

# Community Garden Brief and Expression of Interest Form

## The Opportunity: Community Garden at Victoria Park

In 2023, Edinburgh Leisure returned several disused bowling green venues to the to the City of Edinburgh Council, including two in Victoria Park. Following this, the Parks and Greenspace team has been exploring opportunities to re-purpose these venues. Community engagement and consultation revealed a strong preference for a community garden, and we are excited to announce an opportunity for local organisations to lease one of the disused bowling greens for this purpose. [More information about the consultation is available here.](#) This initiative aligns with the Council's ambition to increase community food growing opportunities, alongside aims to enhance community engagement, promote sustainability, and provide a green space for all residents to enjoy.

We also aspire for the neighbouring vacant bowling green to become a sensory garden and cafe (refurbishing or replacing the existing pavilion). This is also following an Expression of Interest process. We aim to have the community garden established more immediately, with construction of the sensory garden and cafe proceeding shortly after. There is scope for the community garden tenant to also be involved in running those aspects should they want to apply.

There are also other features that we aim to introduce in the future using a phased approach. This includes a rain garden, outdoor education area, trim trail, etc. If the tenant is particularly interested in any of these features, or any similar aspects which could improve the park, there is also possibility to fundraise together with the Council to progress these aspects further.

## Location

The community garden will be located in the middle former bowling greens within Victoria Park (outlined in red below). The small perimeter around it can also be included – with the total space being approximately 1,900m<sup>2</sup>.

Victoria Park is a green flag awarded park. It is well connected with existing active travel routes, including the Hawthornvale Path and National Cycle Route 75, which provide onward connections to the centre of Edinburgh and the Water of Leith. The park is well used by all ages, includes two separate play areas for different ages, and a range of sports facilities. Victoria Park is Common Good Land and is also protected by Fields in Trust.



## Current Status

The community garden has been developed to a concept stage, where we know the size and location of the site, and some features which should be included (e.g., accessible paths, seating, community growing, sensory garden). We have some ideas and suggestions regarding the layout of the space, however, there is significant flexibility in the design of this space, and the Council expects to work in partnership with the tenant to agree a final design.

There are utility lines under the bowling green, of which the neighbouring allotment site (in the third disused bowling green) uses for water supply.

To activate the space as soon as possible, we appreciate that the tenant may wish to set up a shorter term or meanwhile use of the space more immediately, with plans in place to develop the site fully over time.

## Support Available

A package of support measures from the Council is on offer to help establish the new community garden. This may include the following:

- Although not guaranteed, the Council may be able to allocate a small amount of funding to help the tenant convert the space for community growing. In exceptional circumstances, up to £30,000 may be awarded.
- The Council can use their Procurement Framework to appoint contractors to carry out any work that the successful tenant is not able to carry out themselves, subject to funding.
- The Council's Nursery may be able to help provide advice on planting and cost-effective plants.
- The Council's Parks and Openspace Development Team can provide support such as project management and advice for design and layout of the site, and how to maximise the ecology of the site to improve biodiversity. They are also willing to collaborate with the successful tenant to fund-raise to help deliver the proposed ambitions for this space.

## The Role of the Leaseholder

In addition to collaboratively designing the space, we expect the tenant to use the space to deliver the following:

- Food and sensory growing components.
- Community engagement, including activities and programmes to activate the garden space
- Work with established community groups such as the Friends of Victoria Park to establish how the garden can be a shared resource to all park users.
- Provide public access: located in a public park, it is important that all members of the public are welcome in the space (subject to opening hours).
- Ensure the garden design and activities are accessible to everyone, including those with different abilities.
- To have a flexible approach. We aim for other improvements to be made in the neighbouring bowling green, such as a sensory garden and a community cafe.

Depending on funding, we may need to build these in a phased approach, meaning the tenant will need to expect nearby construction.

### **Power and services**

The garden space will be self-contained. Water supply can be set up. No electricity will be provided. If necessary, any utilities required should be arranged independently by the leasing organisation.

### **Terms**

The space is offered for lease on an annual basis starting from February/March 2025, with the option for a lease term of up to five years. It may also be possible to extend this in the future, and specific requirements can be discussed to accommodate the needs of the tenant. The tenant must obtain all necessary consents from relevant authorities. The unit's appearance must be approved by the City of Edinburgh Council and in keeping with the surrounding area.

The tenant must meet the following insurance requirements:

- Employers liability insurance (minimum of £5 Million) - if applicable
- Public liability insurance (minimum of £5 Million)

### **Timeline for Expressions of Interest**

- **EOI Announcement:** 1st week of December 2024
- **Submission Period:** 1st week of December – 12<sup>th</sup> January (6 weeks)
- **Evaluation and Selection:** Mid-January 2024 – February 2025
- **Lease development begins:** February 2025

Council officers are available the week of December 16<sup>th</sup> to answer questions and organise site visits.

## Expression of Interest

**Please submit a document with the following details to  
thrivinggreenspaces@edinburgh.gov.uk**

Group or organisation name:

Lead Contact person's name:

Telephone:

Email:

**1. About your organisation (no more than 300 words per answer)**

*If you are putting in this Expression of Interest as a partnership, please provide this information for all partners.*

- a) Background information about your organisation, including information about your general audience.
- b) What kind of model does your organisation have (e.g., social enterprise, CIC)?
- c) How do you sustain your organisation financially?

**2. Your proposals for the space (no more than 300 words per answer)**

- a) What is your vision and ambition for this space?
- b) Outline your proposals for this space including how it be used and what it is likely to include, e.g. planting beds, raised planters, polytunnels, covered outdoor area, green compost bins, etc. If you have any ideas at this stage for its layout, please append a plan, even if it's just a rough illustration, to help us understand your vision.

**3. Community Engagement: (no more than 300 words per answer)**

- a) Please outline your plan to engage local residents and encourage community participation.

- b) Provide details of what kinds of activities you would run, and what wellbeing benefits these could deliver.
  - c) What would your target audiences/groups be?
  - d) Outline any partner organisations or groups you expect to work with to deliver activities.
4. **Investment proposals (no more than 300 words per answer)**
- a) Provide the amount of capital funding (if any) you are proposing to invest in this garden.
  - b) Provide details of any match funding from external sources or agencies.
  - c) Provide details of how you expect to provide human resources to set up this project and to run it afterwards, including details of expected paid staff posts and in-kind staff and volunteer contributions.
  - d) Assess the operational costs of the pavilion, considering how efficiently it can run and the pricing structure you would need to adopt for any services.
5. **Wider benefits (no more than 300 words per answer): please share how your project could offer:**
- a) Environmental benefits
  - b) Education and Skills Development
  - c) Inclusivity
  - d) Volunteer Opportunities
  - e) Health and Wellbeing benefits
6. **Relevant experience in managing and operating a community garden (or similar) and/or social enterprises (no more than 300 words per answer)**
- a) Have you undertaken any similar projects before?
  - b) Detail the proposed staffing structure and assessment of risks to delivery of services.

- c) Detail your social enterprise model (e.g. co-operative, charity, joint partnership) and its legal form (e.g. unincorporated association, CIC, CIO).
- d) Any further details you would like considered in the EOI.

7. **Cafe interest: would you also be interested in running a cafe in the neighboring bowling green pavilion?** This is primarily to gauge interest – a separate application would be needed. Please delete the answers below as appropriate.

Yes    No

**Deadline for Submissions:** Sunday 12 January at midnight. Please email completed applications to [thrivinggreenspaces@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:thrivinggreenspaces@edinburgh.gov.uk)