MONTAGU SQUARE
GARDEN TRUST

TRUSTEE PACK

2024

FEBRUARY 2025

CALLING NOTICE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
MONDAY MARCH 3rd 2025 6.30PM
At Wetherby Prep School 48 Bryanston Square

1st February 2025

Dear Trustee,

Please accept this letter as a calling notice for the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Montagu Square Garden Trust.

Included with this letter

- Agenda for the AGM
- Committee Report for 2024
- Accounts and Financial Report for 2024
- Draft minutes of the last AGM held on 5 March 2024

Yours sincerely,

Montagu Square Garden Trust

www.montagusaquare.org
gardenclerk@montagusquare.org
07446 759075

MONTAGU SQUARE GARDEN TRUST

AGENDA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
MONDAY MARCH 3rd 2025 6.30PM
At Wetherby Prep School 48 Bryanston Square

1. To consider and approve the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 5th March 2024
2. Matters arising
3. To receive the Annual Report of the Committee
4. To consider and, if thought fit, to accept the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st December 2024
5. To levy the Garden rate for the year to 31st December 2025
6. To elect the Committee for the year to 31st December 2025
7. Any other business

After the AGM there will be a hosted Q&A with our Garden Consultant Stephen Crisp.

Note:
Prior to the Garden Trust AGM, there will be the Annual General Meeting of 'M' members of the Montagu Square (EMS) Limited at 6.05pm.

Step free access is available from the mews behind Wetherby School to the 1st floor Hall. Please contact the Garden Clerk, Lisa Payne if you require assistance using it. She can be contacted by email: gardenclerk@montagusquare.org or leave her a message on 07446 759075

We know that some residents prefer to receive information by hand, but the Trust is keen to send out more information digitally to those who would prefer paperless communication. Please use the QR code to sign up to our mailchimp account. MailChimp is GDPR compliant and you can unsubscribe from the mailing list at any time.

MONTAGU SQUARE GARDEN TRUST

COMMITTEE REPORT

A Year of New Planting

This Spring, several hundred new plants were added to the Square, including some unusual varieties and a number of herbs carefully placed in sunny spots. All were selected and positioned with great care by Stephen Crisp, our garden consultant since 2023.

The year's plentiful rain was a blessing, helping the new plants establish themselves while aiding the recovery and growth of trees that had been severely affected by the 2022 drought. Notably, the young plane tree on the southeast side has almost doubled in size, and if you look closely, you might spot a self-seeded elm quietly growing in the northwest corner.

Elm trees, once a common feature of the English landscape, were nearly wiped out by Dutch elm disease in the 1960s, caused by the fungus Ophiostoma novo-ulmi. Our young elm is therefore a rare and special addition to the square, with the potential to grow up to 30 meters tall and live for over 100 years.

Nearby, on the northeast corner, a newly planted liquidambar tree now stands in place of the large plane tree felled in 2019. The liquidambar is quite different, with a more columnar shape and stunning autumn foliage that sheds before winter. In the same area, you'll find an Edgeworthia chrysantha, or Japanese paper tree, a small shrub that delights with wonderfully scented blossoms in early spring before its leaves emerge.

Looking ahead, further planting and regeneration are planned, particularly for the central section on the southwest side. The garden was originally planted with many bay trees, which may have started as ornamental features but have since grown out of control. We're exploring the possibility of heavily pruning one of these bays to create space for more diverse and interesting plants that will thrive with improved light.



Maintenance Highlights

This year, the Garden has also benefited from some practical improvements. Pots around the substation walls were moved to its southern face, and the three rubbish bins have been repositioned by the gates, making them less visible and more accessible. We are still considering ways to improve their appearance.

A lorry load of mulch was delivered and spread across the Garden, providing vital nourishment for the plants in a bid to improve water retention and make planting more resilient to drought.



The flowers of the Edgeworthia - chrysanthia

Electric cutters were not used this year, allowing the hedges to grow taller and enhance privacy for those enjoying the Garden. With its 16 mature plane trees, semi-mature horse chestnuts, and four mature hollies, the Square retains its woodland garden feel. It's a perfect retreat from the summer sun and a place to appreciate the vibrant colors of spring bulbs.

Our tree surgeons, Clear Cut Trees, visited twice this year for massaria inspections and general tree care as were advised in 2024 to move from an annual to a biannual schedule. As always, all work is conducted with permission from Westminster's planning department.

A Summer of Community Events

This summer, the Square came alive with events that brought neighbours and guests together. Highlights included the Open Gardens Weekend, expertly organised by Noella Haquard with support from Sue Smith and Catherine Bourdon-Marsh. Shakespeare in the Square's "All's Well That Ends Well", played to a sold-out audience of 200. Residents and guests picnicked on the lawn, enjoyed a well-stocked bar, and soaked up the sunshine and the magical atmosphere of this unforgettable evening.

The Summer Party was a smaller gathering this year, with Julia Strauss stealing the show in the community Bake-Off with her winning creation.

We also celebrated a significant birthday in the Square this year, a reminder that the Garden is available for resident's to hire for private events.

We are organising a variety of events for 2025 including Open Gardens on June 7th, a reimagined Summer Party on June 21st and another visit from Shakespeare in the Square schedule for July 1st.



A New Chapter in Garden Management

In May 2024, the Garden Committee welcomed Lisa Payne as our new Garden Clerk, succeeding Westbourne Block Management. Lisa has already made a significant impact, including a complete overhaul of the key system to ensure only authorised residents have access to the gates. Lisa also works closely with our treasurer, Peter Blott, handling financial and administrative tasks with dedication.

Lisa is the only paid member of the Committee; the rest of the team consists of volunteer residents. To help us dedicate more time to planning events and improving the Garden, please pay your Garden Rate promptly — chasing arrears is time-consuming and costly.
At the end of 2024, the Committee decided to bring in a new gardener. After 20 years of excellent service, Joseph Jones Maintenance Ltd will be succeeded by Jelani George, who will begin working in the Square two days a week from February 2025. Jelani has 15 years experience as a professional horticulturist specialising in garden design, soft landscaping and maintenance, for several organisations and companies and is looking forward to taking over stewardship of the Garden and working with the Garden Trust Committee. Stephen Crisp will continue to provide his expert guidance as we move forward.



How to identify the English Elm in the Garden

Looking Ahead

As for me, I'll be stepping down as co-chair in March 2025, as my husband and I embark on extended travels. It's been a privilege to serve the Square, and as we haven't yet found someone to take on all of my role liaising with gardeners and tree surgeons, I encourage anyone interested to step forward. It's a wonderful way to contribute to this special space.
Thank you all for your ongoing support of the Garden. Here's to another year of growth, care, and community.
Warm regards,
Anne Bristow,
Co-Chair Garden Committee

The Committee

The current Committee is made up of the following Trustees: Anne Bristow (Co-Chair), Peter Blott (Co-Chair and Treasurer), Sarah Lang, Sue Smith, Martin Bikhit, Noella Hacquard, Catherine Bourdon-Marsh and Bethen Lewis-Powell. Our Garden Clerk, Lisa Payne, provides invaluable support.
A huge thank you to Anne Bristow, who will be stepping down as Co-Chair in March. Her tenacity, vision, and boundless energy have been transformative for the Square, particularly her leadership in delivering the new play area—a monumental undertaking that will benefit generations to come.

We're looking to welcome more Committee members to reflect the diversity of those living around the Square. Roles are apportioned based on members' available time, so there's plenty of flexibility. In particular, we're keen to find someone who would enjoy liaising with our new gardener and conducting regular garden walkthroughs to ensure everything is in top shape.
Joining the Committee is a great way to make connections, build friendships, and play an active role in shaping this beautiful community space. If you're interested, we'd love to hear from you!

MONTAGU SQUARE GARDEN TRUST

ACCOUNTS
year ended 31 December 2024

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE - GENERAL FUND		2024	2023
Income		£	£
	Garden rates received	84,272	95,721
	Misc. income	1,256	3,365
		85,528	99,086
Expenditure			
	Gardener & garden improvements	42,098	39,956
	Clerk's Fee	11,880	9,780
	Tree work	7,914	16,458
	Insurance	1,132	1,051
	Water	-3,315	4,757
	Electricity	12	3,021
	Sundries	3,026	3,033
		62,747	78,056
	Excess of income over expenditure	22,781	21,030
Allocation to reserves			
	Painting fund	2,000	2,000
	Surplus / (Deficit)	20,781	19,030

BALANCE SHEET AND RESERVES		31 Dec 2024	31 Dec 2023
Assets and liabilities		£	£
	Cash at bank	68,650	37,144
	Other current assets	0	5,720
	Creditors and Accruals	-3,375	-371
		65,275	42,493
Reserves			
	Painting fund	22,697	20,696
	Surplus /(Deficit) Prior Years	21,797	2,767
	Surplus /(Deficit) Current Year	20,781	19,030
	Accumulated Surplus	42,578	21,797
	Total Reserves	65,275	42,493

ACCOUNTS continued

OTHER INFORMATION AND NOTES

	31 Dec 2024	31 Dec. 2023
Hanging Basket fund	£	£
Reserve at start of year	1,454	2,540
Donations received	4,296	3,721
Paid out in year	-5,750	-4,807
Remaining reserve	0	1,454

Agreement of total cash at bank at period end		
General fund	68,650	37,144
Hanging basket fund	0	1,454
Total cash at bank	68,650	38,598

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Commentary

The Trust received £84,272 from the garden rate levy in 2024 (2023 - £95,721). Overall the trust recorded a surplus for 2024 of £20,781 (2023 - £19,030). Total reserves at the end of 2024 were £65,275 (2023 - £42,493).

Garden Rate arrears from a minority of properties on the Square continue to be a problem, particularly following property ownership changes we are not aware of. Additional work will be prioritised by the new Garden Clerk to bring our trustee records up to date and collect these arrears.

Water and electricity bills have been overestimated by the two utility companies in previous years. Our new Garden Clerk secured a water bill refund of £4,733 in August 2024. Water expenditure in the 2024 accounts is negative because of this refund, partially offset by regular charges since then. Electricity charges for 2024 were reduced to £1 a month to eliminate the prior year overpayments.

The Garden Trust has administered the procurement of hanging baskets on the Square. These were paid for by voluntary donations and are accounted for separately from the Trust's main funds. The Trust's main funds can only be spent on the Garden and may not be used on the hanging baskets outside the railings of the square. In recent years residents' voluntary donations have not been sufficient to meet the increasing cost of maintaining the hanging baskets and in 2024 we exhausted our hanging basket financial reserve and will not be able to have the hanging baskets in 2025. The Committee would welcome any ideas for how we may get some hanging baskets around the Square in future years.

Garden Rate Levy for the Year to 31 December 2025

The Committee recommends an increase in the garden rate levy for 2025 of 2% (a rate of 1.4212 pence in the pound on the annual values taken as 8% of the 2005 building insurance values). This increase is recommended to absorb some of the inflationary pressure on the Trust's expenditure and allow continuation of garden improvement projects.

DRAFT MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MONTAGU SQUARE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 5th March 2024 at Wetherby Prep School

ATTENDEES Peter Blott (Acting Chair), Anne Bristow (Co-Chair), Sarah Lang, Sue Smith, Salvatore Giorgio (WM), David Lane, Sara Lane, Bethan Lewis-Powell, Alan Bristow, Jeremy Lang, Chris Morris, Karen Wilson, Catherine Marsh-Bourdon, Lesley Hopkinson, Robert Bramwell-Jones, Nicholas Posnansky, Joanne Walker, Anne Methuen-Campbell.
IN ATTENDANCE Stephen Crisp

Peter Blott opened the meeting by welcoming all the attendees.

1.To consider and approve the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 6th March 2023. The minutes were approved.

2. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising from the last minutes.

3. To receive the annual report of the Committee. The report of the Committee had already been circulated with the mailings and published on the garden website.
Anne Bristow started by introducing Stephen Crisp who has now been a consultant to the Garden Trust for 18 months. He has four meetings a year with Joseph Jones and the Committee to discuss the garden and that year's planting. The focus is to improve privacy through planting new shrubs, developing the existing hedges and shrubbery which will ultimately create a tranquil oasis.
Clear Cuts Tree Surgeons are employed to manage the trees. While doing the regular plane tree inspections they have also worked on regenerating shrubs to bring them back to a more naturalistic form.
Montagu Square Garden is very much a woodland garden and so by definition is very shady and suitable plants have to be chosen for these conditions.
A herb garden will be created in the south side of the garden with plants like rosemary and myrtle where there are windows of direct sunlight.
The whole regeneration process is part a long-term plan where the Committee is committed to the quality and privacy of the garden.
Anne then spoke about the garden party which was very successful thanks to Martin Bikhit, Berkshire Hathaway and Home House. She also thanked Bethan Lewis-Powell for gathering all the raffle prizes from local business. She said that a big summer party will be held every other year and alternate with a more low-key gathering for residents.

DRAFT MINUTES continued

Montagu Square will take part in the London Square Open Gardens on Saturday 9th June and Shakespeare in The Square will be back on 27th June 2024. Finally, Anne thanked Sarah Lang for looking after all IT issues and for producing the newsletter twice a year

4. To consider and if thought fit to accept the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st December 2023

Peter Blott outlined that tree works now cost over £16,000 pa as a regular ongoing continual expense. Water and electricity, and particularly the water, were very high in 2023, but the bills are based on utility company estimated readings, that exceed the actual meter readings and the accounts are significantly in credit.

Peter then spoke about the hanging basket and explained that the Committee had taken over the management of them when the residents association disbanded. The Trust can only be responsible for items within the railings, so the cost of the baskets cannot be paid from the Trust's general fund money and instead is met from voluntary donations requested at the same time as the garden rate notices are sent out. The cost of the baskets has increased significantly in the past few years and there is not sufficient voluntary donations to cover this. There are sufficient funds to pay for 2024 baskets, but the baskets won't be renewed from 2025.

The accounts were approved.

5. To levy the garden rate for the year to 31st December 2023

It was proposed to increase the rates by 2%. This was approved.

6. To elect the Committee for the year to December 2023

The Committee was re-confirmed and Peter Blott, as always, invited any Trustee who wanted to join the Committee to step forward.

7. Any other business

Rubbish bins, foxes, lighting in the garden and dogs were all discussed and will be followed up at Committee meetings.

Stephen Crisp's presentation on the long-term plan for the garden and subsequent question & answer session concluded the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

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MONTAGU SQUARE
GARDEN TRUST

FOR THE ATTENTION OF:

Established by Act of Parliament 1813

www.montagusquare.org
gardenclerk@montagusquare.org
07446 759075