



Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire

New allotment site for Skelmersdale

West Lancashire Borough Council is delighted that planning permission has now been granted for a new allotment site in Skelmersdale.

The 34 plot site will be located alongside the Houghtons Road allotment at the end of Manfield thanks to almost £50,000 provided by the Council.

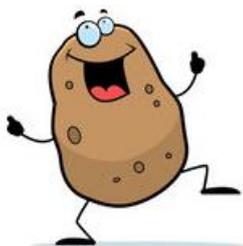
Construction will start within the next few weeks with the intention of having the site ready for occupation in early Spring.

Skelmersdale residents on existing waiting lists will be offered plots first with any remaining plots being offered through local publicity. Discussions are underway to have the new site managed by a local allotment society, with more details about this expected in the near future.

Further details are available from Steve Kent, Leisure Operations Manager WLBC on 01695 585169 or stephen.kent@westlancs.gov.uk



Potato Day - Saturday 30th January 2016 9.30am-3pm



Make sure you don't miss the Annual Potato Day organised by West Lancs Allotment Federation! It's well worth a visit to stock up on old favourites as well as choose some new varieties to trial. With over 80 varieties to choose from, plus fruit bushes and seeds, you won't be disappointed!

It is being held in the Concourse shopping centre, Skelmersdale, WN8 6LE - on the first floor outside Iceland



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Organic Veg Club flooded

West Lancs suffered much in the recent floods, but few places were affected as dramatically and disastrously as the Organic Veg Club near Rufford.

On 28th December, Neil Hickson wrote on their blog: *'The last two days have had a devastating effect on Organic Veg Club. The collapse of the Ellerbrook river bank filled our farm with 5 feet of water which then went on to cascade across Meadow Lane and flood fields all the way to Rufford.'*

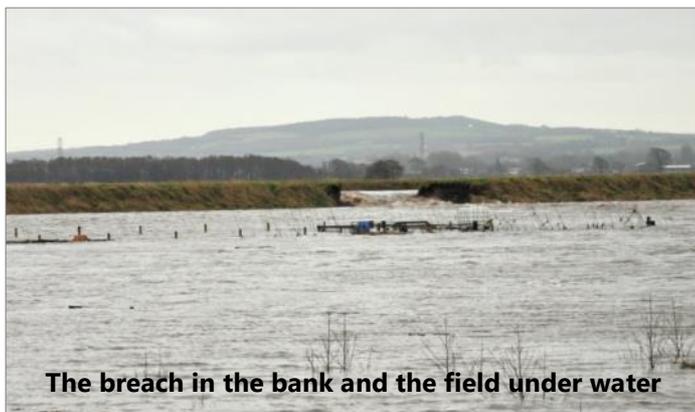
Two years ago we started Organic Veg Club, a community farm based in between Rufford and Burscough. During the flood, 2 years hard work from Members of Organic Veg Club were washed away. We lost most of our chickens and ducks, three beehives and all our remaining crops were washed away. We had planted over 1500 trees on site with more to go in this winter. All our tools and equipment are in an inaccessible shipping container that is sitting in 4 feet of water. Yesterday we rowed a dingy into the barn we were in the process of finishing off last week as it had five feet of water in it.

Chicken rescue mission

'A small amount of good news was salvaged yesterday when one of our members brought two dinghies to site. Four of us saved the 13 chickens that had managed to cling onto life on top of their floating coup and other floating debris overnight. These are now at home in the garden of our secretary.'

Bee survival

'In other good news, a member of the public saw one of our bee hives floating on its back and managed to drag it onto the riverbank. We found it with bees flying in and out of it and plan to move it today to a safe location. It seems, because the hive had been 'strapped up' for the winter, it all stayed in one piece and floated on its back like a raft through the water. If the hive had tipped any other way than on its back, it would have filled with water and all the bees would have been drowned.'



The breach in the bank and the field under water



The surviving bee hive



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On December 31st, the Environment Agency started repairing the breach in the river bank and once the gap was plugged the waters started slowly receding.

The group is determined to carry on and is formulating a plan of action for this year following the Big Clean Up.

***Neil:** 'The flood disaster on Boxing Day and the stress that it caused is slowly being eclipsed by the amazing groundswell of goodwill messages and creative thoughts and ideas to get Organic Veg Club back on its feet.*

Jane and I have been overwhelmed with the wonderful messages we have received. Even visiting the site, people were coming up to us in the lane and saying that they have been following the projects progress over the last two years. So many people love what we are doing and want to help get it back up and running again. We are truly grateful for this.

***Community is a wonderful thing and the people that have come together to achieve what we have so far have now become more important to me than the project itself.** I have learned that the two go hand in hand. The pleasure and satisfaction I get from achievements and successes we have made are multiplied when they are shared with others. This has been the great lesson I have learned from this project.'*

The Organic Veg Club are holding their **Annual General Meeting** at The Grove Community Centre in Burscough on **Wednesday 24th February 2016** from 3pm until 8:30pm. Everyone is welcome.

As well as the formal part of the proceedings, there will be an exhibition showing the different strands of what OVC are working on. Over the last two years they have partnered up with other organisations such as The Tree Bee Society and bird watching organisation Skein Nature. These and other partners will be part of the exhibition and give presentations about their areas of interest.

- For more details and to follow their rebuilding progress, go to: www.organicvegclub.co.uk/
- Follow them on Twitter: https://twitter.com/organicvegclub?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- Sign up for their newsletter [here](#)
- **You can hear Neil Hickson interviewed by Marc Gaier of BBC Radio Merseyside on the 4th of January 2016 here:**
www.organicvegclub.co.uk/2016/01/radio-interview.html



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Dates for your diary

Calling everyone living or working in Skelmersdale.....! A group of people in Skelmersdale is putting together a week-long festival in 2016 - celebrating all the creative, recreational and sporting activities that take place in our community.

As part of this they would like to get allotment sites involved and if possible have Open Afternoons.

The plan is to stage one big celebration event where organisations can promote what they do and then follow on with a number of different events across the town.

They hope to get the whole town involved from toddlers to pensioners attending events, participating in activities and generally letting the world know that IT'S GREAT TO LIVE IN SKELMERSDALE!

Anyone interested in taking part or helping to organise the event should come along to a meeting at

**Evermoor Hub (Digmoor Community Centre)
Sunday 31st January 2016 at 7pm**

Or contact Claire Cooper by emailing claire4birchgreen@gmail.com



West Lancs Allotment Federation Annual General Meeting

is on February 10th. The meeting will be held at the West Lancs Borough Council offices on Derby St in Ormskirk at 7pm. All welcome!

National Allotment Society: If your site is not yet a member of the National Allotment Society, then make it your resolution for 2016 Growing Year!

Membership brings many benefits, including automatic membership of West Lancs Allotment Federation. Another attractive feature is the cut price seed scheme run with Kings Seeds. Anyone with an allotment on a NAS site can **order seeds for half or one-third of the RRP.**

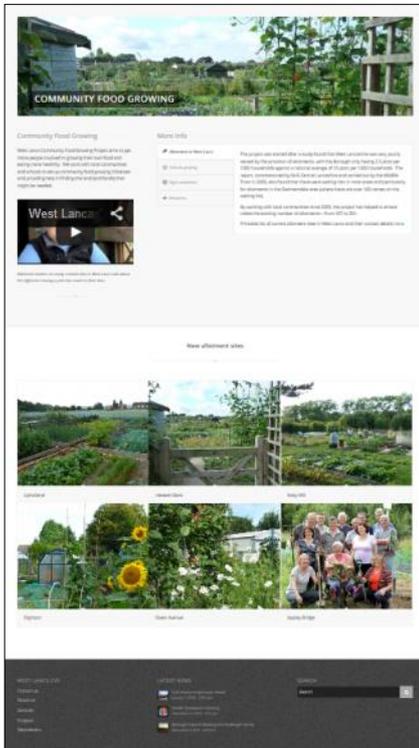
For more information, go to www.nsalg.org.uk/join-us/ or contact Ray Fowler at WLAFF on rfowler001@btinternet.com



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CVS update



New CVS website

If you haven't already done so, then check out the new CVS website! The Community Food Growing page has been updated to include photo stories of the development of each of the allotment sites created since 2009. Go to www.wlcvs.org/?page_id=28 to see your site!

Facebook

The CVS is also now on Facebook. Follow us to keep up to date with the latest news <https://www.facebook.com/wlcvs/>

Schools' Worker post

The Community Food Growing project may be looking (subject to funding being made available) for someone to work on a part time basis from April to July – about 6 hours a week - as a mentor to support local primary schools with their school allotments. The ideal person would be a confident grower with experience of working in a school environment. If you are interested, please contact either Debbie or Martin at the CVS.

Resources

- **Green Grants:** If your allotment site is part of a wider project that is open to the public, you can apply for Green Grants of up to £1,000 from the Lancashire Environmental Fund to fund small scale community projects that are accessible to the general public eg wildflower and bulb planting, tree planting, community orchards, Community Gardens, pond creation

The next deadlines for submitting an Expression of Interest are 5th February and 13th May 2016.

- **The Community Trees Fund 2016:** this fund is open to community groups - both formal and ad hoc. The Tree Council will fund up to 4 fruit trees on semi-vigorous, vigorous and very vigorous rootstocks. There is also a parallel fund for schools: [Trees for Schools Fund 2016](#)

Community Groups wishing to plant more than 4 fruit trees, should apply to the [Orchard Windfalls Fund](#). Children under the age of 16 must be actively involved in the planting process. The closing date for applications is the 31st March 2016

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Training: environmental courses for 2016

The WEA run a number of environmental courses in Lancashire (see below). All courses are FREE to those on means tested benefits and the Discretionary Learners support is available for those on low incomes.

Please email Elaine on ebennet@wea.org.uk or Victoria on vicswoods@btinternet.com for more information about any of the courses you may be interested in.

- **Introduction to Permaculture** – a gentle weekend course in beautiful surroundings, a course to make you think about your place in the world and how you can have a positive impact on yourself, your community and the wider environment. Set in the beautiful Offshoots Permaculture Project.
- **Full permaculture design certificate course** - This is a life changing course, whether you already know lots about Permaculture or are relatively new to the subject. You will be guided through the process of making a Full Permaculture Design and gain hands on experience of working in harmony with nature.
- **River Habitat Management**- taught in various locations in Lancashire in conjunction with Ribble Rivers Trust. This is an innovative course to develop practical skills and awareness of River Management, learn species identification techniques, as well as invasive species and land management for water quality.
- **Introduction to Forest Gardening** This weekend course will appeal to those who want to understand more about our local woodlands, how they can get involved, gives the opportunity to work with woodlands in a holistic way using Permaculture Design techniques and a chance to spend time in the beautiful Woodlands around Towneley Hall, Burnley.
- **Backyard planting** – for those without a garden or only limited space – learn how to grow in unusual containers. A mix of theory, planning and practical techniques for growing in your own small area.
- **Beginners organic gardening** – Whether on allotments, gardens or in containers, grow the organic ways – good for you, good for the wildlife!



The West Lancs Community Food Growing Project aims to get more people involved in growing their own food and eating more healthily. We are working with local communities and schools to set up community food growing initiatives and providing help in finding the land (and funds) that might be needed. **We are keen to hear from anyone interested in growing their own food with others in West Lancs. Please get in touch!**

Martin Trengove
Debbie Shepton
Rachel Wheble

CVS Project Co-ordinator
CVS Community Support
CVS School Mentor

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Email: debbies@wlcvs.org
Email: enquiries@wlcvs.org

Phone us on:
01695 733737

Keep up to date at our website: www.wlcvs.org/?page_id=28



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