


	<h1>Notes</h1> 
Name of Meeting:	Isle of Wight Council (IWC) Environment & Sustainability Forum: Community Gardens and orchards, Allotments and Land-share
Date and Time:	10 th April 2025, 18:00 – 19:40
Chair:	Alaster Sims – Service Manager for Climate, Coast and Environment
Attendees:	Katy Hurd (Climate Change and Biosphere Coordinator); Pete Johnstone; Joanna Ridley; Julie Newell; Ben Gribble; Alison Killick; Martin, Sarah-Jane; Claire Draper; Patricia Godridge; Penny Acton; Jane Popov; Robert Packham; Kathy Domaille; Sarah R; Claire Critchison; Gillian Stokes; Alison Pearce; Tony Gillingham; Charity Garnett; Sarah Talbot; Lora Peacey-Wilcox; Helen and Andrew; Judith Moore; Jon Jewett; Rob Sauven; Leigh Jackman; Catherine Hammond; Paul OFEI-MANU
Notes:	<p>Grow Gurnard - Presentation by Penny Acton and Jane Popov</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow Gurnard is a project initiated by Gurnard Residents in partnership with a the Meadow View Housing developers. The organisation has been gifted one acre of land and are currently in the process of developing a Community Garden/Farm. Their mission is “Bring people together, grow food and help the planet!” • The project started with the transformation of Old School Meadow which was Gurnard Primary Schools school garden up until the closure of the school. With the help of Jane Popov and her husband this derelict garden was given a new lease of life and through doing so highlighted the involvement of local children and the impact of community efforts. Highlights include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old School Meadow: A small piece of land leased by the Isle of Gurnard Parish Council from the Isle of Wight Council. Initially neglected, it was revitalized through community efforts. • Community Involvement: Local children, including a young girl named Lily, participated in growing vegetables like French beans. The project saw significant improvement within months. • Challenges: The site had been neglected for years, with overgrown beds and unused land. COVID-19 further delayed progress. • Support: Green Gym and local volunteers, especially Jane and her husband, played a crucial role in the transformation. • Future Plans: Continued development and engagement with local families, especially those with young children. • Meadow View - The next phase of Grow Gurnard was initiated when the Meadow View Housing Development was being planned. Highlights of this project are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meadow View Development: A large private housing project involving rewilding 9 hectares of land as a SANG (<i>Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. This term is used in environmental planning and conservation to refer to areas that are designated to provide recreational space and reduce visitor pressure on more sensitive natural habitats, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).</i>) The community aimed to secure

a hectare for growing space. Incredible relationship with the developers including full support for social media presence.

- **Shared Harvest:** Transitioned from the idea of community-supported agriculture to a more flexible shared harvest model, involving both funding and labor contributions.
- **Field Trips:** Visits to various community farms in Bristol and local permaculture sites provided inspiration and ideas.
- **Community Events:** Successful events have been held to gain community input and involvement, including a village hall stand and a public gathering in the field.
- **Volunteers:** Skilled volunteers, including Lucian, contributed to activities like pruning and grafting workshops.
- **No-Dig Gardening:** Implemented no-dig techniques using locally sourced materials like cardboard, wood chippings, and compost. Men in Sheds provided a beautiful notice board.
- **Primary School Project:** The project has led to an incredible relationship being made with Gurnard Primary School whereby 14 workshop sessions have been offered to help both pupils and parents to learn about food (where food comes from, why we should grow it in Gurnard). Every class from R – Yr6.

Questions and Answers

- **AS:** Emphasized the importance of reducing the carbon footprint of food and supporting local farming, applauded the school partnership.
- **JP:** Happy to share school lesson information. Pros and Cons. Mentioned Grow Gurnard newsletters. **Think Globally. Eat Locally.** **PA:** Contact Penny who can pass on to Jane at Penny.Acton@Gurnardparishcouncil.gov.uk
- **PA:** They will be taking part in the Biosphere Festival. Also agree with the suggestion that they become a Biosphere Story for the website.
- **CC:** Is Gurnard using it as their school garden? **JP:** Not yet but they do have a very strong Forest School.
- **CC:** Has a similar piece of land in Niton that they are hoping to bring on as well. Looking to find out more about Grow Gurnard as inspiration. Suggested talking to the Developer about providing water and electric. **PA:** Some ideas have been brought forward and they are looking to do a bore hole for water with solar panels in order to provide a pump and power in the future. **JP:** Need planning for sheds etc. Lots more to do.
- **CG:** This project would work really well with the Biosphere packs being discussed for schools.
- **PJ:** Would be a great Biosphere story to put up on their website.

Leigh Jackman presentation on the Godshill Food Forest

- **Leigh Jackman:** Introduced the Godshill Food Forest and the concept of food forests. Mentioned the Green Spaces Fund and the involvement of the community in various projects. Key Points raised:

- **Food Forest:** A structured approach involving nut trees, fruit trees, soft fruits, and support plants like strawberries and herbs.
- **Community Building:** Efforts to engage the community in nature-based activities and gardening. Do have space for allotments as well (looking for people to want them).
- **Green Spaces Fund (greener Godshill):** Secured up to £20,000 for greening Godshill, including heritage seeds, greening verges (integrating camomile and creeping thyme, bee spaces and food), wildlife trust assessments, and waste reduction initiatives. HIWWT will come in and assess our spaces and optimise green spaces and optimise corridors. Assess people's gardens for growing food. Also reduce waste and look at home insulation.
- **Youth Group:** The Hive, a new youth group, will be involved in the funded activities.

Questions and Answers

- **RS:** Asked about the Green Spaces Fund and its details.
- **LJ:** Flagged to Godshill by Chillerton. Explained the fund and its benefits, including heritage seeds and support from wildlife trusts. Link provided here for next round: www.greening-campaign.org
- **RB:** Please share any grants that are available. Could a group be set up of likeminded parties to share funds?
- **PA:** Mentioned Wootton Parish Council getting 2000 Fruit Trees
- **CC:** Discussed the importance of planning for community benefits in new developments.
- **LJ:** Discussed how she brought the community together with a community group named Godshill Matters (met in the pub!). Asked people how they saw the future of Godshill, what they would like in the village, how would you want it to develop. Looking for ways to achieve net zero.

Presentation by Claire Draper – Allotment 15

- **Claire Draper:** Shared her experience with community gardening and the challenges of funding and support. Mentioned the success of training programs and the need for formal qualifications.
 - **Plot 15:** An allotment plot used for training and community gardening. Provided permission from Allotment Association for limited public access as long as they are there under Claire's public liability insurance. Activities include building sheds, greenhouses, and implementing permaculture techniques. Started last November. Happened organically after a series of people asking if there were jobs.
 - **Training Programs:** Free step up introductory courses. Introduction to horticulture, tailored to individual needs. Success in helping trainees become self-employed gardeners.
 - **Funding Challenges:** Difficulty in securing grants due to business registration. Exploring partnerships with colleges for formal qualifications and potential sponsorship schemes.
 - **Future Plans:** Expansion to two additional sites, contingent on securing funding. Promoting horticulture as a profession, green skills deficit of about 200,000. How do we get kids into horticulture?

Questions and Answers

- **AS:** Asked about certification for training programs.
- **CD:** If from IW College then they are certifying them (level 1 or Level 2 certification). Discussed partnerships with colleges and the potential for apprenticeship schemes. A lot of people do not want to be doing any form of formal certification. Talking to Sparsholt. Qualify in terms of the correct educational opportunities but not an educational centre. So looking to partner with an educational centre so people who want certification can do that. Also looking at funded training opportunities.
- **PJ (in comments):** Suggested reaching out to Youth Trust and Royal Countryside Fund

Sarah-Jane Martin – Family Practitioner - Children's Disability Team – Isle of Wight Council

- **Sarah Jane Martin:** Shared the success of the allotment project for children in care and disabled children. Highlighted the positive impact on mental health and community involvement. Alternative setting for young people to learn good skills.
- **Ventnor Allotments:** Two beds allocated for the children's disability team and the leaving care team. Raised beds designed for wheelchair accessibility (Created by Men-in-Sheds).
- **Community Engagement:** Collaboration with local schools, churches, and cafes. Positive feedback from young participants, including improved mental health and reduced anger. Linked with "Come-Dine-With-Me" project. Learning to grow their own food and then provide it to local figures.
- **Cookbook** – Developed their own cook-book.
- **Wildlife Pond:** St Catherine's school have taken over this section and developing the pond and making it an area for pollinators.
- **AQA Program:** Offers certificates for learning allotment skills. Involvement of occupational therapy and youth offending teams. Great feedback from youth taking part "makes us feel calmer".

Questions and Answers

- **CC:** Asked about visiting the allotment project. **SM:** Invited participants to visit and see the project in action (will be after school or in holidays). Will get in contact with KH.

Co-benefits and Allotments - KH

- **Allotments:** There are 24 allotment sites on the Island with over 730 allotment plots of varying sizes.
 - Price varies - £30 - £100p.a depending on size / location
 - On average a 1-3 year waiting list with very few having available lots (Ryde and Merstone have 1 available and Ryde will be looking to increase their waiting list with a media release soon)
 - Majority of sites have water
 - Some sites share composting, other have individual composting

- **Co-benefits: Discussed the varying co-benefits brought up throughout the evening including:**
 - Mental Health: Reduced stress, anxiety, and depression from calming and therapeutic activity.
 - Social Connections: Social interactions - sense of belonging, lifelong friends, a social group
 - Sense of Achievement: Self-esteem and accomplishment, learning a new skill
 - Physical Activity: Exercise improves cardiovascular health and muscle strength.
 - Nutrition: Fresh, home-grown produce can improve diet quality and overall nutrition.
 - Immune System: Exposure to soil microbes can boost the immune system and overall health.
 - Sustainable Practices: Composting and organic farming.
 - Biodiversity: Plants support local wildlife, which can help ecosystems adapt to climate change.
 - Urban Heat Island Effect: In urban green spaces gardens can reduce temperatures and improve air quality.
 - Plant Growth: Carbon storage through photosynthesis.
 - Soil Health: Garden practices can enhance soil quality by crop rotating, composting, mulching avoiding soil compaction.
- **KH Question: Is there a need for additional community gardens or do we have enough already? Could this be attained by a land-share project? Could the Grow Gurnard project be replicated within future housing development projects? How to retain momentum once a project is set up. Open forum for discussion on our community's needs.**
 - **LPW:** Thanked the team for putting the webinar together and expressed thanks for all the positive work being done across the Island within this space.
 - **CG:** Mentioned the acquisition of land 6.5 acre field in St Helens for community growing and the importance of networking and sharing resources. Nature connection for young people is the key aim here. Mentioned the Cornwall Sustainable Food Hub – local Food Production and its benefits on the Environment. **“Joining the dots for nature”** to share best practise and resources. <https://sustainablefoodcornwall.org.uk/>
 - **AS:** Agreed on the importance of collaboration and networking.
 - **PA:** Likes the idea of “joining the dots for nature”. **AS:** Yes we can look to getting this information together and disseminating it.
 - **JM (in comments):** I have an acre in Adgestone I have wondered about how to go about making it available for community growing, probably more for people in Sandown. But I want it to be developed organically. **CG:** Jude Geddes who lives in Sandown has experience of setting up community gardens on the mainland and is keen to do something in or near Sandown... How exciting! **LPW:** Judith, I am sure Cllr Debbie Andre would be interested and has good contacts. **CH:** We are interested in the land share idea too in Ventnor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SM (in comments): 5 and 6th of July is Bonchurch open gardens, come and see Ventnor allotment. • CG (in comments): I wonder if there is a forum that we could share things, including grants and stuff, but even down to seed swapping! KH: I believe G.I.V.E (Green Island veg Economy I think) still do this via the Facebook page that was set up in lockdown. • AS: Thanked everyone for their participation and concluded the meeting.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KH: Will conduct a mapping exercise to identify community gardens and resources. Once this has been done then we can establish the interest in meeting together more formally (maybe an in person forum meeting). • KH: Provided her email for further information: sustainability@iow.gov.uk • PA: Provided her email for any questions about Grow Gurnard: penny.action@gurnardparishcouncil.co.uk
Upcoming Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biosphere Festival: 28 June - 6th July. A week-long event celebrating our Biosphere status with various activities planned throughout the week. The event will be kicked off at FOCAS, the weekend of 28/29 June at the Wild heart Animal Sanctuary. If you would like to be involved, please register your event before the end of April. Please email Martha Henson at Hello@iwbiosphere.org.
PSQ:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
AOB:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following links were either shared in the chat or provided after the meeting:
Next Meeting	June 2025



From small,
neglected
'raised' beds to
a hectare of
growing space!

In just a few months

...from neglect to growing and educating.

Lily's bean grew from a single leggy plant brought from a windowsill and planted in her veg bed.



With a lot of hard work put in by adult volunteers (mainly Jane and Nic assisted by some visits from Green Gym) three beds are growing veg, the small fire damaged bed is a communal herb garden near the mud kitchen and the fourth, beside the holly tree has some soft fruit but is left mainly for pollinators. There's a bee hotel and a slow worm home on it too.



To start at the beginning ..

2009 -10 Gurnard Primary School moved from the Cockleton Lane/Hilton Road site to Baring Road.

2012 - Gurnard Parish Council (GPC) took out a lease with IWC for the old school orchard (includes the 'raised' beds), pond area and playing fields adjacent to the old school site. Planning permission for seven houses was granted to replace the old school built area.

2014 - Friends of Cockleton Meadow was formed (membership included GPC councillors and local volunteers). With the support of IW Green Gym the area was mostly de-brambled, the playing field seeded as a wildflower meadow, a small copse of trees planted, a compost area put in, a container (funded via Tesco) was craned in, a mud kitchen with rain catchment was erected , the pond area cleared and the concrete hard standing in the orchard area became a fire basket (commissioned for the spot) stand with bespoke seating circled around it.

2017 - GPC took back full control and renamed the area Old School Meadow (OSM). A mowing contractor was employed, a strict No Fires' policy introduced and the container locked for safety but otherwise little attention was paid to the area.

2020-21 - during Covid an illicit break in the top hedge was forced and it became common practice for dog walkers to go onto the (recently sold) private land beyond the meadow although it was an area still used for haymaking. Some of the machinery from the container was sold via closed bid auction and the fire basket gifted to Gurnard Scouts. A fence was erected around the orchard and mud kitchen area creating a dog free zone. Dog mess is a problem, although the poor behaviour is limited to a few owners so many animals use the area it is a constant concern.

2022 -A local fruit tree specialist pruned apple tree over two days but GPC declined an offered maintenance plan. The raised beds were becoming a potential safety hazard and discussions were held on removing them.

2023 - An attempt to start a Forest School failed because the no fire rule is absolute - especially after the drought left OSM a tinder box and new houses are close by. Decision to try reinstating raised beds made.

2024 - a representative of G.I.V.E. was asked to co-ordinate work with families with young children, especially those from Gurnard Pines, to take on the raised beds and start growing there. (March) A visit from Green Gym and 775ltre bag of compost was provided by GPC , in July a £600 budget set up by GPC. The change is stunning.

And then the SANG

The **TURQUOISE** circle is next to the point where the break at the top of OSM leads into the adjacent SANG which is associated with the big Meadow View development (fronts onto Place Road).

Big **BLUE** cross – is roughly where the Grow Gurnard site is planned within the SANG.

The work that has been started at the Grow Gurnard site has helped to bring more life and activity into Old School Meadow – it's a wonderful place for children to play and it means OSM is no longer simply a dog walking field. Lots of happy people though some dog owners are voicing complaint

I loved the children's Risk Assessment made while a pruning workshop was underway in the Orchard- I trust I will never have to face a black panther and hope I am not the Gurnard Witch! Over to Jane who has wrought this magic!



Bristol Field trip February 2024





Village Event - with activities at the hall, a litter pick across the parish and joyous involvement at OSM orchard



Team



Sample Footer Text



Comm -unity Picnic Aug 2024





First
hedging
from
Woodland
Trust
Nov 24

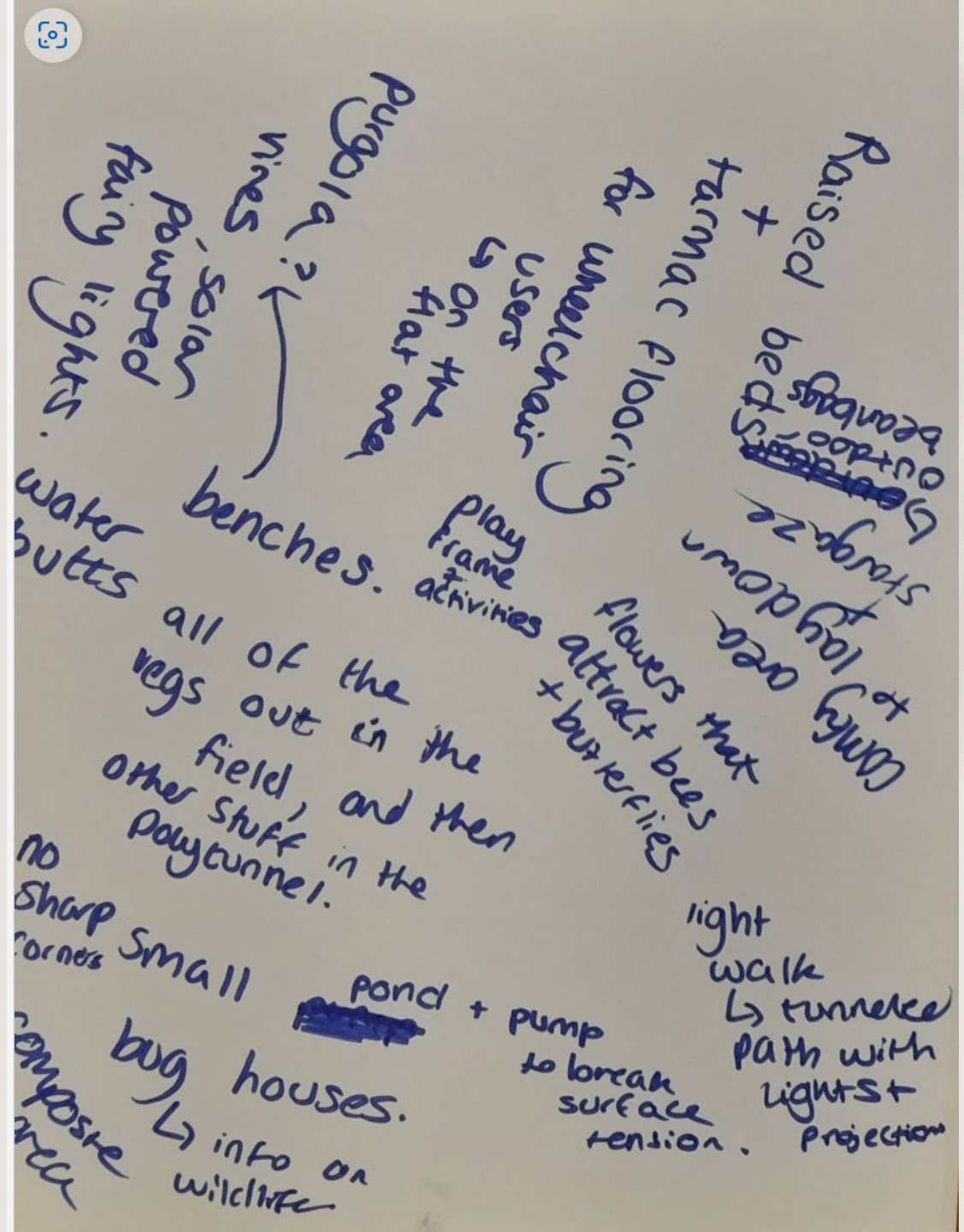
Christmas
celebrations
Dec 24

Sample Footer Text





NHS Youth Forum Jan 25



Grafting workshop Mar 25



Bed-laying in GG site March 25

Men in Sheds' donation March 25

