



## Dunton Community Garden Group

Charity No. 1113186

### Annual Report to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011

Normally we would single out one or two highlights for the year. But the Fruit & Veg project has been a continuous highlight; exceeding its targets in all areas. None the less, the strategy and planning days have been instrumental in marking a change of direction for the group. Now that the group is firmly established at Great Close, we feel it is time to engage more with Dunton in general, with local groups in particular and to focus attention on being of relevance to the under-25s.

**Membership.** Membership demonstrates to funders that we are a viable group. Membership at 31st December 2010 was 193 (15 up from last year).

**Volunteers.** The Garden would not exist without the efforts of the volunteers. The amount of effort is measured in 'garden sessions', which are roughly half-days. The number of sessions in 2010 was almost 2000 which is a huge increase on last year's 1100. Clear indication of the value of The Garden and the need for staff to manage the volunteers.

**Working with other Groups.** We continue to forge links with other groups through their work at Great Close; by us doing work for them; providing a venue for them to visit or giving talks. The following groups benefited in 2010.

Dunton Lower School, Dunton Pre School, St Mary Magdalene Parish Church - Dunton, Biggleswade Community Mental Health Team, Biggleswade Carers Group, Bedfordshire Probation Unpaid Work Unit, Potton Veggie box shop, The Prospects Trust  
Dunton WI, East Feast, Stevenage Amblers, Leisure 50, Northill and Ickwell WI, Biggleswade Scout Fellowship, Langford Garden Club, The Centre at St Paul's, Anglican Guild of St Andrew's

**Staff.** We can only employ staff if we have funding. The Dunton Fruit & Veg project funded by The National Lottery employ Sarah and Loraine from 2010 to 2012. Craig is employed through a variety of smaller grants. Another way of employing staff is through Government initiatives - Aidan, Karl and Linda have been on work placements during 2010.

**Committee.** Paul stepped down from the committee. We thank him for his work and continued involvement. We have two new members. Judy Rowley joined us before Christmas and Anne Smith agreed to join the committee again having already taken on the role of secretary. The committee met 11 times. The current members are Frank James (chair), Rich Bevan (vice-chair), Anne Smith (secretary), Chris Bugg (treasurer), Alan Dansey, John Coombs, Celia Walpole, Sandra Williams, Ted Joyce and Judy Rowley. Jenny Pates also attends committee meetings.

Guests are welcome to ask to attend any meeting.

In addition to the committee meetings, there was a "strategy day" where we met to discuss the direction of the group for the next 3 years. This was followed up by a "planning day", attended by 21 staff and volunteers, which prioritised the work.

**Visitors.** We know that 1106 people visited, because we counted these. We also know that many people visit when no-one is counting. If we include dog-walkers (as many as 5 per day), this would be another 1500. There were planned visits from 2 walking groups, 2 WI's, Dunton Church Sunday Club, Prospects Trust, Dunton Lower School, Dunton Preschool, Garden Club from the school, Three Counties Radio Treasure Hunt, Retired Scout Leaders' Group

**Talks.** One talk was given in 2010, to a group in Biggleswade: If anyone is interested in learning how to speak in public, this is a good way to practice your skills.

**Training.** Energize is a training organisation who have much impressed the group. Their self-confidence improvement training has been particularly enjoyable. There has also been First Aid training and Basic Food Hygiene training.

**Funding.** Grants used during the year came from: COMMA, Big Lottery Food Scheme, Dunton Parish Council, Steel Trust, Comic Relief, Hertfordshire Rural Transport Partnership, Yapp Foundation

**Produce.** We had a new trolley created by Kath and Graham Ambrose - this was part of the Dunton Fruit & Veg project. Whilst it looks splendid, it is a bit difficult to move and can be top heavy. We are looking at ways to utilise it better. Sales of produce have been excellent. Over £2500. The shop in Potton has helped greatly in the sales. We are hoping that The March Hare will be able to sell produce in the future.

**Events.** The Grand Opening of Great Close was the major event in 2010. This was filmed by LocalNewsTV. The film can be seen on the internet. Sir Graham Wynne, former chief executive of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds performed the ceremony which also celebrated the Dunton Fruit & Veg project. One of the features of this project is the setting up and running of events. A list of 2011 events can be found on our website.

**Publicity.** Jenny appeared on Biggles FM. The Grand Opening film is on the intranet.

**Governance.** We continue to review our policies annually. We are working on two new ones - Financial Reserves and Staff Sickness and Absence. In addition, following the staff induction exercise, we will review this policy and update the Health & Safety policy.

**Accommodation Project.** There was further work on the infrastructure at Great Close. The biggest difference was made by the installation of the telephone line enabling us to run the group from the field. The water supply was turned on. The most obvious change was the construction of a three-sided shed. The kitchenette has been refurbished. Improvements to paths and ramps have been made.

**Dunton Fruit & Veg.** The project really swung into action this year. All of the targets set in the funding application have been met.

**Objective 1 - Two new part-time jobs, each created for three years of the project;**

**Progress** Two part time jobs have been created. Recruitment was carried out during January and February 2010. Both new members of staff started work on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2010

**Objective 2 - 25% year on year increase in income from the sale of produce during the three years of the project;**

**Progress** During this first year of the project we have made a total income of £2559.82. This is an excellent start to the project and we hope that the project will continue in the same way over the next year.

We are now assessing each crop in terms of harvest volume and income to enable us to plan for next years growing season with a view to maximising income from the space that we have while still growing a wide range of crops.

**Objective 3 - Two Big Open Afternoons, three food celebration events, six workshops per year focussed on learning and the development of skills;**

**Progress** Two open afternoons – one in April and the Grand Opening in July. 3 food celebrations and 8 workshops were held.

In addition a 6 week lunch time garden club was run for pupils from year 4.

**Objective 4 - 50% increase in gardening skills amongst beneficiaries by the end of year three of the project, measured through before and after reviews;**

**Progress** This continues to be monitored as beneficiaries start and finish on the project. In addition, a monthly record is kept of tasks carried out in the garden, which also shows the activities that beneficiaries have taken part in over a particular time frame – hence showing the experiences that they have had and the skills they will have developed during their involvement in the garden. All workshops and events continue to be evaluated. In addition the lunch time garden club was evaluated by the participants.

**Objective 5 - An increase in the number of beneficiary sessions from 1153 to 2800 by the end of the project.**

**Progress** Sessions ran 5 days a week until the end of October, and over the winter for 4 days.

This brings the number of sessions held during the first year of the project to 2312.

Frank James. Feb 2011