


Case Study
ENTERPRISE

**Wenlock Barn
Herb Garden**





Space number: 95
Lead organisation: Wenlock Barn Herb Garden
Borough: Hackney
Postcode: N1 7PQ
Size: 140 sqm
Target group: Local residents, local businesses
Land type: Social housing
Land owner: Local authority
Cost: £4,250

Background

In spring 2010 Wenlock Barn Herb Garden was established on a small patch of disused land on a housing estate in Hackney, London. Although small, the area is highly productive, with crops growing in raised beds. The project specialises in high-yielding salad crops which are rotated to ensure they have a consistent supply to sell. The site is managed by a paid part-time grower who works on the site and manages help from occasional volunteers.

The project – an off shoot of Grass Shoots, a community food-growing initiative on the housing estate – was created as a commercial venture to ensure long-term viability. It generates income through the sale of produce, which is used to pay for staff to run the project. Any profits are fed back in to the local community.

How was the growing space created?

- In 2008 Grass Shoots was commissioned by Shoreditch Trust to develop the Growing Kitchen Garden on the Wenlock Barn Estate.
- Grass Shoots put together a package of community workshops based on cooking, gardening and sustainable living, to be implemented on the estate. The project was a great success and one of its major outcomes was the creation of 35 mini allotments for residents.
- Two of the allotment holders then became interested in developing a food-growing project with a commercial focus. They envisioned the business would grow herbs and salad crops on underused green space in the estate and the produce would be sold to restaurants and commercial outlets.
- Their application to the East London Green Grid Programme and Capital Growth was to finance a business plan and set up costs, to give the project a clear structure.
- During the development of the business plan, Grass Shoots contacted two local businesses for advice on how the project could consistently provide herbs to commercial establishments.
- In March 2010 the group organised an open day to invite local residents to see the plans for the site and register their interest. The group also holds a session every Wednesday, where residents are encouraged to volunteer to help build and maintain the garden.



What has been achieved so far?

The group sold approximately 200 kilos of cropped salad from March-October 2010 to a number of local restaurants and retailers. The money raised paid for three part-time members of staff to help co-ordinate the project.

The environment of the estate has been improved, creating positive publicity for the housing provider. It has also resulted in a supply of fresh food on the estate which residents can come and purchase on an ad-hoc basis.



Top tips and lessons learnt



“More community food-growing projects should look to enterprise as a way of achieving their aims and have their work valued by being paid for it. There are potentials to create good jobs and grow the financial side of the project sustainably without relying on grants and funding.”

Michael Turrisi, Head Grower

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

There have been numerous issues involved with running this small scale enterprise. These have ranged from maintaining a regular supply to customers, delivery of the produce and managing orders when they had gluts of produce to sell.

One of their largest customers also went bankrupt leaving them with unpaid invoices. This caused them to adjust their payment methods to cash on delivery.





How has Capital Growth supported the project?

The project received a grant through the Capital Growth East London Green Grid Programme, to help set up as a social enterprise. Wenlock Barn also won training and equipment in order to start a community apiary through Capital Bee, Capital Growth's campaign to support more responsible bee-keeping in London.

The project took part in the Capital Growth 'Open Gardens Day' in September 2010, when a number of spaces opened their doors to members of the public.

What next?

The group would like to perfect their current model garden, improving administration, planning, yields and services to customers. Following this they will expand to another site, with the aim of creating more jobs so the project can continue to grow and sustain itself.

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

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