

Notes from The Community Garden Network meeting at the OPEN offices in Dublin on 19th May 2012

Present: Peadar Lynch, Dublin Community Growers, 3rd meeting,
Sinead Keenan, Healthy Food For All, 1st
Eoin Craven, Ballymun Community Project, 1st
Jackie Dempsey, Greystones GIY, 2nd mtg
Seamus Bradley, Dublin Community Growers, 1st
Miren Maialen, Dublin Community Growers, 2nd
Tony Jennings, Swords, 1st
Georgina Buffini, Healthy Food for All, 3rd
Michael Reilly, Clontarf, 1st
Sandra Austin, OPEN, 2nd
Dee Sewell, Carlow
Chris Chapman, Facilitator

We started with a quick check on how many meetings the participants had been to as there was concern about the continuity issues and how difficult it will be for the group to progress well if there isn't a consistent core group of people willing to attend the meetings, or that the supporting organisations aren't represented. This was followed by a recap on the previous meetings and the vision for the group as previously noted.

The two working groups gave their progress report since the last meeting.

EXTERNAL WEBSITE

Sandra gave us a demonstration of the free month's trial of the NING website that she and Davie Philips have started work on www.communitygardennetwork.ning.com. The cost of this site will be €149.50 per annum that the supporting organisations present and GIY have agreed to contribute towards. Sandra also pointed out that the CGNG need branding, a logo and a description or 'mission statement' that will help members to promote it. Once we have that we can offer a badge on the site that members can put on their websites as well as identify links with our organisations and funders. Regarding promoting the Group, Sandra and Emma went to the Federation of City Farms & Gardens & were able to say they were from the group. Dee also mentioned that The Saturday edition of the Irish Times ran a feature on community gardening and again the Group was mentioned.

Due to the fee on the NING site, Sandra mentioned that we need to open a bank account and the simplest way to move forward on this is to make the CGNG a Club. As such we need (in name only) a chairperson, secretary, treasurer (signatories) and a constitution.

Action: Peadar will look in the constitution and mail the attendees of this meeting his findings.

Action: Sandra will follow up the bank account.

Regarding the website, questions still need to be answered on how much should be open to the public, whether people can sign up automatically, data protection and management of it. We also discussed

how we are going to get the information out there to everyone without boring them about the potential updates on the website and it was felt a monthly summary on the NING site would make it friendlier. It was recognised that as this could potentially be a lot of work and we are all voluntary, we would take it step by step.

LOCAL GROUPS

Healthy Food For All is building an online directory & running regional events and has been talking to Dublin Community Gardeners about various links.

They've identified that all communities should be aware of the groups and organisations that they can link with and the NING site can facilitate this.

They felt it was vital that before we left at the end of the day we need clarity on how the steering groups will work and what we are meeting for.

The two groups broke away and the following is their feedback:

NING

All agreed that NING is a good way forward - helps to establish our identity, enables us to connect with each other and fulfil our aims.

They agreed that it should be kept simple - people are being bombarded with a lot of information these days, we need to identify what makes our website different, what adds value, why check our NING instead of another resource. Our main focus will be on three things - identifying member gardens; publicising events; making resources available.

Establishing an IDENTITY for CGN is important and should be a priority. There are two aspects to this

1. Logo/visual identity
2. Mission statement/Definition of Purpose; who we are, what we do.

1. Visual - Task is to come up with a design brief, and then to find someone to create a visual identity for us. We can base the design brief on our Definition of Purpose. We could either outsource the creative process, or try to find someone within the network that would have the needed design skills.

2. Defining our purpose. They came up with a list of things they feel the CGNG should be about:

- To support Community Gardens
- To facilitate the sharing of learning, knowledge and resources (with particular reference to setting up a community garden)
- A central repository for information (publicising events; providing resources; identifying gardens and information about them)
- A point of connection for Community Gardens and growers around the island.
- Provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas.

Action: Sandra to put together list of 'what we do' and then ask for help from other members with drafting the statement. All attendees at the meeting will be invited onto the NING to contribute to the drafting of the statement over the next 10 days.

Action: Dee to ask network for help with the design process.

Action: We need to identify who will take on the task of setting up, maintaining and moderating the NING. For the time being, Sandra will continue to develop the trial site.

Action: Sandra, Miren and Dee are happy to moderate, and Davie Philip will be asked if he would also like to be a moderator on the site.

Action: Sandra is to write to partner organisations - GIY, Healthy Food for All, Dublin Community Growers, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, An Taisce - to request a one-off donation to fund the cost of the NING for one year. GIY have already pledged 50 euro.

OUTREACHING TO LOCAL GROUPS

- It's important to identify a purpose/mission statement for the Network.
- It's important to have the NING and website set up to direct people to.
- Once this is done, we can develop a standard paragraph or two that we can send/email people to promote the Network and encourage membership
- We can all send out to people/groups/other networks we are involved with
- We can all identify and use any opportunity to promote the Network and share learning; speak at events, contact media etc.
- It is important that there are (links to) resources to enhance membership of the network and share learning
- An important part of the Network is in being inclusive and building community – empowering people to be part of a bigger Network
- It was acknowledged that it is a great time to be developing a Network – lot's going on with community gardens
- Difficult to be in control of who joins up – some moderation necessary for membership? People will join if they think it is useful.

STRUCTURE

We finished by discussing that we will need a minimum bureaucracy to consolidate the network in terms of roles and a long term structure.

- Coordinator
- Provincial contacts

Action: Dee to ask the original volunteers and if they're not to ask others on the mailing list.

- Treasurer

Action: Dee to put it out to the wider network - we need a secretary, treasurer and a chair to open a club account just for the purposes of the bank account. These are named roles only.

NEXT MEETING

It was suggested that the next meeting be at the GIY Gathering in Waterford 15th or 16th September

Action: Dee to talk to GIY.

Action: Sandra will talk to Davie about doing a presentation on 20th June at Cloughjordan

SOME OF THE KEY DATES IDENTIFIED THAT THE CGNG COULD BE PART OF

Launch planning – to be carried forward until NING up and running.

- 23 May [Pop Up Orchard](#)
- 26 May [Green Communities, Pearce Collage](#)
- 1st - 4th June [Bloom](#)
- 6 June [Convergence Festival - Cloughjordan Launch](#)
- 9 June DCG & GIY Workshops - Food coops
- 16 June Bike Week Food Cycle
- 17 June [Streetfeast](#)
- 16 - 24 June [Convergence Festival](#)
- August [Pop up parks](#)
- 3-6 August [Permaculture Gathering](#)
- Sept [Global green at Electric Picnic](#)
- 15/16 September [GIY Gathering](#)
- 29 September [Dublin Harvest Festival](#)
- 4 October [Cloughjordan Harvest Festival](#)