

West Sussex Growers' Association

Growing Together – Strategic Plan

July 2017

Strategic Priority 1

Represent the Horticulture Industry to advise and inform policy makers as to land use policies that support the sector.

Strategic Priority 2

Seek strategies to enhance the perception of the sector to young people and potential recruits.

Strategic Priority 3

Engage with local communities and stakeholders to improve understanding of the Horticulture Industry.

*First Edition: September 2010 - Second Edition: September 2011
Third Edition: February 2015 - Fourth Edition: July 2017.*

Growing Together: Introduction

West Sussex Growers' Association (WSGA) was established in 1927 and currently has 70 members, ranging from Multinational businesses to specialist family businesses. The Industry in West Sussex produces over £1 billion in annual sales of fruit, vegetables, salads and plants and employs more than 9,000 people.¹ With rapid advances in technology, increasing numbers of these jobs are highly skilled and of high value. In addition, the Industry supports many ancillary businesses and jobs in the area.

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. 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, renewable energy systems, carbon dioxide capture and green waste management, lead to substantial improvements to benefit the environment.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. Many businesses operate apprenticeship schemes. Free access to the European labour market is essential for the future success of the Horticultural Industry.

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, supportive planning policies, good infrastructure and free access to the European labour market.

¹ West Sussex Growers' Association: Economic Survey – July 2017

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

Represent the Horticulture Industry to advise and inform policy makers as to land use policies that 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>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>WSGA will always endeavour to cooperate and contribute fully with Local Authority consultations and initiatives that involves the Horticultural Industry.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>
1.2	<p>Food, Plant & Energy Security</p> <p>In line with Government Strategy and customer demand, 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 imports, food miles, energy efficiency 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>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>Ongoing</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>WSGA supports the introduction of Local Development Orders (LDOs) that identify specific areas of land for horticultural development.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>
<p>1.4</p>	<p>Access to the Labour Market</p> <p>The most valuable resource available to the Horticultural Industry is the people who work in it.</p> <p>The range of jobs available in the Industry are many and varied; from entry level, through mid-skilled to highly skilled and across all functions.</p> <p>Over 9,000 people work in the local Horticultural Industry; approximately 65% in the Chichester area, 30% in the Arun area and 5% in other parts of West Sussex.</p> <p>Continued access to the labour market is of vital importance to the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex; including, free access to the European labour market.</p>	<p>Promote the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex as a positive career choice.</p> <p>Encourage all member businesses to provide continuous training and support for all employees.</p> <p>Promote to potential recruits the positive career ladders that exist within the Horticultural Industry.</p> <p>Support Local Authorities in their initiatives to provide affordable housing and accommodation for horticultural workers in West Sussex.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>1.5</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, reservoirs, trickle and closed irrigation systems for the most efficient use of water in horticulture.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>
<p>1.6</p>	<p>Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)</p> <p>WSGA shares the aims and visions of Coast to Capital (C2C), the Coastal West Sussex Partnership (CWSP) and the Rural West Sussex Partnership (RWSP).</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 provide delegates to the C2C, CWSP and RWSP forums and meetings to represent the interests of the Horticultural Industry.</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>July 2018</p>
<p>1.7</p>	<p>Allied and Ancillary Businesses</p> <p>Allied and ancillary businesses and organisations that support 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 large and small scale allied and ancillary organisations within the local area.</p> <p>Continue to work closely with the National Farmers’ Union.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>

<p>1.8</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 pack houses 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>1.9</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>Minimise food and plant waste and recycle where possible.</p>	<p>Enhance the local environment through innovative and imaginative landscaping, waterways and habitat schemes on horticultural sites.</p> <p>Provide local charities with food and plant surpluses.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>1.10</p>	<p>Infrastructure</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>Campaign with others as to the vital importance of improving local infrastructure for the benefit of the whole community.</p> <p>Proactively support all initiatives for the improvement and increased capacity of the A27 and its feeder roads at Arundel, Chichester and Worthing.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Growing Together: Strategic Priority 2

Seek strategies to enhance the perception 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 9,000 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>Continued access to the labour market is of vital importance to the Horticultural Industry in West Sussex; including, free access to the European labour market.</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> <p>Promote and support the need for free access to the European labour market.</p>	Ongoing
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>In addition to in-house training, work with Training Providers to develop specific skills training for staff at all levels.</p> <p>Attend recruitment events and promote careers in local horticultural businesses.</p>	July 2018

<p>2.3</p>	<p>Schools</p> <p>Industry 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. the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to promote cooperation and strong links between WSGA business members and Schools.</p> <p>Promote and support regular visits to horticultural businesses for pupils and teachers.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Industry Specific Training</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Foster stronger links with key stakeholders, education and training providers.</p> <p>Seek further resources and funding from Government to meet the education and training needs of the Horticultural Industry.</p>	<p>July 2018</p>

Growing Together: Strategic Priority 3

Engage with national and local communities and stakeholders to improve understanding of the Horticulture Industry.

Item	Issues	Actions	Review
3.1	<p>Government</p> <p>Strong links with Government; including Defra, are of paramount importance to WSGA and its members.</p> <p>Representing the interests of its members across a wide range of issues; including: access to the EU labour market, trade, planning, research, education & training, broadband & utilities, environment, water and transport.</p>	<p>Continuously to seek representation with Government to promote the interests of the Horticulture Industry.</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 and Rural West Sussex Partnerships, the Environment Agency, Universities and Colleges.</p>	Ongoing
3.2	<p>Local Communities</p> <p>Local engagement with all types of stakeholders is of paramount importance to the Horticultural Industry.</p> <p>Links with Councillors and officers from Local Authorities; including: West Sussex County Council, Arun, Chichester, Adur & Worthing District Councils and local Parish Councils.</p> <p>Strong links with local Universities and Colleges, Coast to Capital, Coastal & Rural Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce and other business and community organisations are highly valued.</p>	<p>Strengthen links with all stakeholders to form closer relationships and improve understanding.</p> <p>Promote Open Days and organised visits to local horticultural businesses.</p> <p>In cooperation with stakeholders; organise conferences and meetings to discuss issues that affect the Horticulture Industry and the wider community.</p> <p>Take part in presentations and talks with local Councils, Universities, Colleges and other business and community groups.</p>	Ongoing

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