

Annual General Meeting

Minutes — as recorded · 20 May 2023 · Ref AGM-2023-05-20

Minutes of the Bathford Allotments Annual General Meeting, held at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 20 May 2023 at the community plot.

Present: 31 plotholders.

Welcome and introductions

The chair thanked everyone for coming and introduced representatives from the Parish Council, including the Council chair. She thanked her fellow wardens — all have worked really hard over the two years they have been in post, managing plots, rotavating, clearing, burning, building and moving projects forward. Between them the wardens handle the heavy lifting, the admin, the sourcing of resources and building work, and securing the grant that established the pond; the pond dig day was very successful.

There is a range of great skills on the allotment and the wardens are very grateful for any offers of help. All plotholders agreed with a round of applause.

Report from the Parish Council — finances

- Current account: £3,500 — very healthy.
- Deposit account: £1,698.
- Rent: £2,341 raised — fully let.
- Key expenditure: water (up a little on the previous year because of the dry summer) and plot rotavating.
- Pond costs were all covered by an £800 grant from Wessex Water.
- The loan from the Parish Council for the water-tank installation is being paid back at £500 per year.
- Maintenance of the New Road wall cost the Council £11,262, and the Parish Council would like people to see this as their commitment to the plots.

Wardens' report

Waiting list and messy plots

We now have a waiting list of three people (compared with five-year waiting lists in Bath, or very expensive plots at Roots). Many plots are still undercultivated and messy. According to the regulations, plotholders must keep the plot in a proper state of cultivation at all times and keep paths mowed, trimmed and in good order.

Particularly because of the waiting list, the wardens want to support existing plotholders to choose manageable plot sizes rather than holding on to uncultivated space. The wardens are now more proactive in making formal requests for people to sort out their plots, as messy plots have a negative impact on neighbours' plots through the spread of weed seeds. First and second notices will be delivered to the plotholders in question, and the issue will then be passed to the Council if there is no change.

There is growing demand for smaller plots for beginners and young families. It is important to understand that no one wants plots to stand empty, newcomers will be given latitude and encouragement, and personal circumstances will be taken into account in any timeframe negotiation. The meeting fully supported this approach.

- **Option 1 — get help:** a plotholder can ask a friend to join them. If this person is registered as an official plot helper and the plot is kept in good condition for at least a year, they will be given first refusal on the plot if the official renter leaves. The wardens keep a register of helpers to ensure there is no queue-jumping.
- **Option 2 — reduce size:** decide what size of plot you can manage and liaise with the wardens to reduce it.

Plots are currently rented as full, half and quarter size, but actual sizes vary due to historic arrangements. Plots can be smaller, but £12 per year is the minimum rent, as this covers the cost of sending out an invoice each year; everything else is done by volunteer labour.

Restoring paths

It is essential to have safe paths. Please consider the drop at the edge of the path (sometimes significant and dangerous) as well as the width, and try to dig uphill as much as possible. The wardens have identified the most dangerous paths and will put a map on the central noticeboard showing the designated primary paths that need attention first.

Bonfires

No bonfires are allowed on Sundays, or between June and September (Parish Council allotment rules). The bonfire closed a month early this year to support the reconfiguration of the bonfire/deliveries plot. Please do not add green vegetation, whole plants with soil, plastic, carpet or metal rubbish to the bonfire; compost all green waste (unless diseased) on your own plot or take it home. The bonfire will be trialled for one more year, and if the situation continues we will have to discontinue it.

New access gate

The gate is in (with thanks to the warden who donated it and oversaw installation). Next, a section of the New Road wall will be demolished, hardcore spread and the work finished. It is for emergency access or deliveries — **do not use it for general parking**. A delivery zone will be available for people to have bags delivered, and a warden will be able to help transport them.

Individual plotholder deliveries — manure, bark chip etc. — can still be delivered to the central track close to your plot, so long as you move it as soon as possible. The wardens are working on regular seasonal deliveries of bark chip.

Communal plot

The plan is for a seating area and raised beds, mostly bark-chipped for low maintenance (posts donated by Mumfords Vineyard). The wardens need to discuss the water supply with the relevant contact. The plan is for all costs of the proposed community shed to be covered by grants. A water-collection system will be set up to feed the pond — a series of water butts; any donations welcome.

Future plans

- **Rotavator:** one has been donated but needs repair. We need a new rotavator team, who will be taught how to use it and must be insured.

- **Composting toilet:** the committee would welcome advice and support. Previously considered but too expensive, as the cost is not just set-up but also maintenance. Hiring a portaloo may be considered but is also expensive. All suggestions will be looked at by the committee, but proposals would go to a general vote before expenditure is agreed.

Proposed changes to regulations

Trees in pots. The tree must be in a robust, permanent pot and above ground. If someone leaves without taking their tree, the tree becomes the property of the allotments and will be sold to raise funds. **Vote result: passed by a large majority.**

Bonfire plot. No non-burnable rubbish (metal, plastic, green vegetation with soil) may be dumped on the bonfire plot. **Vote result: passed unanimously.**

Competitions

Judged by independent judges last year (Parish Council and people from Colerne Allotments); we may ask them to repeat this year. Scarecrow judging is in August — please request an entry form. Best-kept plots will be announced at the Flower Show.

Staffing and working groups

More wardens are needed to support the work. The committee is relaxed, with a focus on gathering views and supporting projects — please volunteer if interested. We keep a general help email list. The Pond Posse have had great help so far, with a volunteer keeping an eye on the pond; native marginal plants for the edge would be welcome.

Any other business

- If you leave anything in a communal space, please label it clearly as yours, as items have been taken.
- There is a green box near the top-right gate where plotholders can leave spare vegetables for Penny's Pantry food bank.
- Please remember to enter the Flower Show — we want to keep it alive.
- The next newsletter will include an article by a plotholder on the benefits of having a plot.

The meeting acknowledged the progress and amount of work the wardens have made over the last three years. If people are struggling and need a hand with their plot, please let the wardens know.

Postscript: after the meeting, volunteers came forward for the committee, working parties and the rotavator team — thank you, everyone.

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