

# **MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION**

## **Committee meeting**

**5.30pm on Tuesday 4 July 2023**  
**Nunsmoor Centre, Fenham, NE4 5AH**

### **Present**

Frank Lightfoot (Chair), Steven McDonnell, Simon Rutherford, Sarah Farrell, Emily Sweetman, Susan Pownall, Barbara Taylor, Richard Littlewood, Karen Brown

### **1 Apologies for absence**

Nick Coster, Tony Whittle, Nicola Francis

The Committee noted their hearty congratulations to Nicola on the birth of her third child.

### **2 Minutes of previous meeting (6 June) and matters arising**

Proposed by Richard and seconded by Steven. Minutes were AGREED.

**Action:** Emily pass to Richard for publication on website.

### **3 Chair's Update (Frank)**

Frank met with the Freeman, at their request, on 15 June. It was a relatively formal meeting which included representatives from each of the wartime sites and was hosted by Alan Bainbridge and Sherod Walker.

Commenting on the lease, the Freeman had been surprised that Moorside Association had received a copy of a lease which had apparently come via Newcastle City Council. The Freeman were reportedly not happy with a number of items on the lease and proposed to review it themselves and respond to the Associations. The representative from the Triangle Allotments in Jesmond raised the particular concern of finding themselves responsible for the clearance of an abandoned site. This was likely to be addressed in the next meeting with the Freeman on 6 July.

**Action:** Frank to report back and to copy details to Nicola.

The status of Newcastle Allotments Working Group (NAWG) had been raised by another Allotment Chair at the Freeman meeting. It was reiterated by the Freeman that NAWG had no formal authority over, or relationship to, the wartime sites but was available to offer advice to sites or individual plot holders as required.

Frank reported that the Freeman would like to meet with the Moorside committee at some point to discuss the site in general.

The Urban Pollinator research team from Newcastle University had been on site again with access arranged via Steven. Frederica (lead investigator) continued to be delighted with what she is finding by way of pollinators.

The new Plant Scheme had closed for the growing season with a final sales total of £571. Frank noted that he used £57 to pay for perennials for pots at the site entrance which will be recovered from the Bee Garden's grant fund. Susan confirmed that the Bee Garden received a substantial grant some years ago and continued to fund those pots from its residual funds. Richard asked whether those were the 'grant funds' referred to in the AGM accounts, which recorded £335.03 remaining but this could not be confirmed.

**Action:** Check with Nicola

Susan queried the protocol relating to break-ins and thefts on site. It was confirmed that nothing had changed and that any plot holder was welcome to notify the police and receive a crime number for any thefts or damage. Frank reported that he keeps a log of any incident of which he is notified.

#### **4 Other updates**

- Trading Hut (Susan)

Susan reported that the interim takings for June were £937.96.

**Action:** Susan to complete the health and safety report for the shop and pass to Steven.

- Inspection (Frank)

Frank and Steven had inspected in the morning, followed by Susan in the afternoon.

Plot 17: showed no evidence of work having been done since the last check. Frank had attempted to contact but received no response. It was AGREED to send official warning letter and emphasise the importance of seeing sustained improvement rather than temporary responses to reminders.

**Action:** Emily.

**Action:** Susan to review the current watchlist and confirm to Frank / Emily the date(s) when those plot holders were written to the previous growing season.

Plot 11: Frank's efforts to contact had elicited a response and some work had been done but not sufficient to have an impact on the overall level of cultivation. Proposed that Frank reconnect with plot holder. AGREED.

**Action:** Frank to make contact.

Plot 20: Rubbish had been seen hanging from trees on the plot and areas of rotten wood were seen as presenting a potential danger to the plot holder. It was AGREED to make contact and notify him that it needed to be moved by the end of August or else the committee would remove it for him. **Action:** Frank.

Sarah asked whether there was a map of the site available with plot numbers. Frank advised he planned to produce a hand drawn map of the site and that he had asked Richard to identify major shrubs and trees which should be included on the map as part of the wildlife / site survey. Steve reminded the committee that Tony had taken photos of all the plots some point in the past, which could be useful.

Plot 91: No evidence of work since last month. It was AGREED that Frank should make contact

**Action:** Frank.

Plot 75: after some initial work, the plot is sliding back into neglect. AGREED to send formal letter.

**Action:** Emily

Frank had reminded another plot holder that their plot should be cultivated and could not simply be used as a garden or children's play areas. Agreed to keep under close review.

Plot 95: large holes at the edge of the plot could be affecting access to hedges for the neighbour.

**Action:** Frank to speak to plot holder.

- Lettings (Tony/Frank)

Tony Whittle had reported separately by email that he had let 27a.

- Health and Safety (Steven)

Steven noted that bees were still in the felled tree trunk on plot 34 and would be unlikely to move now until the end of July when they would naturally move on.

Steven noted the brambles on the lanes needed attention. Susan reported the strimmer was still with the maintenance man and that it would be important to drain down the strimmer at the end of the year to prevent petrol solidifying in it again.

## **5 Moorside Competition (Frank)**

Frank reported that, under pressure of time and in the absence of any other volunteers, he had judged the site using Urban Green's criteria and his findings were later verified by Steve McDonnell and Nick Coster. Angus Aitchison (plot 62) had verified the wildlife judging. Frank had circulated the winners' details to the committee and had retained detailed records of his scoring for inspection. It was AGREED to offer special commendations to gardeners who had done particularly well.

**Action:** Emily to circulate list of winners and special commendations with next Chair's Update.

## 6 Members' Survey Results (Emily)

Emily relayed the results of the members survey (26 responses) and it was agreed that the document be circulated minus the email addresses of volunteers.

**Action:** Emily

She noted that the responses received were supportive of the current forms of communication, and the proposals to provide more advice and guidance to plot holders. A number of people had volunteered and Emily was to contact them and find out more.

**Action:** Emily to contact.

## 7 September Event Proposal (Emily)

Emily had circulated and analysed the results of the survey question that related to the annual show/event. The majority were in favour of an informal/fun allotment competition, a social occasion with other plot holders, and some form of refreshments. Plot holders would be welcome to have their own stalls selling or displaying wares on the basis that they would donate 10% of their takings to the Association's funds. It was AGREED to run an event along the lines of the previous year's Open Day, from 12-5pm on the traditional show day of 9 September (weekend of Great North Run). Responsibilities were agreed as followed:

Item	Actions (not exhaustive)	Lead
Informal growing competition	Agree fun categories; information for plot holders; (circulate by email and poster); secure 'judges'; administrate on the day; buy and deliver prizes	Rich
Refreshments	Oversee provision of hot and cold drinks; home-made cakes; bacon sandwiches (not BBQ) etc	Emily
Stall holders	General invitation to plot holders (florists, soap / candle makers, artists, jam makers etc); with a 10% contribution of takings to MAA.	Emily
Visitor trail	Produce a visitor trail / map including Moorside Competition Prize Winners, sites of recent nature sightings; produce 'welcome to visit here' signs (laminated and strung) for plot holders who don't mind people entering their plots. A kids trail? A dedicated area for kid activities?	TBC
Produce sale or flower	Take donations from plot holders on the day; price up and present in paper bags	Emily
Tombola	Not essential but very easy to organise at short notice with raffle tickets and donated items and sold well last year.	Sarah
Infrastructure	Create site plan. Oversee: signage; gazebos; tables etc	Karen
Communications	Advance notice of date / event to plot holders (Email, Facebook and Website); poster in local shops; alert WhatsApp groups; circulate completion rules; invite Freemen.	Emily

**Action:** Emily to circulate details to plot holders with the next newsletter and seek further volunteers (e.g. for visitor trail).

## **8 Wildlife Group (Frank)**

Frank invited comments in relation to what was wanted from the wildlife group in terms of focus. Karen suggested some kind of baseline understanding of the wildlife assets. Frank reported that Rich was going to undertake a survey of major shrubs and trees, and that he would use the next Chair's Update to invite plot holders with specialist knowledge to produce advisory notes or video demos. Frank has prepared a note on bat boxes and Tony could produce one on bees. Angus (plot 62) may produce one on water spiders.

**Action:** Emily invite contributions in next email to plot holders.

## **9 The Way Forward (Frank)**

In relation to site improvements, Frank had raised the question of appealing to Northumbrian Water (NW) to make improvements to the pipework on site with the Freeman. They were in agreement and supplied the appropriate contact at NW, who was currently on holiday.

**Action:** Frank to follow up on his return.

## **10 Any other business**

- Shed application Plot 57b (circulated)

Shared application 57b was approved.

**Action:** Emily to email and formally confirm what Frank has already said by way of approval.

- Lost keys protocol (Susan)

Susan asked for confirmation of the protocol for lost keys. She noted that the red box at the main gate was a useful place to deposit any keys found on site and that she opened the box daily, keeping its keys in the Trading Hut. It was AGREED that it would be useful to have another red box key holder, so as not to limit access to via the Trading Hut.

Emily raised an email query from Pat Francis, requesting permission to remove redundant equipment from the toilets to enable proper cleaning and redecoration. This was AGREED.

**Action:** Susan to liaise with Pat.

Barbara enquired as to the whereabouts of the files recording the history of the site. Susan said they had been recovered and she would liaise with Frank to bring them to the site by car.

**Action:** Susan

Barbara reported seeing a dog walker on site in the early early mornings who had no right to trespass. Even if this was a person connected to a homeowner on Moorside North with access to the site, it was confirmed that their right of access was simply to go out onto the moor. It was AGREED that Frank would speak to the dog walker next time they were seen on site.

Frank reported Urban Green were coming to judge the City Competition between the 4-10 July and would give Frank 24 hours notice of their visit.

It was noted that as plot 34 was currently unable to use her allotment, thanks to the felled poplar tree and the bees. The Committee was sympathetic to her plight and it was AGREED to monitor the issue with a view to offering some form of compensatory rent reduction for the following year.

Richard reported that the web hosting fee was due £26 and that he would settle the bill and reclaim the amount.

# **11 Date of next meeting**

5.30pm on Tuesday 1 August 2023