

West Sussex Growers' Association

Growing Together – Strategic Plan

February 2015

Strategic Priority 1

Ensure that planning and land use policies support the sector.

Strategic Priority 2

Seek strategies to improve the attractiveness of the sector to young people and potential recruits.

Strategic Priority 3

Seek ways in which to improve understanding of the sector with local communities.

First Edition: September 2010 - Second Edition: September 2011 - Third Edition: February 2015

Growing Together: Executive Summary

- West Sussex Growers' Association was established in 1925 and currently has 70 members, including: one man bands, family businesses and regional, national and international businesses.
- The West Sussex Coastal Plain is the ideal location for horticulture, as it has the highest winter light levels and one of the best year round climates in the UK.
- The Horticultural Industry in West Sussex produces over £1 billion in annual sales of fruit, vegetables, salads and plants and employs more than 7,000 people.¹
- Crops are grown all year round in 450 acres (180Ha) of glasshouses and 350 acres (140Ha) of polythene structures.²
- West Sussex Growers' make a major contribution towards food, plant and energy security and through local production and import substitution contributes to the reduction in food and plant miles.
- Rain water harvesting and storage, controlled irrigation recycling systems, carbon dioxide capture and green waste management, lead to improvements to the environment and best practice.³
- Education and training is of paramount importance to horticultural businesses in West Sussex, with strong links being further developed with local Universities, Colleges and Training Providers.
- The demand for British fresh produce has never been greater. To meet the needs of Customers and to thrive, horticultural businesses in West Sussex need suitable land for development, good infrastructure and supportive planning policies.

¹ *Viability of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex: Reading Agricultural Consultants: March 2009*

² *Growing Together: A Strategy for the West Sussex Growing Sector: Step Ahead Research: March 2010*

³ *Combined Horticultural Production & Energy Hubs: Reading Agricultural Consultants: November 2012*

Growing Together: Strategic Priority 1

Ensure that Planning and Land Use Policies support the sector.

Item	Issues	Actions	Review
1.1	<p>Horticultural Development</p> <p>For the successful development of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex, a number of criteria need to be met, including: the availability of suitable land with good drainage, ease of access for transport, access to essential utilities such as gas, water and electricity, broadband and mobile telecommunications connectivity.</p> <p>Fully supportive Horticultural Policies in Local Authority Local Plans.</p>	<p>Continue to develop strategies with Local Authorities, land owners and other stakeholders to identify suitable land for horticultural development.</p> <p>WSGA to represent Growers' interests and facilitate collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders.</p> <p>Work closely with Local Authorities to ensure that their Horticultural Policies allow for the continued development of the Horticultural industry in West Sussex.</p>	<p>June 2015</p>
1.2	<p>Food, Plant & Energy Security</p> <p>The need to improve food, plant and energy security becomes a more pressing issue with each passing year.</p> <p>Local food, plant and energy production can have a major positive affect towards reducing food miles and our carbon footprint.</p> <p>The use of alternative energy systems on horticultural sites, such as: Combined Heat & Power (CHP) plants, Anaerobic Digestion (AD), Photo-Voltaic (PV), Bio-Mass and other technologies can bring both economic and environmental benefits to the area.</p> <p>Improvements to local infrastructure such as: the A27 and its feeder roads, utility provision e.g. access to gas, water and electricity, broadband and mobile telecommunications connectivity.</p>	<p>Promote the findings of the report: <i>Combined Horticultural Production & Energy Hubs: Reading Agricultural Consultants: November 2012.</i></p> <p>Promote the benefits of improved food, plant and energy security to all stakeholders.</p> <p>Facilitate site visits to Nurseries for Councillors, Planning Officers and other stakeholders, so that they can gain a better understanding of the major part that horticultural businesses can play in these areas.</p> <p>Campaign with others as to the vital importance of improving local infrastructure for the benefit of the whole community.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>

<p>1.3</p>	<p>Land Availability & Planning Policy</p> <p>WSGA members need additional land for the successful development of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex.</p> <p>WSGA supports Planning Policies that consider all horticultural planning development proposals on their own merits and on a criteria basis.</p> <p>Where Horticultural Development Areas (HDAs) have been designated; they should be retained for further horticultural development. Equally, horticultural planning development proposals outside of HDAs should be considered on a criteria basis.</p> <p>The use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) for land that has already been identified within HDAs.</p>	<p>Continually lobby Local Authorities to explain the specific land, resource and planning needs of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex.</p> <p>Facilitate meetings and visits with local and national policy makers to pro-actively help in forming planning policies that fully support the needs of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex.</p> <p>Where appropriate, support WSGA Members Planning Applications for horticultural development.</p> <p>WSGA supports Local Authorities in the use of CPOs for land already designated within HDAs.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>
<p>1.4</p>	<p>Water for Irrigation</p> <p>The continuous availability of large volumes of good quality water is of paramount importance to the Horticultural Industry.</p> <p>Sustainable irrigation systems and techniques that support the most efficient use and storage of water.</p> <p>Technologies to promote the use of advanced systems that aid water conservation through the use of recirculation and closed growing systems.</p> <p>Water abstraction licences and the total volume of water abstracted.</p>	<p>Engage with the Environment Agency, Water Companies and Local Authorities to represent the water needs of the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex.</p> <p>Engage with consultations around the issues of “<i>water trading</i>”.</p> <p>Promote the advantages of rain water harvesting, on-site borehole water abstraction and reservoirs, and trickle and closed irrigation systems for the most efficient use of water in horticulture.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>
<p>1.5</p>	<p>Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)</p> <p>WSGA shares the aims and visions of Coast to Capital (C2C) and the Coastal West Sussex Partnership (CWSP).</p>	<p>WSGA will provide delegates to the LEP forums and meetings to represent the Horticultural Industry.</p>	

	<p>Meeting the needs of Customers and further developing businesses that can provide high quality jobs for the benefit of local communities and the wider economy.</p>	<p>WSGA will engage fully with C2C & CWSP to promote the aims and objectives of the LEPs and the interests of WSGA and its members.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>
<p>1.6</p>	<p>Allied Businesses</p> <p>Allied businesses and organisations that supports the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex are as important as the Industry itself e.g. Transport & Logistics, Irrigation & Engineering, IT & Communications, Horticultural Supply Companies, Training Providers and Consultants.</p>	<p>WSGA will Provide support, and wherever possible, promote the socio-economic benefits of allied organisations within the local area.</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the National Farmers' Union.</p>	<p>February 2016</p>
<p>1.7</p>	<p>Meeting the Needs of Customers</p> <p>Satisfy the needs of Customers for fresh food and plants through supplying the highest quality produce grown in West Sussex.</p> <p>Improve the offer of West Sussex produce available to Customers.</p> <p>Understand the importance of year-round supply chain demands for fresh produce and the part that packhouses play in handling imported produce to supplement home production.</p> <p>Increase year round production to displace imports.</p> <p>Grow and supply fresh West Sussex produce for local restaurants, retailers and Farmer's Markets.</p>	<p>Through innovation, research and development, constantly strive to improve the range, variety, quality, shelf life and availability of fresh produce available to Customers.</p> <p>Explain the important role that packhouse operations play in the demands of the year-round supply chain for fresh produce. Home production sometimes needs to be supplemented with imported produce.</p> <p>Fully support Farmers' Markets and the supply of locally grown produce directly to local restaurants and retailers.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>1.8</p>	<p>Environmental Issues</p> <p>Most horticultural businesses operate in rural and semi-rural areas and have a duty of care to the local environment.</p>	<p>Enhance the local environment through innovative and imaginative landscaping, waterways and habitat schemes on horticultural sites.</p> <p>Instigate strategies that minimise emissions to air, water and land.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Growing Together: Strategic Priority 2

Seek strategies to improve the attractiveness of the sector to young people and potential recruits.

Item	Issues	Actions	Review
2.1	<p>Growing Jobs & Training</p> <p>The Horticultural Industry in West Sussex employs over 7,000 people and produces fresh produce to the retail value of over £1billion.</p> <p>Many of the jobs in the Industry are high-tech in nature and high value.</p> <p>Apprenticeship places and continuous development and training are paramount to a skilled work force.</p>	<p>WSGA will promote the Industry to ensure that the wider community understands its continuous needs for a skilled workforce.</p> <p>Encourage the provision of more places for Apprentices in the local Horticultural Industry.</p> <p>Build strong relationships with local Universities, Colleges and Training Providers to meet the training and development needs of the Industry.</p>	February 2016
2.2	<p>Links with Education and Training Providers</p> <p>The provision of horticultural, operational and business courses at Universities, Colleges and Training Providers.</p> <p>Initiatives that promote the Industry to young people to stimulate the next generation into joining the Industry as a career choice.</p> <p>Education and training courses that ensures the continued development of the horticultural workforce.</p>	<p>Engage with local education and training providers on a regular basis to keep them up to date with advances in the Industry.</p> <p>Work with local education and training providers to develop new courses to meet the training needs of the Horticultural Industry.</p> <p>Cooperate with Training Providers to develop specific skills training for staff at all levels.</p>	February 2016
2.3	<p>Schools</p> <p>Developing stronger links with local Primary & Secondary Schools.</p> <p>Individual Businesses developing strong links with their local Schools.</p>	<p>Work with national bodies e.g. RHS to promote cooperation and strong links between WSGA members and Schools; including regular visits to Horticultural Businesses for pupils and teachers.</p>	February 2016

2.4	Industry Specific Training The Horticultural Industry in West Sussex has a continuous need for a wide range of bespoke education and training courses that can be delivered through innovative forms direct to the Industry.	WSGA will carry out Training Needs Assessments with its members, to discover and share with Education and Training Providers, the Needs of the Industry. Foster links with key Stakeholders, Education and Training Providers to seek further resources and funding to meet the Education and Training Needs of the Horticultural Industry.	February 2016
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Growing Together: Strategic Priority 3

Seek ways in which to improve understanding of the sector with local communities.

Item	Issues	Actions	Review
3.1	<p>Public Relations</p> <p>Strong links with both local and national Stakeholders are of paramount importance to WSGA and its members.</p> <p>Representing the interests of its members across a wide range of issues; including: Planning, Research, Education & Training, Utilities, Environment, Water and Transport.</p> <p>Nursery Open Days and organised visits can be the most effective method of engaging with stakeholders, students and local communities.</p>	<p>Continue to seek representation with Stakeholders; including: Local Authorities, Politicians & Planners, Partnerships and other influential organisations.</p> <p>At both local and national levels; develop further the existing strong links with: National Farmers' Union, Defra, Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board, Local Authorities, Coast to Capital, Coastal West Sussex Partnership, Environment Agency, University of Chichester and Colleges.</p>	Ongoing
3.2	<p>Web Site</p> <p>WSGA requires a constantly updated website that is an information resource; not only for Members, but especially for: Educationalists, Trainers, Students, Politicians, Planners and anyone who is interested in the Horticultural Industry.</p>	<p>Develop a new website that is easy to access, up to date, informative and that offers a window into the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex.</p>	June 2015
3.3	<p>Funding</p> <p>Funding streams that finance research and support for the advancement, better understanding and promotion of the Horticultural Industry is of vital importance to West Sussex Growers' Association.</p>	<p>Funding for research and support has been gratefully received from: West Sussex County Council, Arun and Chichester District Councils, National Farmers' Union, NFU Mutual, the Leader Programme and the Horticultural Development Company.</p> <p>Most research funding is matched by West Sussex Growers' Association.</p>	Ongoing

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