

Active Gardeners to be recognised

Introduction. A recent study sponsored by the National Council for Physical Recreation (NCPDR) has identified a new group of individuals whose average life expectancy is 3.7 years greater than active sportsmen and women. Furthermore this group has very low obesity levels and is so healthy that the NHS has named them “nature’s miracles”. This group has been identified as Horticulturists and Gardeners. The NCPDR study has revealed that the average work undertaken by gardeners is the equivalent of 14 hours of strenuous physical activity per week – way above most conventional sportspersons.

This remarkable study confirms what many observers have believed for years. ***Sport England has welcomed the NCPDR findings and as a result has decided to include gardeners in the ninth year of their Active People’s survey.***

The Way Ahead. Sport England has held emergency discussions with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Together they have formulated a working programme to promote horticulture for the 14 – 25 year old age group. The RHS will receive funding for this new venture from the DCMS via Sport England but stresses all its existing activities will continue to be monitored by DEFRA. As a registered charity the RHS will be seeking Lottery Funding for the project as a new era begins.

Already the Youth Sports Trust has announced plans to develop horticultural activities in Sports Academies and hopes to have the first pilot schemes operating in the London Borough of Newham this summer.

Meanwhile the London Marathon Charitable Trust has announced free entries to the 2016 Marathon for horticultural clubs affiliated to the RHS and to England Athletics. The affiliation fees for gardeners have yet to be fixed.

Wide Support. Jenny Price from Sport England commented, *“This will add further growth to the size and status of athletics”.*

The London Olympic Legacy Company stated. *“ We have supported the early stages of this study. London 2012 legacy has been a hot topic recently and it is great to see another area where we can build on our successes.”*

Neils de Vos posted on Twitter *“I am already in active talks with the Dutch Government to see if we can work together on this new venture.”*

IPSOS MORI has already bid for the ninth Active People survey. Their spokesperson said, *“We are ideally placed to do this. Our MD is a keen gardener and has the mobile numbers of at least a dozen fellow enthusiasts.”*

ABAC declined to comment.

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