

Coventry Urban Eden (CUE)

Final Evaluation Report



Prepared for Spirit of 2012

Project Duration: November 2023 – March 2025

Lead Organisation: Grapevine Coventry &
Warwickshire.

Project Overview

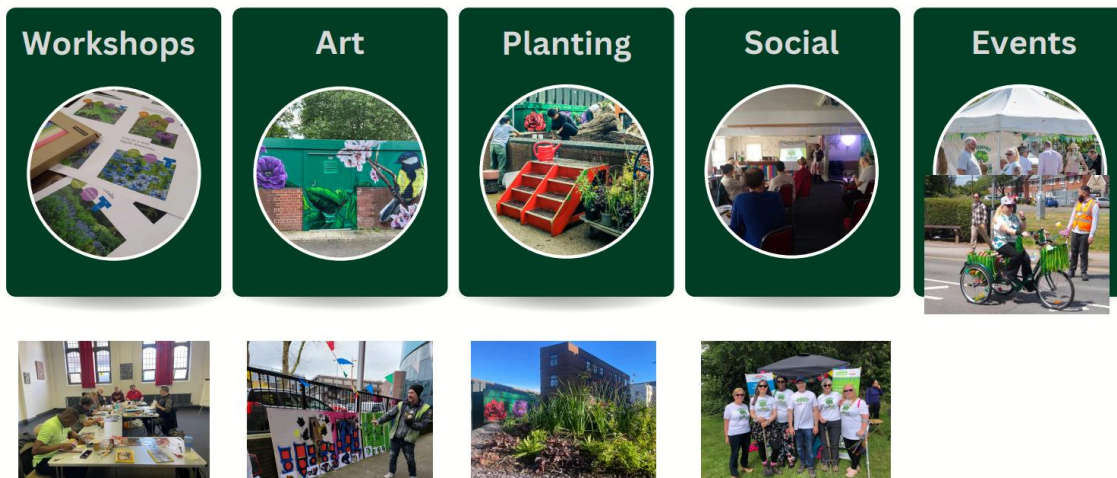
Coventry Urban Eden (CUE) set out with a clear vision: to green the city centre of Coventry through collaborative, community-led action. Over the course of the project, we transformed public spaces, built new networks, grew a team of passionate volunteers, and learned critical lessons about leadership, inclusion, and sustainability.

Our work centred on three core goals:

- Increasing green spaces in urban Coventry
- Fostering community leadership and participation
- Connecting green-minded groups and individuals across the city

Visual Celebration

Our Progress



Key Achievements

- Greening of the Central Hall raised bed, creation of the Terracycle bench garden, and involvement in Herbert planters
- Community mural creation and two public mural workshops
- Engagement of over 400 community members and 18+ volunteers
- Co-hosting events with 30+ local green groups
- Delivery of volunteer training: First Aid, bid writing, manual handling
- Creation of CUE-branded materials to raise visibility and team identity



Learning & Insight

1. Leadership Starts with Relationships

Early assumptions around roles and structure led to confusion and conflict. We learned that team dynamics, trust, and clarity must precede task division. A more deliberate onboarding and training process would have helped us align faster.

2. Infrastructure is Vital

Banking and financial management posed serious setbacks. Internet banking access took months to resolve. A simple guide or peer mentoring from other groups might have averted this.

3. Conflict is Normal, if Addressed

Unspoken tensions built up over time until a crisis meeting brought honest conversations to the fore. We now understand the value of early, open dialogue, personality awareness, and having agreed conflict resolution tools.

4. Inclusion Requires Intention

Despite efforts, we didn't reach as many isolated or underrepresented groups as intended. More tailored outreach, partnerships, and accessible welcome materials (like a clear joining pack) are needed.

5. A Bigger Vision is More Magnetic

Some members felt our narrative stayed too narrow. Broadening our vision to include biodiversity, urban wellbeing, and policy influence can attract more diverse allies and funders.

6. Celebrate & Incentivise Participation

Badges, annual volunteer appreciation, and fun socials matter. They motivate, build identity, and help keep people involved.

Challenges

- Banking setup delays affected operations
- Team changes and unclear roles slowed decision-making
- Volunteer recruitment fell short of expectations
- Delayed delivery of a second site due to site control and utilities
- Lack of structured succession or knowledge-sharing processes



Recommendations for Other Groups

Theme: Team Building

- Start with structured onboarding, skills audits, and role clarity
- Invest early in group dynamics training (e.g. conflict resolution, personality styles)

Theme: Systems & Sustainability

- Establish financial infrastructure before project launch
- Create simple operating manuals: finance, welcome packs, decision processes

Theme: Inclusion & Reach

- Don't wait to partner—learn from similar groups early
- Recruit via skill-specific asks rather than general callouts
- Co-design events and gardens with potential users

Theme: Balancing Fun and Delivery

- Build in celebration, appreciation, and creativity
- Balance practical workdays with community-building activities

Theme: Bigger Picture Thinking

- Link gardens to wider goals: biodiversity, climate, health
- Position the group as part of a citywide movement, not just a project

2025–2026 Plan

Vision: To consolidate and deepen our work in the Central Hall area, grow a stronger, well-supported team, and nurture a broader sense of purpose beyond gardening.

Strategic Priorities:

1. Team Building & Onboarding

- Hold regular bonding sessions and orientation events
- Develop and use a new member welcome pack
- Implement two-person onboarding conversations

2. Workload Management & Leadership



- Define and agree on core group roles at AGM (target group size: 8–12)
- Encourage skill-sharing and task rotation
- Offer leadership development and peer mentoring

3. Inclusion & Recruitment

- Host an open recruitment event in early 2026
- Use posters, community centers, and partner networks like Chat Central
- Ask onboarding questions such as "What keeps you motivated in a group?"

4. Sustainability & Focus

- Maintain and improve current green spaces (especially Central Hall)
- Emphasize watering, maintenance, and educational signage
- Avoid overextending to new spaces unless resourced

5. Broader Impact

- Embed biodiversity themes (e.g., pollinator planting)
- Pilot educational activities or interpretation boards for the public
- Work with local businesses and the wider community to assess impact

Monitoring and Reflection:

- - Bi-monthly check-ins on team wellbeing and workload
- - Annual review of group values and roles
- - Year-end impact reflection with visual and story-based documentation

Conclusion

Coventry Urban Eden is more than a gardening group—it's a catalyst for green change in Coventry. While we navigated internal challenges and infrastructure hurdles, we leave this phase with stronger roots, deeper insight, and renewed commitment to grow community-led green action in the heart of our city.

