

# Bulletin

July 2026

## In this edition

- Championing food growing in our area
- Councillors visit the Lower Common East site
- The History of Allotments in Bath
- Spotlight on the Lower Common East site
- Partner success- Alice Park Community Garden wins lottery funding
- Potential for Combe Down site to be compulsorily purchased by BANES Council

## Championing Food Growing

We all know that growing food locally has multiple benefits. It provides access to nutritious and environmentally appropriate food, buffers people against food inflation and improves food resilience. Then there are all the other health and welfare benefits, including keeping fit, improving mental health, encouraging social inclusion and wellbeing. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bath Allotment Association not only aims to protect existing allotments but seeks to expand local food growing spaces. As long-standing members know, this is an uphill struggle. Allotment land in and around Bath is very attractive to developers and, although new housing developments schemes are meant to set aside land for allotments or growing space, there is little sign of this happening. To make sure the allotments remain a key part of the vision for Bath, our officers lobby the Council and arrange site meetings with Councillors to ensure that local politicians are aware of the issues affecting our membership. Our Chair's report below on a visit the Association organised to the Lower Common East site is illustrative of the work going on behind the scenes and our article on the History of Allotments explains the legislative context.



## Trading Hut

The Trading Hut will be open from 10.00-12.00 on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> July. It will also open from 11.00 -1.00 on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2026 as a one-off to correspond with the BAA/BOG joint social event (see below). It will close during August apart from a special opening on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2026 to overlap with our trail celebrating National Allotment Week.

## Water Butts are Back!

The recent very hot weather has, once again, emphasised the impact that climate change is having on growing. If you are not capturing rainwater already why not buy and install one of our **heavily discounted water butts**. We expect delivery to be in the next few weeks and the cost will be £15 per butt (subsidised from our WaterMyPlot grant). Advanced orders are already coming in so if you would like purchase one, please email Maria at [info@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:info@banes-allotments.org.uk) to check availability and add your name to the list. If you would like to explore using a local contractor (for a fee) to help you install your new butts please email us at [planning@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:planning@banes-allotments.org.uk) with your plot number and site and we will put you in touch with him

## Councillors visit Lower Common East Allotments Site

On a warm Thursday morning representatives from BAA met with Councillors Oli Henman, Climate Change and portfolio holder for allotments, John Leach, Advocate for Climate Resilience and Paul Roper, ward councillor and lead for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development including corporate estates. Charlie Love, site rep, and Jacky Wilkinson, BAA Planning Officer, joined us to talk through the various site-specific issues as well as those relating to allotments in general. Site specific discussions included:

- Unmet demand for growing space on the site: LCE waiting list is over 70 and this is increasing because of Western Riverside and new residential developments (predominantly flat) along the Lower Bristol Road. None of these schemes have dedicated growing space built into their plans.
- Bringing under cultivation tracts of under-utilised land on the site – overgrown plots and the area bordering the conifers along the Upper Bristol Road.
- Tree encroachment on the plots bordering Victoria Park rendering land unsuitable for cultivation.
- Potential for increasing number of plots through splitting larger plots.
- BAA and tenant improvement projects including microplots, repair and refurbishment of the communal shed, clearance working parties, proposal for a wildlife area on disused land, the development of on-site production of plant liquid feeds.

Julia Cleveland, joint BAA rep, commented

“I feel there is a willingness from LCE plot holders to be active members and take on day to day upkeep and assist in maintaining the whole allotment site. Helping other plot holders and maintaining some of the paths, and bays. Also helping with some of the overgrowth. However, the larger projects are not viable for individuals. There is clearly a need to have the larger trees around and over the site regularly monitored, managed pruned and cut back.”

The councillors made valuable contributions and suggestions regarding the use of underutilised ground and overgrown plots for on-site composting and new allotments. They agree with BAA that there should be a plan for the site which showed where plots could be split to create medium sized plots. smaller developments.



## Upcoming Events

Why not sign up for one of our workshops to get some tips from experienced growers on ways in which we can adapt our cultivation practices to be more sustainable. Workshops are free and open to Bath Allotments Association. See the side panels below for what's on in the next month or so. A full list of forthcoming events can be found on our [website](#).



*Meeting with Councillors on LCE. From left to right John Roper, Oli Henman, Erica Draisey, Charlie Love and John Leach*

We were heartened to hear that the Council is committed to retaining allotments, as indicated in its ambition to restore Combe Down Allotments, and to meeting statutory requirements as well as the need for new allotments for new developments. For our part we are working to build relationships with the various departments who are responsible for allotments. This is very complicated now as allotments currently straddle several departments including:

- Parks (day to day management),
- Capital Delivery (major repairs and delivering new sites)
- Corporate Estates (land ownership),
- Green Infrastructure/Place Shaping (Strategy)
- Planning (protecting sites and provision of new sites).

Oli Henman has also asked us to prepare a set of recommendations to include:

- Specific maintenance/repair projects
- Ideas for service improvement/partnership
- Wider funding opportunities, including use of CIL and S106
- Potential new locations for allotments

We would welcome your comments and feedback to shape our recommendation. Please email your comments to [chairman@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:chairman@banes-allotments.org.uk)

## The History of Allotments in Bath



Understanding the history of local allotments is an important factor in safeguarding our existing sites and appealing for more food growing space. We are fortunate to be able to draw on the work of Malcolm Hitchcock, a local historian, who researched Bath allotment sites back in the early 2000s.

Bath's allotments have existed for over a century, with around ten sites shown on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, including the Combe Down site which was sadly lost to cultivation last year. Early allotments were mostly run by private organisations such as churches, co-operative societies and landowners. Bath City Corporation initially operated only one site at Crescent Gardens (later redeveloped for housing and Charlotte Street Car Park) but, in 1908, Bath City Council became more directly involved in the provision of allotments in response to national legislation.



## Celebratory Summer Social Event

**A joint gathering for members of Bath Allotment Association and Bath Organic Group**

 **Saturday 25th July**  
 **1.00 pm – 3.00 pm**

**Bath Organic Group Garden, Lower Common West (entrance opposite Hop Pole Inn on Upper Bristol Road)**

Come and join us for a relaxed summer gathering celebrating our shared love of growing, gardening and good company.

Please bring something **sweet or savoury made from your own produce** to share.

We'll be providing:

- Earth oven pizzas
- Fresh salads
- A selection of drinks and fizz

## Music

If we can persuade some of our talented members, there'll be music too! If you sing, play an instrument, or fancy busking amongst the brassicas, we'd love to hear from you.

This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy each other's company, celebrate the growing season, and share delicious food in a beautiful garden setting.

Please [RSVP](#)

Council-managed allotments grew steadily in the first half of the twentieth century, eventually reaching a peak of about 2,500 plots across 150 acres in Bath in the early '50s. However, numbers later declined because of commercial pressure, municipal housing needs and reduced leisure interest.

Recent years have seen a decline in available allotment land but an increased demand for food growing spaces. Bath currently has over 1000 [municipal plots](#) on 23 sites, and, unsurprisingly, most have a long waiting list.

Malcolm's research focused on the first 40 years of municipal allotments, which was mainly a period of growth. We provide a summary of his work here because it informs the current position of allotments in Bath. If you are interested, you can access Malcolm's article written in The Survey, the magazine of the Survey of Old Bath in 2006 [here](#) and you may also like to read Jacqueline Burrows' excellent research on the [history of the Combe Down allotments site](#).

## Allotments in Bath: The Legislative Background

The principles on which allotments were founded can probably be traced back to the General Inclosure Act 1845 and Commons Act 1876 that established the early standards for providing land to the landless poor. By 1908 the importance of local food growing, particularly in areas of high-density terraced housing with small gardens, was so firmly entrenched that the Small Holdings and Allotments Act was passed requiring local authorities to provide allotments where demand existed, including by compulsory purchase if needed. Much of today's allotment heritage stems back to this Act and subsequent legislation. For example, legislation in the 1920s set a maximum plot size of  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre (approximately 1000 square metres) though Bath's standard plots were usually smaller, at about 10 perches (around 250 square metres) Although there are few full-size plots on today's sites, we still see echoes of this legislation in current plot sizes. Similarly, the Allotment Acts required that future town planning development should include provision for allotments and added the requirement that a site could only be closed with the permission of the Secretary of State. We still rely on this legislation today to protect existing allotments and to support our appeals for more food growing space.

## About Malcolm Hitchcock

Those of us who have lived in Bath for many years will remember Malcolm well even though, sadly, he is no longer with us. He was a prominent member of the local History of Bath Research Group and wrote extensively on Social Housing with a particular focus on the Dolemeads area of Bath. Malcolm led some excellent special "Mayor of Bath" guided walks around the city introducing us to less well-known aspects of Bath's history, particularly its municipal allotments and housing.



Rainbow over Monksdale Allotments



## Bath Council Allotments

Bath's first municipal allotment created at Rosehill, Larkhall and was followed in 1912 by the acquisition of land for allotments at Coronation Avenue, South Twerton. The first World War saw a massive push towards home food production and Councils were encouraged to expand allotment land to counter food shortages. Expansion continued in the 20s and 30s when many new sites were acquired including Bloomfield, Englishcombe/The Oval, Lower Common, Fairfield, Twerton Brick Works, Canal Gardens and Prior Park Road. This initiative was, in part, a response to the surge of returning servicemen facing high levels of unemployment and a desire to alleviate food poverty.

The second World War once again placed emphasis on the need for home food production but finding suitable land for growing has always proved difficult in Bath. This is partly because Bath's steep topography makes cultivation difficult in many areas but also there has always been resistance from landowners and, to some extent, from the Council to set aside land for growing. The desire to preserve the Bath landscape and encourage tourism by retaining uncultivated open land has limited space available for allotments. The demand for allotments declined somewhat in the early post-war years and in 1955 the Allotments sub-committee was wound up and responsibility for municipal allotments moved to The Parks Department, where it still rests today. Some of the early allotment sites have now been lost to other developments.

In more recent years, particularly following the Covid lockdown, there has been a resurgence of interest in allotments and the need for food resilience in the face of environmental, economic, political and social change. As an Association we face a constant battle to stop the erosion of food growing spaces in our city but as Erica's report on LCE shows, we are on the case.

Interested in finding out the history of your site? Documents held at Bath Record Office, allow the history of Bath's municipal allotments to be traced. Do let us know what you find.

## Dates for your Diary

Twerton Flower Show and Family  
Fun Day 18<sup>th</sup> July 12.00-4.00  
Pennyquick Park

[More details here](#)

Mikron Allotment Theatre  
performing 'Wensleydale Whey'

18th July 1.00- 3.00 Beechen Cliff  
Methodist Church, Shakespeare  
Avenue, Bath

[More details here](#)

## Wild about Bath

Summer Butterfly and Wildflower  
Walk

25<sup>th</sup> July 10.00-12.00

Meet at the Church of St James,  
Southstoke BA2 7DT

[More details here](#)

## Spotlight on the Lower Common East Site

Lower Common East sits north of the Upper Bristol Road and with its sister site, Lower Common West, stretches from Marlborough Lane to the children's playground of Victoria Park. The first allotments were created in 1917 to support the war, but the main establishment of the council-owned site was in 1921. But there has been growing on the site for a long time before that.

Various archaeological excavations have been carried out on the area, the main one in the mid-1980's. There is evidence of an Iron Age settlement on the site with various rings found, thought to be dwellings. But the real development was in the 4<sup>th</sup> century with an extensive Roman villa complex centred on what is now the communal shed car park, which had a bath house with piped water and seemingly was later developed into a workshop with a glass factory. The area had extensive fields laid out and if you are on plot 157/8, you are growing on the site of a former gatehouse.



*Roman ruins excavated at Lower Common East, now beneath the car parking area.*

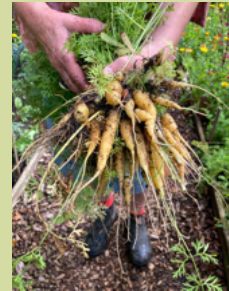


*The LCE shed renovated with BAA funds*

Many people will have noticed the newly refurbished communal shed which was completed using Association funds. The locks can be opened with standard allotment keys and the Association is planning to establish a plant tea and tincture station there.

## CropDrop is back up and running

The distribution of this year's allotment fruit and vegetables to local charities has started again this month. Thanks to all those who make it happen



## Rescheduled Course

Unfortunately, Carol Stone's workshop on 'Dealing with Pests and Diseases' planned for 6<sup>th</sup> June had to be postponed because of heavy rain on that day. The good news is that this has now been rescheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> August 10.00 - 12.00 on Ring Common Site. Full details [here](#)

LCE continue to support Crop Drop. The site reps have recently had two communal meetings and there is a clear drive to work together to improve the site.

Anu Anand, Julia Cleveland and Charlie Love are the Association's site reps on Lower Common East so do say hello if you are on the site.

### Partner Success: Alice Park Community Garden.

We are delighted to announce that Alice Park Community Garden has been selected for Big Lottery funding to develop & sustain this wonderful space for everyone in the community who shares their passion for local food growing and the natural environment. This award will help secure the community garden's future over the next couple of years and will sustain this wonderful space for everyone in the community who shares their passion for local food growing and the natural environment. It will ensure that their education programme can remain focused on providing the skills and experience needed to prepare for future challenges and will enable the team to run a series of workshops focused on habitat creation, conservation & biodiversity.



*Alice Park Community Garden*

## Potential for Combe Down site to be compulsorily purchased by BANES Council

We have some very encouraging news about Combe Down allotments.

The Council has now formally confirmed that it is pursuing the acquisition of the Combe Down allotments site, with the intention of offering new allotment tenancies/licences if the acquisition is successful. This is a significant step forward for our campaign.

To help keep the momentum going, we now need your support.

Please email: [CAM@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:CAM@bathnes.gov.uk)

By: Friday 10 July

Subject: Combe Down Allotments Q1

Every email will help demonstrate the strong local demand for allotments in Combe Down.

If you would be interested in having an allotment in Combe Down—whether you registered your interest previously or are doing so for the first time—please email [CAM@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:CAM@bathnes.gov.uk) by Friday 10 July, quoting "Combe Down Allotments Q1" in the subject line or body of your email.

This is not a commitment to taking on an allotment. It is simply a way of showing the Council that there is strong and continuing community demand for allotments in Combe Down.

Please spare a couple of minutes to add your voice. Every email counts and the more people who respond, the stronger the case for securing this valuable community asset.



D

### Problem with Allium Leaf Miners?

The adult allium leaf miner is a small fly, only 3mm long, and inconspicuous. The damage is done by the maggot-like larvae, which tunnel into the leaves. Allium leaf miner feed on leeks, onions, chives, shallots, garlic and ornamental alliums and can ruin your crop. Find out what you can do about them here.

### Why are my onions bolting? Advice from King's Seeds.

Bolting is usually caused by sudden changes in temperature, whether that is extreme heat or unexpected cold spells early in the growing season. This year the frosts we experienced in May followed by recent hot temperatures have put many onion plants under stress. Keeping plants well watered can reduce this stress and reduce the chances of bolting. When onions bolt, they're essentially going into survival mode. The plant sends up a flower stalk and focuses on producing seed rather than growing the bulb. The good news is that bolted onions are perfectly edible. Simply snap out the seed head and use those onions first as they can develop a harder core centre.