

Trellis 3rd Annual Networking Conference

In association with the Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens (FCFCG)

'Growing Healthier, Wealthier, Fairer, Smarter & Greener through Gardening

- Scottish Government Policy: the Gardening Contribution.'

The 3rd Trellis conference was held this year on Wednesday 18th March 2009 at The Business Centre, Cardonald College, Glasgow, G52 3AY. The theme for this year's conference was built around the Scottish government aims for Scotland, reflecting the increasing need for gardening projects to be policy-aware and politically astute in their approach to seeking funding and positioning themselves within communities. A new venue for this year's conference in Glasgow enabled projects from the West and South of Scotland to access the conference more easily. Delegates regarded the conference facilities at Cardonald as good, if a little crowded at break times.



Some Conference Statistics:

The conference attracted **91** delegates, representing **48** Trellis network projects.

*Just a few of the Trellis delegates captured on camera after Conference 2009
(photo: Colin Stirling)*

In addition to network projects, there were many delegates, speakers and workshop presenters in attendance representing other organisations including:

- A Rocha
- Care Farms
- Churches Action for the Homeless
- Dundee City Council
- Fife Rheumatic Diseases Unit (NHS)
- Forth Valley College
- Glasgow City Council; Highland Council
- Langside College, Glasgow
- PAMIS
- Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health
- Rothsay Primary School (Isle of Bute)

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society
Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition
The New School, Dunkeld
West Lothian Council

Feedback, by word of mouth and via evaluation forms, on the conference was generally very positive. With 40 Evaluation Forms returned and several emails received about the day we are not short of information regarding what you felt was appropriate, inspiring and useful, as well as suggestions as to themes and speakers of interest for future events. The Keynote Speaker, Antonia Swinson, doubtless no stranger to controversy in her work as a journalist, aroused strong feelings in the audience. Opinion on her speech was divided between those who were not inspired to several who expressed unreserved praise for her speech and commented on it as being as "excellent". Antonia advised therapeutic gardening projects to regard themselves as being involved in the politics of land and also urged them to seek out their Local Authorities' 'Single Outcome Agreements' and be prepared to demonstrate the 'outcomes' of their projects, aligning them with SOA's in order to secure funding in the future.

Project Showcases

The morning session included the universally well received 'project showcases'. This year they included:

Gardening by the Clyde: Peter McMahon, Kelvinbank Resource Centre, Kilsyth

Greener Gardening by the Tay: Craig Allan & Billy Moan, Capability Scotland, Perth

Green Routes- the development of a new project: Gillian Forster, Stirlingshire

Ups and downs of gardening in a rural residential community: John Allison, Lothlorien, Dumfries.

The project showcases elicited lots of admiration for the projects featured and several commented on the inspiring nature of these projects and those featured in the workshops. Here are a few comments sent to us in evaluation forms:

"Hearing about other projects, activities and ideas, inspiring!"

"The project showcases – just hearing what others are doing – inspiring and gives me ideas for my own project."

"Strong steer in direction and ideas of what works/doesn't work"

"So many inspiring little ideas of how you can do things different, better."

Networking

Networking, as always, is a key function of the conference. The general lively buzz and noise of chatting certainly confirmed that many delegates were taking full advantage of this opportunity at Registration, coffee breaks and lunchtime. The main atrium contained several tables & display areas where projects displayed leaflets and materials for delegates to take away with them. In addition, Margaret Teale from The

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society was on hand to discuss the new RCHS Award Scheme.

This networking opportunity was appreciated by all, judging from the many references made to the benefits of talking to others in the same field. Several people commented on renewing old contacts and making some new ones:

“New contacts and supports for me, ideas re fundraising and activities.”

“Great bit of networking, lots of business cards and websites to check out on info/funding etc.”

“Local contacts with other projects, general level of enthusiasm!”

Many other delegates commented on what they would take away from the conference:

“We will be able to contact the other people for help and advice.”

“I now have a Fieldworker visit arranged to advise and look at the possibility of developing a sensory garden for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.”

“It has given me the confidence and support to move forward with setting up/running a therapeutic horticulture group.”

“Ideas for education projects. Contacts and info about horti awards for young people.”

Workshops

Five workshops were on offer, reflecting the theme of the conference:

1. “Horti-Therapy” - Developing the Profession: A short presentation from Trellis on how it supports therapeutic horticulture in Scotland and then opening up to delegates to discuss the future of therapeutic horticulture: the development of a professional body; development of training courses in Therapeutic Horticulture. *With Jenny Simpson & Vicki Ferguson, Trellis*

2. Healthier - Gardening & Arthritis: Gardening as part of an award winning community rehabilitation programme, including insights on the NHS perspective and case studies, *with Janet Harkess, Fife Rheumatic Diseases Unit.*

3. Wealthier – Social Firms and the restoration of a Walled Garden: **Some of the things you always wanted to know about social enterprise, but were afraid to ask!** An exploration of the social enterprise concept: its role in your organisation and some pointers in how to avoid mission drift, risky business and the perils of risk aversion, *with Kath Critchley, CATH Balharry, Perthshire.*

4. Greener – How a garden therapy project integrates with the ethos and activities of The Ecology Centre, *with Elspeth Killin, The Ecology Centre, Kinghorn, Fife.*

5. Smarter: Innovative, Accessible Training: Let me tell you about Parklea, why we see learning as so important and how we hope to bring benefit to the whole community, *With Robert Kelly, Training & Development Officer, Parklea Training Centre, Port Glasgow.*

Unfortunately the original Workshop 1, Developing School Grounds, had to be cancelled at the last minute, much to the disappointment of a few delegates who had come specifically for this. Trellis staff used this opportunity to stimulate debate and carry out some research in the replacement workshop ‘ “Horti –Therapy” developing the Profession’. A report on this workshop has been written and will be made available on the Trellis Web pages.

All the workshops were very well received and prompted comment such as:

“Very good – a lot of food for thought, very practical and useful information”

“Excellent, somewhere I want to visit.”

“Very Informative “

“Great: very low key, easy to understand”

“Very interesting project. Inspiring range of activities-would like to visit!”

Looking forward

Many suggestions were made by delegates on their evaluation sheets as to what they would appreciate in the way of event themes, speakers or other activities at future events. Some of these suggestions have caught our eye:

- Shadowing OT, GP’s and other health care professionals as part of training
- Host a debate involving funders, activists and politicians on funding & political commitment
- How the disability laws i.e. unrestricted access to all that have mobility problems may affect community gardens
- A conference slot for questions to the showcase presenters
- More school based projects & ideas
- Focus on Health promotion/physical activity government agenda
- Looking at other European and Nordic countries for inspiration and ideas about growing, environment, and social enterprise and community projects.
- A 2-day event hosted at a garden project of interest.
- How to improve early intervention with children regarding good food /good health ethos

We are always open to suggestion and will do our best to accommodate them- so please keep sending them to us. If you can help us to implement any of the suggestions listed above please get in touch.