



# Dig In

Community Food Growing in West Lancashire

## Schools Celebrate Growing Success

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, seventeen schools gathered at Red Apple Nursery for a fabulous day of awards and school displays to round off their summer season. They brought stalls and produce to be proud of and there was great excitement as representatives from each school toured each other's displays. There was an excellent range of fruit and vegetables on display along with brilliant ideas that had been used in gardening clubs. Young gardening club members from several schools took to the microphone and talked the 120 strong audience through the features of their school's growing year.



The celebration morning also included a tour of the nursery site, a food preparation demonstration by Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative and presentations of certificates to all the schools. Everyone enjoyed an excellent lunch and had time to reflect on the extraordinary achievements of the project.

Red Apple staff and Joanne McGrath from the Extended Schools Service deserve special thanks for organising and staffing the day. A senior County Councillor reflected on the success of the project to date "It was truly inspirational, a fantastic effort by all the schools

*that took part... The children took a real pride in what they had achieved. I went back to County Hall and reported on how impressed I was. Well done to all involved."*

## School Homework

One of the great spin offs of the schools' gardening club programme has been the number of children who have taken the message home. This development is no better illustrated than in the Noone household (and garden). Back in April, young Britany who was enjoying the Holland Moor School gardening club so much, insisted that they needed raised beds in their back garden! Her Dad set to and beds were built, tools and seeds bought and a regular slot was found to pursue the new hobby with young Britany leading the way. The produce they have grown together is fantastic, and the health value added along the way a further bonus. It is the simple fun of growing your own food that is spreading the message.



Building on this, Holland Moor school have successfully piloted a 4 week Parents and Children Together gardening club. Assistant Headteacher, Ailsa Fletcher says: 'we have seen the enthusiasm of children and parents develop beyond our expectations, and plan to run it again next year'.

The message on health benefits and food is going from schools to home and back again. Produce from our back gardens is a growing movement. Congratulations, Britany!





# West Lancs Community Food Growing Project supporting local people to grow their own food

## Community Sites Update

**Hesketh Bank:** The Poor Marsh site at Hesketh Bank had been used for food growing for a number of years but the huge size of the plots made them an unrealistic proposition for any prospective allotment holder. The Parish Council (through its allotments committee) decided to re-provision the site to make it available to the whole community and found there was huge demand within the community of Hesketh with Beconsall Parish. After help from local businesses in ploughing, levelling and marking out the site, they now have 17 traditional size plots up and running—all allocated and growing started. A further 30 plots are expected to become available in phase two. They are also looking to offer a small number of 'purpose built' plots for people with disabilities and are exploring potential sources of funding to help to provide these.



*17 new allotments at Hesketh Bank*



*Planted up within days of allocation*



*Proposed new site in Upholland*

**Upholland:** In this exciting development, St Teresa's Church is looking to create 11 new full plots on land adjoining the church on College Road. A public meeting is planned for September 16th to discuss the idea and ascertain demand. A Steering Group will be drawn from this meeting to work to set up the new site and allotment society.

**Tower Hill:** the Community Food Growing Project has been working with the tenants of the Council run site at Tower Hill, Ormskirk to explore the possibility of them becoming self-managing. Plot holders have visited other Council owned but Society managed sites in West Lancashire and are considering whether or not to form their own allotment society to take on the management of the Tower Hill site

**Holmeswood Community Garden:** Community members from Holmeswood, a small village near Rufford, have come together to create a Community Garden in the grounds of their local primary school. A grant from the Community Food Growing Project has allowed them to prepare the site and plant a variety of fruit trees, fruit bushes and vegetables all of which were growing well when we visited the site in July.





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## Resources News

- The Community Food Growing section on the CVS website now contains lots of information resources for new food growing groups. As well as a sample constitution, site rules and tenancy agreement, there is information on insurance, creating a website for your group, and sources of small grants for groups. Go to [www.wlcvs.org/services/community-gardening.html](http://www.wlcvs.org/services/community-gardening.html).
- Looking for funding? Included in the list of small grants available (outlined above) is the **Small Sparks Fund** for up to £500, which can be used to 'kick start, inject life or enhance existing community based services or activity'. Help Direct, which operates the fund, tell us that it is currently undersubscribed and that the application process is simple and straightforward, resulting in a decision within 4 weeks.
- Planning some Summer days out? The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has published a large full-colour map of Community Gardens (including many community allotment sites) in the northwest. The CVS has a number of copies to give out or if you prefer to download it, go to <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications?start=5>
- Dobbies Garden Centres have launched a nationwide campaign called 'Here We Grow' to encourage local communities near the garden centres to develop green space in their area and get growing. Dobbies will give advice, training, plants or materials (but not direct funding) to local community groups, projects, schools and charities in areas near Dobbies garden centres. They prefer to get involved with projects at the startup stage. If your project is situated between Crossens and Ormskirk, contact Dobbies Garden Centre in Southport and ask to speak to their Community Champion. Tel: 01704 552 920. Or go to: [www.dobbies.com/Dobbies-in-the-community/C](http://www.dobbies.com/Dobbies-in-the-community/C)

**Bag a bargain** : A new 'Veg Box' scheme delivering top quality seasonal fruit and veg to centres across Skelmersdale is being piloted by Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative. Local people can drop into their nearest centre and buy a bag of veg or fruit for £3.00. Many organisations including SCFI, NHS Central Lancashire, West Lancashire CVS and Age Concern have been working in collaboration to develop this scheme and many others have also offered support in kind. If the pilot is successful and the project continues, it may be possible to link local allotment sites to these distributing hubs to feed in any surplus produce.

For more information, contact Deirdre Mitten at Skelmersdale Community Food Initiative on 01695 720555.

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!**

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