progress

With further help for individual volunteers and from corporate groups from Barclaycard, Nationwide, Scott Bader and others, the site was made ready to start planting in April 2018. The appalling wet weather of this period slowed us down but we now have a wide variety of plants in the ground.

10 polytunnels are in construction, plus fencing around the perimeter and a children's teaching area, along with sheds and compost bins. It's becoming a productive site, and from May onwards service users have been using the site for therapeutic gardening and some volunteering experience. Teaching at an accredited level has not yet commenced due to the delays specified above, but we hope to start later this autumn, alongside some new work with school groups.

The related project this gardening projects supplies food to, Hope's food club has launched in February with supplies of ambient and tinned items, plus other fresh food from other sources, and already has 75 members. As food is produced from this site the intended recipients are identified and awaiting this produce.

We have worked very hard to communicate this project very widely with articles on the Allotment gardening website <http://www.allotment-garden.org/garden-diary/5604/gardening-hope-homeless/> and hopefully a forthcoming piece in the Guardian. We have been selected to enter the Britain in Bloom national awards after winning RHS gold in the regional awards for our separate flower and therapy gardens last year. We also have exhibited and spoken extensively locally and networked with other therapeutic gardening leads in other organisations. We work closely with our own host allotment society, St Davids Northampton.

Achievement of benefits

In terms of our specified benefits, it's still very early days for this project. However we said:

- The project will benefit the environment: we will turn urban land that is currently only grass or not under cultivation into thriving growing eco-systems with capacity to produce food and improve pollination in nearby gardens and allotments **ACHIEVED**
- We will provide opportunities for gardening as therapy for groups of clients, from Hope and elsewhere, with benefits for such issues as mental health and substance misuse **ACHIEVED**
- We will create work opportunities for garden trainers and managers and for trainees **ACHIEVED**
- We will provide training opportunities for people with complex needs to give them a way back into society without reliance on charity or benefits **JUST STARTED**
- We will create access points to healthy food within food deserts **WHEN CROPS ARE HARVESTED**
- We will reduce food miles and add to bio-diversity inside Northampton **WHEN CROPS REACH HARVEST**
- We will regenerate unused land **ACHIEVED**

In terms of your aims, we said:

- The Grant will improve the health and wellbeing of people in acute poverty by providing cheap, accessible fruit and veg, and of the growers, as above **PROJECT SET UP TO ACHIEVE THESE BENEFITS IN YR 2**
- It will provide opportunity to study horticulture and widen awareness of the natural environment amongst learners and recipients of food and those adjacent to the land used, who will be able to co-garden and share the produce **PROJECT SET UP TO ACHIEVE THESE BENEFITS IN YR 2**
- Study of opportunities in land management – although focused on urban land management, there will be valuable lessons about urban food production and use of urban land that arise. **PROJECT SET UP TO ACHIEVE THESE BENEFITS IN YR 2**

It's too early to say we have achieved these, but our project is one of the flagships of Northampton's developing Sustainable Food Cities project, looking to exemplar the third of these. Our project will be able to be used to show how by constructive use and reclamation of urban land we can contribute to the local food system within a wider project that will showcase urban agriculture. We are linked to the national scheme for Sustainable Food Cities and hope to be accredited in September. We will look to attract researchers to study the project as it become more developed.

Summary

We would like to be further forward than we are, but we have identified the barriers we faced – land, weather and recruitment. We are three months behind. Despite these challenges, we have set up the site and appointed a gardener, have started taking trainees and are growing crops. We are fully ready to progress to achieve our wider aims of offering training and producing food at scale in the 2018 growing season; however with the polytunnels we will be

able to produce crops under cover at the end of this season too. We very much hope that the trust will be able to offer us continuing funding for a second year.