

Aden Community Allotments, Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire

Written by Leigh Minion on behalf of Aden Allotments

Introduction

Aden Country Park is located just a mile from the small town of Mintlaw in rural northern Aberdeenshire. It was within the boundaries of this beautiful park that the first tentative steps were sought to bring about the Aden Park Allotments.

First Steps

Aden Community Allotments Association (ACAA) was formed in August 2012 in response to the community consultation carried out as part of the Big Lottery, Investing in Ideas funding. The resulting report concluded that the local community surrounding the park would like to see an allotment and Community Gardens being established within the grounds of Aden Country Park.

ACAA has a fully engaged, elected management committee consisting of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and 7 ordinary members. The association also has the assistance of Aden's Project Development Worker, Buchan Development Partnership and Aberdeenshire Council. The current committee is made up of two teachers; an IT specialist; two project and design engineers; a detective constable; a horticultural professional and Landscape Project Manager; a retired teacher and an IT consultant. The committee also had the assistance and expertise of Mr Neil Shirran, Project Development Worker for Aden Park.

The Field

The field used for the allotments covers about 3 acres. The soil is varied from loams to slightly heavier gleys in the less well drained areas. The field in previous years had been let out to a local farmer who had used the field for crops on a



rotational basis. The field is owned by Aberdeenshire Council and is leased to the Allotments on a long term basis.

Funding

As with any major project, significant funding was required to fund the project and in October 2012, the committee set about securing over £77,000 worth of funding from the Keep Scotland Beautiful, Climate Challenge Fund. This was awarded in February 2013.

Lowering Carbon Dioxide Emissions

One of the key aspects of funding from the CCF is to concentrate on lowering Carbon Dioxide emissions. For us in a good year we aim to reduce our emissions by 36.5 tonnes per year by reducing food miles, and waste and increasing recycling and composting.

Aims and Objectives of Project

1. To reduce the amount of CO₂e by 365.2 tonnes (over the lifetime of the project) through the reduction of waste going to landfill, increasing composting, and reducing food miles that are a result of large scale food production.
2. To increase whole community involvement through open days, fundraisers, learning open days and allotments being provided for to local schools and special needs units.
3. To impact positively on the local environment by reducing the need for mains supply water by having rainfall water harvesting equipment available at each plot; Increase biodiversity (and select plants which increase numbers of insect pollinators); Reduce the need for artificial pesticides through the use of companion planting and organic control measures.
4. To provide an educational tool with that allows individuals with the opportunity to learn more about growing fruit and vegetables and in doing so passing on valuable lifelong skills of food production. Including helpful advice on how to store food, preventing diseases and pests, general growing advice, seeds and propagation and so forth. This can be achieved through the development of seminars, informal training and advice, use of a website/forum, leaflets and open

days.

5. To raise awareness of the economic, social, environmental and health and wellbeing benefits of growing your own fruit and vegetables through open days, seminars and information boards publicity days.

6. To increase the production and consumption of 'grow your own' fruit and vegetables. Through the allocation of 47 different sized allotments (so that members can choose which size matched to needs).



Planning Permission

As the allotments did not involve a change in use, full planning permission was not required. However the project proposal did need to go to the local planning department for consideration and in February 2013 ACAA was granted permission to site the allotments on the field.

Site Preparation



In July 2013 the ground work on site began by a local contractor, Robbie Cadger. First at the site entrance and hard standing area, together with the access paths and repairing some of the old field drains as well as adding new ones. It had been a very wet cold Spring and it delayed the starting the ground works by 2 months. There are two stand pipes on the field, one at the top and another in the middle.

Ploughing and Adding Compost

Ploughing commenced in early September to help break up the soil which had laid fallow all year. Compost was then added to the whole field from compost kindly donated from Aberdeenshire Council.

Security Fencing



Green fencing was erected around the entire allotment to help keep out the resident deer population. In addition to this the fencing also incorporated rabbit proof fencing along the bottom. The fencing was erected in October.

Plot Holders Sheds



Longside Sawmill provided the project with all of its small plot sheds, all 47 of them. We went for 6ft by 4ft with a roof felt sloping to one side so that we could collect rainwater. Each allotment holder was then given a 5 litre tub of green wood preservative to paint their shed with. On the 30th of November a large number of Allotmenters got together to lay the sand and slabs for the sheds on the plots. It was a fantastic day made all the better for the very

generous donations of hot soup, Sandwiches, hot drinks and tray bakes. A very well deserved lunch.

Plots

There are three plot sizes available. The largest is 20m x 20m, a 20m x 10m and a 10x10m. This flexibility allowed us to accommodate for everyone and if someone found a larger plot too much or even a change in circumstance they could change size. As well as a shed, each plot also has a compost bin and water butt.



We have found that many plot holders have taken on a different design. Some have gone for maximum food production with little infrastructure other than crop rotation and some raised beds. Others have plots which are highly structured with raised beds, nursery cloched beds and fruit cages. What we all have in common is a high degree of commitment and effort. And even before the first crops have gone into the ground we can see the fruits of our love and passion for growing food already taking shape.

The Community Areas

In some respects what makes the Aden Allotments unique is the area that have been dedicated as communal areas for allotment holders as well as areas for open days, fundraisers, raising awareness and training events.



The community shed was made by local joiners and erected on site. We used box profiling for the roof so that it had a longer life. It also makes it very efficient at collecting rainwater. We also have a composting toilet on site which is an amazing piece of design. We were gifted a polytunnel and 2 greenhouses from two locals. We plan to make full use of these for all plot holders in the future.

The Future

Of course, our work has only begun, we are full members of Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS). For now we shall be contented with growing, harvesting and eating the fruit and vegetables we have produced on the allotments. Currently there is no waiting list but all plots are taken. However, there is still much work to do at the site entrance in terms of the community gardens. We are also currently developing a communal area where we will be erecting two greenhouses and a polytunnel for the shared use of all the site users.

Please Visit our Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/AdenCommunityAllotmentAssociationacaa>

With grateful thanks from the following organisations.

*Climate Challenge Fund/ Keep Scotland Beautiful
Aberdeenshire Council and in particular the team at
Aden Park*

Buchan Development Partnership

The Scottish Government

Mintlaw Burns Supper

Crimond Community Garden

The Big Lottery: Investing in Ideas

*Neil Shirram, Aden Park Project Development
Worker*

