

www.lifeisland.org

a campaign for
olympic allotments



ifeisland has been formed in support of Manor Garden Society Allotments in Hackney Wick, east London. The future of these beautiful vegetable gardens is in jeopardy due to a pending eviction order from the land by the London Development Agency. The gardens are surrounded by the planned 2012 Olympic Park. The landscape designers for the areas between the stadiums have taken no account of the existence of the allotments. They have drawn a concourse across us which is needed for the four weeks of the Olympic event only. Consultation has consisted of telling the local people what the London Development Agency have decided they are going to do to regenerate us.

Short History of Manor Garden Allotments

The gardens go back to 1900 when Major Villiers, philanthropic landowner, established sports facilities and allotments for the local poor. Our community is close-knit and has members who started on their fathers' plots in the 1920s. Today, a community of gardeners that has grown to reflect the cultural diversity of the area, share plants and horticultural knowledge from different countries. We have a waiting list, despite our precarious circumstances, many of whom are young people. There are 80 plots which provide food for over 150 families in the summer and space for socialising. Our gardens and community are considered remarkable by many and as a result we have featured in many magazines and TV programmes.

Our campaign

It is impossible to uproot and replant such an established community. Our members and many local people believe that to bulldoze the gardens to build a footpath would be to squander an opportunity to showcase a uniquely British institution and an example of the philosophies espoused in the London Food and Biodiversity Strategies and the Sustainability aims of the the 2012 bid.

The lifeisland team of plot holders, architects, artists, local people and experts in the field of food and environment have been working to develop ideas for retaining the allotments through the Olympics in order to develop from them in the Legacy Park. Using this superb working example of sustainable land use and self-organisation, additional initiatives could be developed such as educational facilities, an affordable Farmers Market, many more acres of growing space for local schools, mental health and rehabilitation services to use, facilities for learning about and sharing food and cultures, sustainable technologies and land management.



Aerial view. Images by campaigner Charlie Charman show where they are situated in relation to the development



Drawings released by the Olympic Delivery Authority show how the area "might" look during and after the games



Plot holders protest: Chief campaigner Julie Sumner questions the Mayor and generates much media interest

Imagination of Place

Manor Garden Allotments are in an unusual situation in relation to the very welcome regeneration of the area by the Olympic Delivery Authority and the London Development Agency. We are situated on land to be returned to parkland post 2012 and it is our wish to offer our imagination and particular expertise in the use and management of this land. We see ourselves and our Legacy Park Proposal as being able to give a substantial contribution and added value to the Legacy by forming a basis for the new communities to be established in the Olympic village and other housing.

The proposal currently on the table is to bulldoze this resource to prioritise a footpath needed for the four weeks of the Olympics. While our members understand it is more complicated than this; being in a massive building site for several years, the obvious security difficulties and even the need to relinquish control of the site for a year or so. However, the society has gardened through two world wars and can accommodate this disruption if it means continuity of use of our particular piece of land, which is symbiotic with our community.

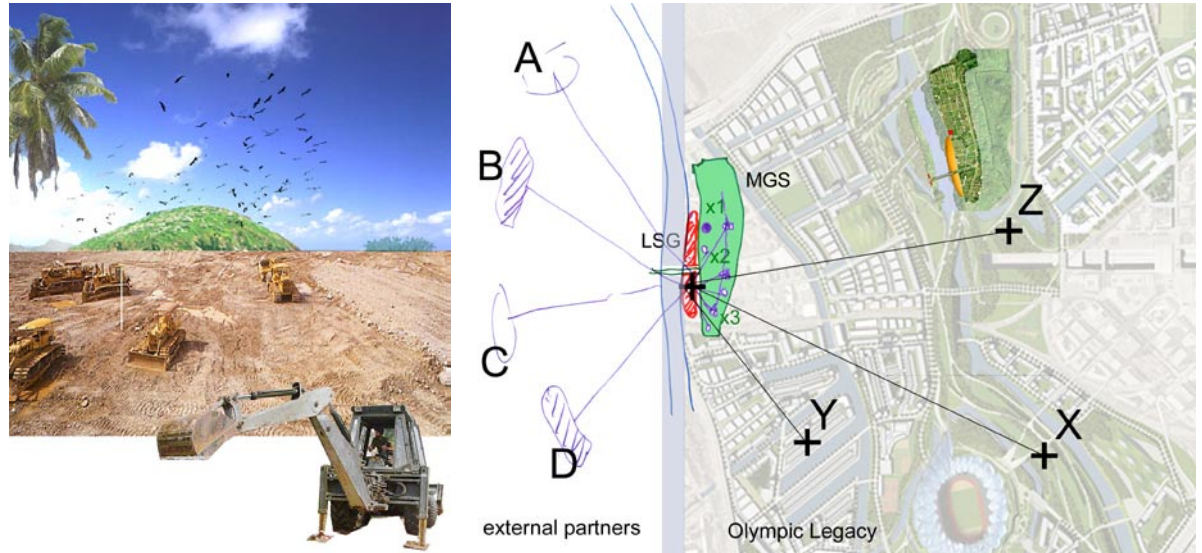
Demo Plot - the plot continues...

Alongside taking part in the concept and running of lifeisland, artists Amy Plant & Ella Gibbs (Pilot Publishing) adopted an overgrown plot on Manor Garden allotments. Demo Plot has been an idyllic process of learning from neighbours and visitors, with around 30 people joining us throughout the seasons to renovate, build, grow food in the city, experiment and cook and eat in the open.

Inga-Lils Elderflower Cordial:

- 20 flowers (not individuals, "groups")
- 1,5 liter boiling water
- 2 liters of sugar
- 2 whole lemons, sliced
- 50 gr. Citric Acid* (if you can't find this there should be something similar, such as lemon juice)
- A bucket with a sealing lid.

Put the flowers in the bucket, add all ingredients, stir with a large spoon. Leave it for 3 days, stir once in a while, keep the lid sealed. Thereafter sieve the juice, and put in bottles.



Images by architect Tak Hoshino. Habitats and land around the allotments are already being disturbed. Wildlife, no longer safe on these churned earths, are rushing to join their neighbors on the allotments to seek refuge. Lifeisland proposes that the allotment site, alongside other areas in the Olympic park could be left, as islands of life, while the bulldozers, buildings and transformations work around them. They will become reservoirs, or 'Noah's Arks', of the natural and cultural bio-diversity that already exists in the area with its self-managing systems. As a gardener preserves seeds for the next cycle, lifeislands will preserve and integrate these living, natural and knowledge-based resources for future generations.



Demo Plot stall at the Laburnum Street Party, July 2006. Serving home-made allotment elderflower cordial in support of the campaign to incorporate Manor Garden Allotments into the Olympic Legacy Park.

Calendar of some lifeisland activities



May 2006 Open Day: food served at Hassan's plot



Demo Plot digging



Demo Plotters sheltering in the shed



Tak's eco-sanitation toilet



June 2006 Demo Plotting



Taming the grape vine



Sowing seeds



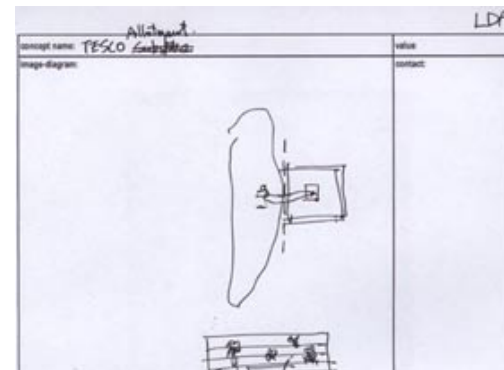
Watering



July 2006 Open Day 2



Laburnum Street party Demo Plot stall serving allotment Elderflower cordial



Poposal brainstorming workshops with Tak Hoshino



September 2006 lifeisland.org goes live hosted by e-2.org



Julie Sumner invites Olympic chief, Gareth Blacker to visit plot-holders on site



October 2006 The campaign is featured on BBC 1 TV



November 2006 Artist Asa Sonjasdottir prepares a potato field on Demo Plot



January 2007 Open to the public once again for a New Year Feast



John Matheson, chair of the society, lights the bonfire with an 'Olympic torch'



The crowd enjoys food cooked by plot holders and a film by Pilot Publishing



March 2007 Planning permission for a temporary relocation site is refused



An emergency meeting is held but the LDA don't show up due to publicity



Julie debates the issue with the Mayor



April 2007 A Spring party is organised for the official eviction day.



But plot holders celebrate as their eviction date is extended until July



And the spring planting continues...



Plot holders begin legal action with the help of a Friends of the Earth solicitor



May 2007 Baroness Sue Miller gives voice to the campaign in the House of Lords



Steve Dowding constructs an internet mast for a Silver Surfers Day



Using solar technology



Plot holders upload images onto the web-site in the community shed



Demo plotters at work again...



Planting Asa's Linda potatoes, a variety which is also under threat



June 2007 Planning permission for the temporary relocation site is now granted



Urban Planning students from Oslo visit the allotments



Demo Plotters Patrick & Jerome construct a green house



The media campaign continues



Plot holders are granted limited access to their plots until the end of September...