

# **PENICUIK COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT: PENICUIK WALLED GARDEN**

**-proposal to lease, restore, operate and develop the  
Upper Walled Garden at Penicuik Estate as a community  
food and learning resource under the aegis of Penicuik  
Community Development Trust  
(registered charity SC037990)**



## **PRELIMINARY BUSINESS PLAN: JUNE 2009**

Prepared for the Penicuik Estate Partnership, we here set out Penicuik Community Development Trust's community food proposal for the restoration and use of the Upper Walled Garden. We describe the Trust's beginnings, how the project took shape, and where things stand now. Our declared objective in restoring the Garden is to promote community development and well-being, and sustainable food supplies, through an intensive engagement of people, place and productivity. We declare our intended emphasis throughout in involving a range of people and organisations. We set out our project leadership and describe some of the specialist bodies we intend to work with. We describe our intentions for the short term, our longer term vision, and outline our arrangements for governance, risk assessment and finance. We are at the threshold of what we see as an adventurous and exciting project with enormous potential. We are ready to start to more clearly define each of the tasks before us. The Garden is a long-term resource, and we believe that this project is large enough and far-sighted enough to transcend the involvement of any particular individuals and create its own highly beneficial momentum in the years ahead.

## **Where we begin: the Trust**

The Penicuik Community Development Trust started with a public meeting in March 2005 in Penicuik Town Hall to halt the loss of community assets and encourage fuller community use. With support to its founders from Scotland UnLimited and the Development Trust Association Scotland, the new organisation moved swiftly to become a registered charity and a full member of DTA(S). As a social enterprise, most of the Trust's resources are raised from its membership and users of its services. It has obtained equipment for recording oral history, it has developed a series of postcards and publications for sale, it has organised events and helps to develop and run the Penicuik Arts Festival, now in its third year. Importantly, it has ensured that Penicuik Town Hall is kept open for community life. Every Saturday from 10am to 2pm under lease from Midlothian Council, the Trust holds an Open House in Penicuik Town Hall, where people gather, exhibitions and displays are shown, and local organisations showcase their interests and good causes. Among over 100 memorable exhibitions featured at the Trust's Open House is our recent show of documents relating to Penicuik Co-operative history [www.kosmoid.net/penicuik/coop](http://www.kosmoid.net/penicuik/coop) and the display celebrating 50 years of Cuiken School. The Trust has successfully brought public cinema back to Penicuik, forming a support group, leasing space, purchasing equipment and operating fortnightly Sunday evening showings since 2007 [www.kosmoid.net/penicuik/cinema](http://www.kosmoid.net/penicuik/cinema) . The Trust has constantly sought to develop sustainable and well-supported community facilities, as these have shown themselves to be. The Trust's Annual General Meetings are lively and well-attended.

## **Where we begin: the Community Food Project**

Building on a long-held shared local interest in organic food supplies, and with some local appreciation of the nature of the Garden as a potential resource, the Penicuik Community Food Project grew out of a well-attended public meeting organised by the Trust in April 2009 in Penicuik Town Hall. [www.makers.org.uk/penicuik/food](http://www.makers.org.uk/penicuik/food) The meeting strongly supported the potential of a Penicuik Community Food Project to restore the Upper Walled Gardens at Penicuik Estate to production, and the Trust's full Annual General Meeting considered the proposal and gave its unanimous backing as an immediate Trust priority to get the project off the ground. Speakers from the floor urged the involvement of schools and as many aspects of the community as possible.

## **Our objective**

To promote community development and well-being, and sustainable food supplies, we seek the permission of the Penicuik Estate Partnership to lease, restore, operate and develop the Upper Walled Garden at Penicuik Estate. We see this as an intensive engagement of people, place and productivity. Our emphasis will be in involving people in learning about food production, in understanding the history and identity of the walled garden and the plants and structures it contains, and in restoring it to sustainable production of organic fruit, vegetables and herbs, to therapeutic use by the community,

and the development of interpretative and demonstration projects to make the fullest possible use of the benefits the garden can offer.

## Who we are

The development of the Project is supported by the membership of the Trust at its AGM and around 40 signatories who have offered their interest and active support. It is guided by an interim steering group that includes: **Roger Kelly** a founder and current vice-chair of the Trust, is a chartered town planner with an interest in conservation, a lecturer and long-standing Government adviser [www.place.makers.org.uk/rkc](http://www.place.makers.org.uk/rkc). He has led volunteer community food supply for organic produce at Valleyfield House in Penicuik every Saturday for twenty years [www.kosmoid.net/vh](http://www.kosmoid.net/vh) and he has helped to guide Penicuik Community Arts Association (a registered charity) for well over a decade. He chairs the Planning and Environment Committee of Scotland's cultural charity *The Saltire Society*. **Diane O'Neil** is a well-respected biodynamic grower who was in charge of the walled garden at the Garvald community, Dolphinton, for some 25 years. She knows growing conditions at this altitude and latitude and is alive to the Penicuik Walled Garden's history, spirit of place, and possibilities for healthy community development. **Barry O'Rourke** is an intelligent and energetic enthusiast for the food project. He is a member of the steering committee of the Community Development Trust, and with his partner and young child he will be living close to the walled garden on the Penicuik Estate. **Jane Mackintosh**, in working life, is lowland grassland adviser for Scottish Natural Heritage. A Cornbank resident, she is the treasurer of the Penicuik Community Development Trust and oversees its now-substantial income, expenditure, and capital reserves. Among the Project's other supporters and specialists are Roger Hipkin, long-serving Secretary of the Development Trust, Alexis Beddoe, grower at the Dalmeny Walled Garden with experience of horticulture at Blyth Bridge, local resident Ewan Robertson of Edinburgh College of Art, and Jackie Quigley exponent of local enterprise development who lives at Ladywood. We have good links with the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh, with the Garden History Society, with the organic movement in Scotland, with Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, and we are actively supporting the inception of a pilot garden project for Midlothian for local residents and housing associations.

## Growing our support

These links are important, because we see our project as something to which a large number of organisations can relate for mutual benefit. Our core connections will be to the **Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens** and to the **Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society**, both of which we intend to join. The Trust is already a member of the **Development Trusts Association (Scotland)**. We are seeking to develop close ties to **Trellis** the Scottish charity that supports, promotes, and develops the use of horticulture to improve health, well-being and life opportunities for all, and with other charitable groups such as **Scottish Native Woods**. We have already mentioned the Garden History Society, RBGE, Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, and we will seek links with Oatridge and other local and national educational and health bodies who might benefit from working with us. We will also

grow the membership of our group and encourage individuals to identify with local food production and the Garden's restoration through a Friends of the Garden scheme, through a presence with the Trust in Penicuik town centre, at Ladywood Community Centre, and on the internet.

## **Our way of working**

We see every stage in the restoration of the garden to local food production (and of its crucial identity as a walled garden in a designed landscape of national importance) as a potentially rewarding experience, learning through activity. We envisage a close and mutually supportive relationship with the Penicuik Estate Partnership and with the many specialist bodies. We will actively involve a wide spectrum of people and age groups in the community, for those developing specialist knowledge and training, and those with longstanding expertise to offer in sustainable horticulture and building techniques. We prefer to raise awareness and understanding by progressively surveying the tasks ahead. We will move forward progressively as we learn from our experience, and we are determined to be well prepared to take up opportunities for help, in-kind support, and funding as they arise.

## **Extent and access**

The upper walled garden at Penicuik is a magnificent asset. With a main growing area of about 10,000 square yards inside the walls this is the size of perhaps 33 traditional family-sized allotments, though up to 40% of this is currently covered with mature conifers and young trees are well set to take over the rest. The terrace area for herbs and flowers covers another 3,333 square yards. The adjacent buildings are sadly dilapidated and the garden's external and internal walls have lost coping stones and brick courses in places.

## **Our timescale**

Our timescale is a long-term one, but our programme of careful steps is ready to start at once. Our first step is to secure agreement to proceed in principle from the Penicuik Estate Partnership. We would then look to agree terms of a lease for the walled garden, its associated buildings and a surrounding broad access strip. We believe a lease would need to be a long one to safeguard our charitable intentions and status. We see this as a fifty year project and hope to think in terms of perhaps a thirty year lease, subject of course to sensible safeguards on both sides.

## **Initial tasks**

Concurrently with securing long term use of the walled garden we will seek to agree **harvesting of timber** with the Penicuik Estate Partnership, examining the options for the removal of roots and stumps either at the same time as harvesting, or as a practical forestry project after a year of natural loosening in situ.

We will look to survey the **plant contents of the garden** as a student project, looking out for potentially rare or interesting varieties, and will seek advice from the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh.

We will look to survey the **structures of the walled garden** as a student project, with help and advice from Historic Scotland and the Garden History Society.

We will gather as much as we can of the walled garden's **history of use** from members of the Penicuik Estate and local knowledge, and establish the extent of its use for biodynamic growing in the postwar years.

We will establish a programme towards an appropriate **organic certification** which may take 2 years or more; a biodynamic route will be among options we examine.

We will look at the most suitable ways in which the garden can be brought back to use to **increase activity and develop productivity**, including interim subdivisions to form individual plots.

We will explore local sources of **organic manure**.

We will explore opportunities for developing related **social enterprises** to capitalise on the garden's potential in the community.

We will look at ways in which **groups in the community** –including local nursery, primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, and voluntary bodies- can become fully involved in the project and help to shape its future.

We will encourage local members to share accommodation for incoming project helpers through **HelpExchange**.

We will explore the best options for the project's **governance and financial identity** as set out towards the end of this document.

## **Longer term vision**

After the initial stages, we hope to progress to a walled garden which is organically certified and fully productive, producing at least 60 fruit & vegetable boxes a week in season, with surpluses for exchange and trade with other growers.

As a landmark Scottish garden project and a working walled garden we expect to generate at least some of the visitor interest found at English Heritage's thriving organic walled Victorian kitchen garden at Audley End.

We envisage at least one greenhouse on site, with existing buildings adapted for demonstration areas and facilities for visitors, volunteers and packing.

We would expect to deliver produce to public pickup points and schools in Penicuik.

To encourage local support and involvement, we aim to have a physical presence in the town centre (working with the Trust) and at Ladywood (working with the Penicuik Community Sport and Leisure Foundation)

We will have a presence on the internet to record the project's development and garner support worldwide.

Our income will come from food purchasers, from the use of our facilities by groups, from members and supporters.

We expect to apply for climate challenge funding to cover a proportion of our expenditure towards reaching our goal of sustainable local food production.

We will have clear responsibilities and procedures in place for trading, health and safety, risk assessment, and insurance.

## **Organisation, governance, finance and risk**

The project will be organised and governed initially by its working group and supporters, acting democratically. We are currently under the umbrella of the established overall charitable constitution and governance of the Community Development Trust. We intend to develop our base of supporters through Friends of Penicuik Walled Garden and through volunteer investors. As the project progresses and acquires the responsibilities of holding a lease, employing staff, and trading, we will move to become an independent identity. The most suitable forms are being explored through our partners and advisers: we are likely to become a registered, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, but we are exploring the alternatives of becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) or a Community Interest Company (CIO).

Our financial starting point is from within Penicuik Community Development Trust's current annual receipts (£16,387) payments (£16,983) and assets (£10,958), many of which are earmarked for its particular charitable purposes (figures quoted are for the year ending 31 March 2009).

Project income, as we have noted, will arise in due course from sales of food produced in the Garden, from the use of our facilities and services by groups, and from members and supporters and fundraising efforts. We intend to apply for funding to help us support our aims and objectives. For example, we expect to apply for climate challenge funding to cover a proportion of our expenditure towards reaching our goal of sustainable local food production. We will seek travel bursaries for reciprocal visits to other projects.

This report to the Penicuik Estate Partnership is merely the preliminary to a fully developed business plan. It is early for us to undertake detailed financial planning, but we have looked at some broad parameters:

From produce trading when the garden is in production, and with reciprocal trading to assure year-long continuity, we would aim for the equivalent of at least 60 £20 fruit and vegetable boxes weekly, net proceeds of £5 per box would yield £15,000 per annum.

There will be a number of expenses and outgoings associated with the restoration and operation of the Garden. One of the most important of these once finances are in place will be the employment of a project co-ordinator at around £30,000 per annum (including NI & pension provision at 20%). Some of this we would expect to recoup from service agreements with Garden users, from visitor income and members fundraising support. A proportion will be sought from climate challenge funding.

In undertaking the project we will be moving progressively, carefully developing our capacity and resources before taking on new tasks. This is essential to minimise risk to the project. Risk to its users will be minimised by putting proper Health & Safety arrangements in place in good time. A subgroup to supervise our procedures for Health, Safety, Risks and Insurances will be set up from the initiation of the project. We intend to secure adequate public liability and employers' liability and other insurances to protect the interests of those in the Garden and the property of the project.



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