

Case Study
**SOCIAL
HOUSING**
greEn | 6





Space number: 523

Lead organisation: LB Newham

Borough: Newham

Postcode: E16 3BY

Size: 374 sqm

Target group: Local residents

Land type: Temporary land

Land owner: Local authority

Cost: £4,000

Background

Canning Town and Custom House area is undergoing large scale regeneration. The council decided to identify potential uses for areas of temporarily vacant land awaiting redevelopment. Allotment waiting lists are very long in Newham, so food growing was considered an appropriate interim use of the land with benefits for the local community. This is the first of two spaces created to date and has proved to be very successful.

This site was set up as a pilot by the Canning Town and Custom House Regeneration project, part of the London Borough of Newham, with support from local organisations including East Potential, London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) and London Wildlife Trust. London Wildlife Trust holds the licence for the site although the space is used by a collection of individuals.

The space consists of grow bags which are allocated to individuals for food growing. There are a variety of individuals involved, including residents surrounding the space and from the Canning Town and Custom House area.

How was the growing space created?

- The space was started with the support of a steering group, which helped to plan the project.
- Obtaining the licence and agreement to use the land took time and associated costs were covered by the regeneration team's budget.
- The community was initially contacted by a local worker. This indicated a high level of interest, which was built on by further activities to engage residents once the space was opened.
- Preparation costs were minimal as the ground was covered in concrete, which was perfect for grow bags.
- The scheme received funding from the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) 'Changing Places' programme, which encourages volunteers to help transform the places they live.
- Through this funding the project has been able to employ a gardener to support the space for a year.



What has been achieved so far?

The growing space has been very important for community cohesion. There have been a number of successful events in the space since February 2010 and a community gardener delivers workshops in the garden.

There was an informal opening in February 2010, by a local councillor, plus a seed workshop for residents to plant seeds and learn about what to put in their grow bags without using chemicals. There was also a celebration of the first harvest in August 2010. There are currently 20 people, and their family members, involved in the project.

Access to water has been a challenge but the project aims to become 100 percent sustainable in terms of water use by harvesting rainwater on the site.



Top tips and lessons learnt



“People wanting to start projects should ‘go for it’ because every space is different and has different challenges. It is hard to tell at this point what will happen in the future when the garden has to move, but it has been well worth using the space in the interim.”

Sam Clark, Newham council

What were the main challenges, and how have they been overcome?

The main challenges were finding and setting up an appropriate licence agreement for a ‘meanwhile’ growing space, finding a willing licence holder, and applying for planning permission for the temporary change of use. None of this had been done before so it took about 18 months to get the space ready for food growing.

To overcome this the Council drew up a special licence and ensured that all users were fully aware of the end date and signed individual user agreements. Getting water on site was also a challenge at this specific site as the costs for Thames Water reconnection were high.





How has Capital Growth supported the project?

In addition to the general information and support Capital Growth provides, and its attendance at training events, the Capital Growth team has also helped the project to source a trainer to run sessions locally. The space was a runner up in the Edible Estates Competition, and received a number of prizes.

What next?

This project has inspired another growing space in the area which has been also very successful. The regeneration team is already scoping out potential sites to take over as the next growing space when the current area is redeveloped.

What is Capital Growth?

Capital Growth is a partnership initiative between London Food Link, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson, and the Big Lottery's Local Food Fund. It is championed by the Chair of the London Food Board Rosie Boycott and aims to create 2012 new community food growing spaces across London by the end of 2012.

Capital Growth offers practical help, grants, training and support to groups in London wanting to establish community food-growing projects as well as advice to landowners.

This is part of a series of Capital Growth case studies.

www.capitalgrowth.org

MAYOR OF LONDON

