



apex

FROM SMALL ACORNS GROW MIGHTY OAKS



JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Bogside & Brandywell Initiative (BBI) has been working in partnership with Apex Housing since before the development of the Ballymagowan and Magowan estates at the rear of Creggan. A relationship that was first established during the redevelopment of Dove Gardens has been developed and grown in the following years and has again paid dividends in the planning and construction of Ballymagowan, with provision for allotments and an urban park.

The allotment site opened in March 2014 and in the past 6 years has become a thriving site that incorporates not just the provision of growing areas but also education, healthy eating, mentoring, partnership with the Apex Social Supermarket, environmental awareness raising and a range of activities for both the allotment holders and the wider Apex tenant base. The past year has been no exception with exciting new developments being explored and developed.

That this has been possible is testimony to the shared vision and excellent working relationships that have been forged and sustained between the BBI and Apex. Whilst the direct beneficiaries of this successful relationship has been the allotment holders and the residents of Magowan and Ballymagowan, the positive impact on the wider Creggan and city communities should not be underestimated. The past year in particular has seen the development of an exciting new project in association with the Flip It Project, which has the potential to transform the Urban Park and hundreds of lives in the city.

Covid 19

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic we closed the allotment site and urban park on governmental advice for three weeks on the grounds. However, after discussions with Derry and Strabane District Council and other allotment sites we re-opened the site on a strictly limited basis. We secured a copy of council's guidelines and policy on allotments during the pandemic and issued all allotment holders with a copy of it and we spoke to every individual allotment holder to emphasis the point about the importance of social distancing etc. and to date all instructions have been adhered to and the site remains open.

The allotment site is used by c. 15 people per day and the urban park by c. 100 people per day.

Ballymagowan – From Small Acorns Grow Mighty Oaks.

Growth of Ballymagowan Project

The opening of the Ballymagowan Allotment Project and Urban Park (BAUP) occurred in March 2014. In June 2020 the project can boast:

- 38 allotments being cared for by individuals and organisations that contribute to the physical and mental well-being of approximately 100 allotment users. Users of the site are also automatic members of the Ballymagowan Allotment Association and many of the users supply produce free of charge to the Apex Social Supermarket.
- An onsite horticultural adviser providing expert advice to the allotment users and the wider community.
- 3 polytunnels that ensure onsite year round activity and provide flowers for resident focused hanging basket workshops.
- An educational classroom for schools and groups
- The provision of a grass cutting and home assistance service to residents of Magowan and Ballymagowan estates
- 2 full-time staff, 2 part-time staff and 4 regular volunteers, creating employment in an area of high economic inactivity and offering work experience opportunities to local young people.
- A growing fruit orchard and 1000 trees that have been planted by local children



A Community Hub

From its launch in 2014 the Ballymagowan Allotment & Urban Park has been so much more than a passive site.

As well as providing the allotment holders with a top class facility BAUP has served as a focus for a number of community activities that have focused on resident engagement, environmental awareness, service provision to the wider community and education activities for local schools and youth clubs.

The site has also enabled a number of community based organisations to acquire their own allotment in a secure, safe, familiar and friendly location to pursue their own goals through the medium of horticulture.

Activities

Ballymagowan Community Days

School Activities – tree planting

Litter Picks

Community Assistance Services – gardening, street gritting

3 Bs Youth Clubs

Other Groups

Pink Ladies / Pink Panthers

Apex Housing Association

Creggan Mens Shed

BB Health Forum

Extern

Apex

Flip It

An exciting partnership is being explored with the Flip it Project, the Gasyard Development Trust and ourselves to develop an holistic therapy centre based on equestrian therapies for the autistic community in the city.

New Initiatives



The last year has witnessed an exciting new development with the BAUP embarking on a flower and hanging basket project which saw the provision of 9000 flowers to the Derry public. Flower trays, hanging baskets and window gardens combined to help improve the appearance of the area and more than 200 residents availed of this service.

Despite the challenges presented by Covid 19 in May 2020, in association with an Awards for All senior citizen assistance project throughout Creggan.

With support from the Big Lottery Awards for All we were able to build a number of window boxes and flower baskets and made them available to local residents at a reduced price. Despite the difficult circumstances at this time more than 50 residents benefited.



Education & Activities

The past year has again saw the BAUP take a lead role in promoting environmental awareness and activities in the Triax area. As well as participating in the Triax Tús Maith environmental educational which reaches every primary school pupil in the Triax are, we also played an integral role in the Turning Triax Green conference, the Yes Project and a range of environmental activities both onsite, in the local schools and across the Triax area.



This has included more than 30 children from the Holy Child Primary School spending the morning planting trees at the allotment site and afterwards they were taken on an educational tour of the site where our horticulturist Rory spoke to them about the importance of the environment

Between July and August 2019 more than 250 children from the different youth clubs in the Triax area came through the allotment site where we had organised litter picks in the urban park and bug hunts in and around the allotment site. They came in different groups each day over the four week period.



Education & Activities



At a Glance

Tus Maith Environmental Awareness Programme

1,600 pupils

Yes Project

400 pupils

Turning Triax Green Conference

250 pupils

Summer Alternatives

250 children

Community Engagement

Bonfire alternative – August 2019

Over 300 families and children attended our family fun day in August 2019 this was organised as an alternative to the bonfire which happens not 500 yards away from the urban park on the back road.



END OF HARVEST BARBUCUE

Over 30 allotment holders and their families gathered at the allotment end of September 2019 for our now traditional end of harvest barbecue which was used as a team building exercise among the allotment holders.

