

# *Murieston Community Garden*

*<https://www.murieston-cg.org.uk>*



## **CASE FOR SUPPORT**

October 2023

### **1 BACKGROUND**

Murieston Community Garden is a not-for-profit community organisation started in 2021 by a small group of residents of Murieston (Livingston, West Lothian) who are enthusiastic amateur gardeners. The aim of the organisation is to form a garden next to Livingston South Railway Station for use by local residents and community groups.

West Lothian Council agreed to rent-free use of the land after a soil analysis survey was completed. Planning permission was obtained by Murieston Community Council prior to establishment of the organisation. Infrastructure including paths, raised beds, and the use of a shipping container as a shed were specified in the granted planning permission. Murieston Community Council also donated fencing, a path, and some sleepers to use for raised beds. Since then volunteers have been helping to raise the funds required to achieve the vision of developing and maintaining the garden.

Members come from Livingston, particularly the local areas of Murieston and Bankton, but membership includes those further afield and includes gardeners of all experience levels and backgrounds.

### **2 VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS**

Our vision is to create and maintain a beautiful relaxing community garden for use by residents and visitors in Murieston and neighbouring areas. Our chosen theme is “recovery” – personal, community, and environment.

Our mission is to engage local volunteers to convert the donated half-acre plot of rough ground into a garden with two areas: a public front garden containing a social hub and sensory garden; and a private back garden to be used by volunteers for growing fruit and vegetables.



Figure 1: Erection of front boundary fence on plot of land provided free-of-charge by West Lothian Council. The Community Garden comprises the entire enclosed green space (0.5 acre).



Figure 2: Planning permission obtained by Murieston Community Council – including a social hub with pergola, raised beds, shed, greenhouses, and a permaculture area

We aim:

- To design, develop and maintain the garden
- To provide a publicly available peaceful green space for any local resident
- To encourage gardeners at all stages of ability to improve their gardening skills (including planning, planting and maintenance of fruit, vegetables and flowers) and to share experiences and techniques to make gardening an enjoyable experience
- To give an opportunity for local people to have access to raised beds and greenhouse facilities where they can use simple gardening skills to grow plants and vegetables
- To encourage the recovery of the environment and flourishing of local wildlife
- To provide an extra resource for local groups in the area, e.g., groups for the elderly or support groups for single-parent families or those with mental health issues
- To allow local schools and other junior groups under supervision a chance to include “the outside” in their curriculum
- To provide an outdoor facility for residents’ personal events, e.g., reunions, birthday parties, etc., suitable for social distancing due to COVID-19
- To accommodate local organisations that might need outdoor space for one-off events

### 3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our overall goals are to:

- General
  - Raise funds to allow us to create and maintain the garden
  - Engage with volunteers who will undertake building and planting tasks in the garden
  - Lay more paths suitable for disabled people
  - Plant fruit trees, hedges, climbing plants, wild flowers and ground-level decorative planting
- Public front garden
  - Engage professionals to build raised beds, seating, a pergola, paving and paths
  - Plant decorative plants in the raised beds
- Back garden
  - Build 20 raised beds with sleepers (11 achieved)
  - Provide water butts and compost heaps
  - Erect a shipping container for use as a shed (achieved)
  - Erect greenhouses
  - Build a den/hut for children
  - Encourage wildlife with a permaculture area, bird feeders and bug hotels (achieved)
  - Plant flowers, fruit and vegetables in the raised beds and permaculture area

Since work began in 2021, we have have achieved:

- 420 tree saplings have been planted to form front and back hedges
- 11 raised beds in the back garden have been built and planted for use with crop rotation
- A storage container has been installed as a shed (as stipulated in the agreed plans)
- Three temporary compost bins have been built with pallets
- Climbing plants have been planted on fences (as stipulated in the agreed plans)
- A wildflower area has been sown along the northern boundary
- 5 fruit trees and a number of fruit bushes have been planted in a permaculture area

Objectives for 2023-24 are to:

- Infrastructure
  - Achieve professional building of the public front garden
  - Build more raised beds in the back garden
  - Install water butts, taking drainage from shed as there is no water supply in the garden
  - Install greenhouses in back garden
  - Install children's den in back garden
  - Install seats in back garden
  - Improve composting
- Planting
  - Grow more climbing plants on fences (as stipulated by plans)
  - Further planting in the permaculture area



*Figure 3: On-site inauguration meeting of Murieston Community Garden (July 2021)*

## 4 BENEFITS

The garden aims to provide a number of benefits. Our success will be judged based on material development of the garden, volunteer involvement, engagement with social media, and achievements in terms of support.

### **Personal recovery**

- By careful design, paths and raised beds will be made suitable for disabled people.
- By developing a sensory garden, a peaceful contemplative area will provide solace for those with mental health issues or people arriving at the railway station before heading home after a long day.
- By encouraging community involvement, we aim to reduce social isolation, and support those with mental health issues.

- By approaching the local medical centre regarding use of a raised bed, we wish to assist in recovery of patients suffering mental and physical illnesses.
- This long-term project will provide a peaceful green space of benefit to over 6,000 residents of Bankton and Murieston and visitors to the area.
- Volunteers will be encouraged to learn gardening skills and engage with nature.
- Eventually, after the garden is established, surplus produce will be donated to a local community cafe to help address the cost-of-living crisis.

#### **Community recovery**

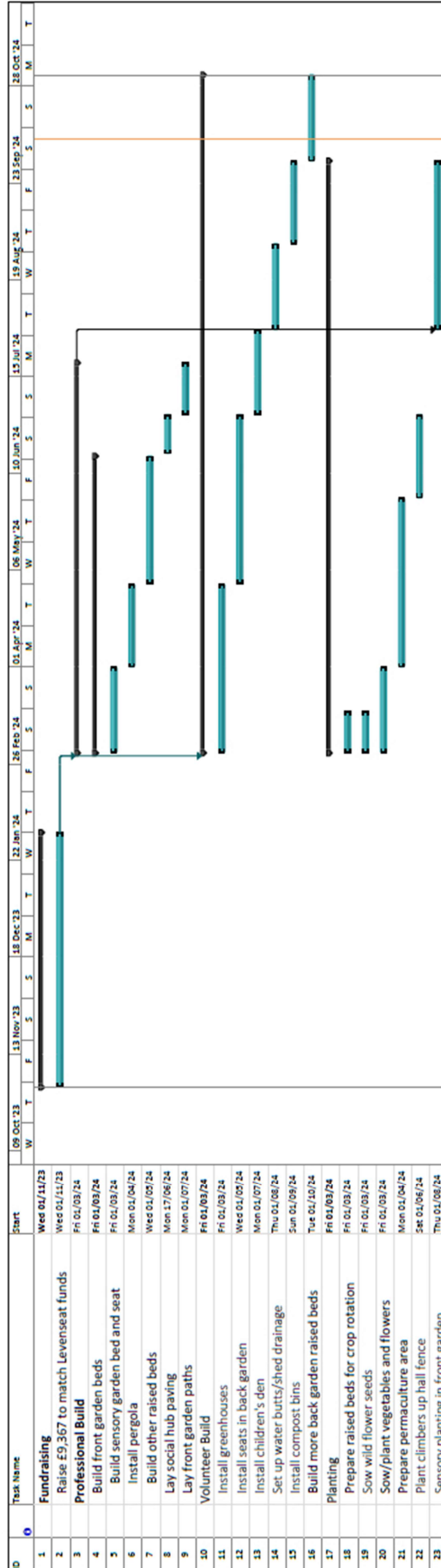
- By encouraging community engagement, we aim to build a stronger local community spirit.
- By providing a welcome outdoor social space we aim to encourage socially-distanced community recovery from COVID-19.
- By offering sponsorship opportunities and by local sourcing where economically feasible, we aim to support local businesses.
- By offering the garden as an additional resource, we will support local groups.
- By offering the garden as an educational resource, we will support local schools and junior groups under supervision.

#### **Environmental recovery**

- By developing a productive area and planting wild flowers and permaculture, we aim to encourage environmental diversity and wildlife.

### **PLAN OF ACTIVITIES OFR 2023-24**

Our next project, in 2023-24, is to build the front garden, including raised beds, seating, a pergola, and an outdoor social hub, and install greenhouses, seats, a play den, water collection and improved composting in the back garden. The project is costed at £52,734.46. A plan of activities is shown on page 6.



Murieston Community Garden  
Plan 2024

**To meet our objectives for this project we need:**

Item	Cost
Professional building of the front garden including raised beds, and pergola, and paving of social hub	£31,290
Sleepers for building 11 raised beds	£3341.25
Public seating for front garden	£1223
Three seats in back garden	£3103
Two vandalproof polycarbonate disabled-friendly greenhouses	£4128.14
Shire Command Post Playhouse (specified in planning permission)	£274.99
Set of 3 compost bins	£335
Four water butts	£250
<b>Total ex. VAT</b>	<b>£43,945.38</b>
<b>VAT</b>	<b>£8,789.08</b>
<b>Total incl. VAT</b>	<b>£52,734.46</b>

## 5 FINANCES

**Background:**

In addition to substantial benefits-in-kind, we have so far received £35,625 in financial grants and donations, including £11,000 from the Town Centre Fund, £10,000 for our local windfarm development fund, and £10,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Just over £18,000 of this has been used for a shed, noticeboard, tools (saws, hammers, gardening tools, etc.) and materials to get us started with infrastructure, particularly sleepers for building raised beds, and other commitments. £17,000 of our reserves are reserved for professional building of the front garden.

Although we have obtained support from West Lothian Council and Murieston Community Council to establish the organisation, we are dependent on donations and grants for the majority of our funding. Eventually, once the garden is more established, some other aspects of the running of the garden may involve payment, such as exclusive use of some raised beds by outside organisations, sale of produce, and use of the garden to host events.

**Current Position:**

We now have the chance of £26,367 of funds from the Levensat Trust for this project so long as we can raise the other funds needed within the next year. £17,000 of our reserves are reserved for this purpose. We therefore need to raise £9,367 to complete the project before Levensat will release the funds.

We also aim to raise further funds for future projects, to be completed as funding allows:

FUTURE PROJECT SPONSORSHIP				
Item	Cost per Item	Number of Items	Total	Ideal Timing
Front garden planting	£1,000	1	£1000	Summer 2024
Path installation in back garden	£15,000	1	£15,000	2025
<b>Total</b>			<b>£16,000</b>	

We are therefore very grateful for further donations, which would allow us to reach our goals more quickly.

## 6 GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING

Murieston Community Garden is an Unincorporated Association with a Constitution intended to ensure the proper running of the association on behalf of the membership.

The garden is run entirely by volunteers; there are no paid employees. Some of the volunteers serve on a co-ordinating Committee. The Committee is drawn from the membership and approved at the Annual General Meeting. Current Committee members are:

Name	Position	Experience
Dr. Janey Cringean	President	Business owner/director/manager Various charity/not-for-profit roles including trustee, chair, treasurer and secretary
Mrs. Carol Salem	Vice-President	Treasurer, Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden
Ms. Isabel Taggart	Treasurer	Retired, bank experience, treasurer for other organisations
Mrs. Deirdre Welsh	Secretary	Retired teacher

We are advised by Ian Brown, Planning Secretary of Murieston Community Council, and have also been offered advisory support by Councillor Peter Heggie and Councillor Moira Shemilt of Murieston South Ward of West Lothian Council.



Figure 4: Enthusiastic volunteers helping to move the donated sleepers into the garden



## 7 EXISTING SUPPORT AND TESTIMONIALS

A great deal of initial support was been given by Murieston Community Council (MCC) in obtaining planning permission and other support, and by West Lothian Council in providing the land free-of-charge. Further donations and grants have been obtained by the volunteers with assistance from Murieston Community Council.

### Donations to date:

Donation	Approx. Value	Organisation
Rent-free plot of land		West Lothian Council
Soil for use in the raised beds		
Blue wheelie bins for temporary use as water butts		
Councillor disbursements 2021	£380	Livingston South Councillors
Site surveys	£30,000	Murieston Community Council
Obtaining planning permission		
Erection of boundary and internal fences		
Laying part of one path		
105 sleepers for use as raised beds		
420 tree whips for hedging	£460	Woodland Trust
Development of a website for accepting donations	£3,000	Tron Systems Ltd.
Donation	£250	
Grants	£250	Volunteering Matters - Action Earth
	£1000	Forth Rivers Trust
	£1000	Arnold Clark Community Fund
	£500	The Conservation Volunteers
	£11,155	The Town Centre Fund (via MCC)
	£10,000	Wind Farm Community Benefit (via MCC)
	£10,000	National Lottery Community Fund
	£26,367	Levensat Trust (requires £9,367 further match funding)
	£540	West Lothian Development Trust (via MCC)
Donation	£750	Livingston South Church
Donations	£180	Private donors
<b>Total</b>	<b>£59,465</b>	

We have also been chosen by the Co-op to be part of the next round of the Co-op Local Community Fund in 2023-24. Funds will depend on local supporters choosing the garden as their cause.



Figure 5: Garden sign with shed in background



Figure 6: First produce from the first raised bed



Figure 7: 'It's your Neighbourhood' Award from Keep Scotland Beautiful, December 2022

**Social media support:**

The public Facebook page has had encouraging support since it started in March 2021 and has now reached 700 followers. The top Facebook post reached 10,640 people and had 1644 engagements. Several other posts with planning details and a request for help have also reached an audience of over 3000.

Comments:

“Thank you to everyone who came along tonight 😊 Was lovely to meet up in person and come up with a plan. Let’s get growing 🥕”

“Grand meeting this evening. Thank you. Some great ideas, loads of vision and terrific enthusiasm. So good to see this lovely venture taking shape. 😊 🌱 🌿 🌻 🌸 🌺 🌻 🌸 🌺”

*Councillor Moira Shemilt*

“I missed your meeting last night but would definitely like to help out with the garden.”

“🍊🍊 A HUGE thank you to the large number of people who turned up today to help us move sleepers into the garden 🍊🍊

We had expected to be finishing about 8pm but so many people arrived to help and everyone worked so hard that we got everything finished by 6pm. We now have 105 sleepers waiting to be made into raised beds.

A huge thank you also to Murieston Community Council for ordering the sleepers for us and to the councillors who provided so much support.”



*Figure 8: The flourishing back garden in June 2023*

## 8 HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our current priority is to raise funds for building of the public front garden and greenhouses, water collection, improved composting, children's play den, and seating in the back garden. Please consider a donation, grant, or sponsorship to allow us to achieve our goals. Any organisation donating more than £1000 will be offered the opportunity to be named on signage within the garden.

Thank you!

## 9 CONTACT DETAILS

**Website:** <https://www.murieston-cg.org.uk/>

**Email:**

- Donations: [funding@murieston-cg.org.uk](mailto:funding@murieston-cg.org.uk)

**Facebook:**

- Public Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/muriestoncommunitygarden>
- Private Volunteers Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/143184837923539>