

# MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

## Committee meeting

**5.30pm on Tuesday 7 March 2023**  
**Nunsmoor Centre, Fenham, NE4 5AH**

### **Present**

Susan Pownall (Chair), Richard Littlewood, Nicola Francis, Nick Coster, Sue Brophy, Barbara Taylor, Steven McDonnell, Simon Rutherford, Frank Lightfoot, Emily Sweetman, Karen Brown, Tony Whittle, Sarah Farrell (arrived 6pm)

### **1 Apologies for absence**

None.

### **2 Election / appointment of committee officers 2023-4**

Susan welcomed the committee members who were newly appointed at February's AGM (Emily, Karen, Barbara and Sarah). Introduction were made.

Susan invited nominations for the key officer roles of the Committee. They were:

#### Role of Chair

- Frank Lightfoot (Proposed by Steven McDonnell, seconded by Simon Rutherford)
- Susan Pownall (Proposed by Tony Whittle, seconded by Nick Coster)

Vote: Frank Lightfoot elected by five votes to four.

**AGREED** Chair: Frank Lightfoot

#### Role of Treasurer

**AGREED** that Nicola Francis, designated a Co-optee at the AGM in February, would remain as Treasurer.

It was **AGREED** that MAA member Fiona Thoburn would continue to handle the Trading Hut accounts on behalf of Nicola and that she would continue as signatory for the HSBC trading hut bank account. An additional signature was required for the main Santander bank account. It was **AGREED** that, as Secretary, this would be Emily Sweetman.

#### Role of Secretary

- Susan Pownall (Proposed by Tony Whittle, seconded by Nick Coster)
- Emily Sweetman (Proposed by Frank Lightfoot, seconded by Steven McDonnell)

Vote: Emily Sweetman elected by five votes to four.

**AGREED** Secretary: Emily Sweetman

Assuming the Chair, Frank proposed a review and confirmation of other key roles:

#### Inspection Team

Current team is Tony Whittle, Sue Brophy, Nick Coster, Steven McDonnell, Frank Lightfoot, Sue Pownall. **AGREED** that the team is working well and to maintain status quo. For the benefit of new members it was noted that the Inspection Team reports findings to the whole Committee for decisions on appropriate action.

#### Trading Hut

**AGREED** that Susan Pownall remain as Trading Hut manager.

#### Bee garden

**AGREED** responsibility to remain with Sue Brophy and Jean Hannon,

#### Health and Safety

**AGREED** responsibility to remain with Steven McDonnell.

#### Lettings officer

**AGREED** that Tony Whittle continue in the role, liaising with Frank Lightfoot, so that prospective tenants may receive additional guidance and support when being introduced to their offered plot.

[Sarah Farrell joined the meeting at this point - 6pm.]

#### Wildlife

**AGREED** Frank Lightfoot and Richard Littlewood to jointly maintain the lead role.

#### Deputy Chair

Frank Lightfoot proposed to reinstate the historical role of Deputy Chair to provide additional support and to enable cover on occasions when the chair is unavailable or indisposed. It was **AGREED** to do so (not voted on). Nominations were as follows:

- Richard Littlewood (proposed by Steve McDonnell and seconded by Frank Lightfoot)
- Susan Pownall (Proposed by Nick Coster and seconded by Tony Whittle)

Vote: Richard Littlewood was elected by six votes to four.

**AGREED** Deputy Chair: Richard Littlewood

#### Toilets

Susan to continue, assisted by volunteer Pat Francis. Steve McDonnell to assist with the men's toilets.

### **3 Minutes of the Meeting held of 7 February 2023**

Minutes of the 7th of February were **AGREED**.

**ACTION:** Susan to pass to Rich for posting on website.

#### 4 Updates and reports

In a change to the circulated agenda, Frank Lightfoot invited any new information to supplement the most recent Chairman's, Secretary's and Treasurer's reports, and updates relating to the Trading Hut, Waiting list, Inspection, Health and Safety, and Community Plot.

##### Community plot

Seed swap from 11am-1pm on Sunday 12 March. Tea, cake and coffee planned.

##### Trading Hut

Susan Pownall advised that sales for February had amounted to £792.56. A further delivery from the wholesalers was expected on 8th March.

##### Waiting list, lettings

Tony Whittle reported that the current list was down to 33 people. Three plots had been let in the previous month (46, 73a, 80a). Only four plots were let between November 2021-22. **AGREED** that the existing waiting list would not be opened to new applicants and that this be kept under review.

##### Inspections

Nick Coster reported that plots identified at last meeting as 'Action Needed' or 'Keep an Eye on' showed little evidence of progress (plots 20b, 27a, 79b, 90, 95 and 110). Further progress will be reported after the next inspection.

It was noted that some Hawthorne hedge had been cut on Plot 17 raising a query over the appropriate time of year to do that.

**AGREED** that it was necessary to establish which rules were preeminent in relation to cutting key wildlife habitats.

**ACTION:** Frank and Richard

It was noted that Laurel had been trimmed and left (posing a health hazard) on Plots 18 and 46. Sue Pownall advised she had notified the plot holders of the issue and arranged for the Freeman to remove all Laurels across the site. Date not yet confirmed. Plants will need to be brought to the East gate for collection at that time.

**ACTION:** Sue Pownall to coordinate.

It was noted that, although plot 75 had been partially rotovated, miscellaneous hardware was accruing at the rear. It was agreed that the degree of this accumulation would be monitored in future inspections. The fence needing repair on plot 91 was in hand.

##### Health and Safety Notice board

Ordered by Susan. Cost £103.08. Invoice forwarded to Nicola for reimbursement.

**ACTION:** Sue Pownall to move to site when ready.

## 5 Any other business

### (a) Potential Resurrection of Plant Scheme

Noted that, if the scheme was to be resurrected for 2023, arrangements would need to be put in place fast. Steven McDonnell reported that he knew of various members who were interested in contributing to the plant scheme.

In previous years members had sown and tended seeds in their own greenhouses or at home for the purposes of the scheme. It was **AGREED** to encourage that approach to continue alongside dedicated growing by a Plant Scheme Team, subject to the Team maintaining quality control of donated plants, and ensuring all such plants were properly labelled.

**ACTION:** Steven to take soundings and encourage the establishment of a team. Noted that Steven had Sue Johnson's plant scheme advisory notes and was familiar with the inventory of scheme equipment still held on site. It was proposed that, should a team come forward to run the Plant Scheme, two of the existing three greenhouses could be removed from the former Scheme plot to the Community Plot site, providing a more central location for volunteer gardeners / waterers and to enable those purchasing plants to pay directly at the Trading Hut.

### (b) Request from Plot 8

Sue Pownall reported a request from Plot 8 to sell excess plants of his own through the Trading Hut and return £1 for every five plants sold to the Association's coffers. This was **AGREED**.

**ACTION:** Susan to inform the plot holder.

### (c) Beehive request

Tony Whittle reported that the member at Plot 14 verbally requested permission to put up a beehive. It was **AGREED** to advise the plot holder that the committee would first need to consider the total number and location of the hives on the site. The committee would take into further factors into consideration which the plot holder must address in a written application, namely:

- To demonstrate that they have undertaken appropriate training (recognised by the Newcastle and District Beekeepers Association)
- To show the proposed location of the hives in a plan diagram
- To demonstrate the agreement of closest neighbours
- To state that they accept full responsibility for the bees and any related problems.

It was **AGREED** to write the plot holder setting out these necessary conditions before the committee could receive a formal request.

**ACTION:** Emily

Richard Littlewood noted that the Bee Policy needed to be added to the website.

**ACTION:** Richard.

**(d) Greenhouse and tree removal request from plot 70**

A diagram and application was submitted and circulated by Sue Pownall in advance of the meeting. The plot has been inspected.

**AGREED** to approve hardstanding base (6ft x 16ft) and greenhouse (6ft x 8ft). Noted that proposed hardstanding is larger than necessary for the greenhouse alone. Proposals for any additional structure on that base will be subject to a further approval by the committee.

It was **AGREED** that the plot holder may take down their willow tree.

**ACTION:** Susan to advise plot 70.

Emily undertook to circulate all minutes from Committee meetings within one week of each meeting for comments, and so as to clarify actions. Agendas to be circulated with sufficient time for committee members to read them. Frank undertook to invite agenda items from all members well in advance of each meeting.

RL proposed the establishment of a WhatsApp group as a simple and quick way to share information informally. (Membership not mandatory.)

**ACTION:** Richard

A vote of thanks was made to Sue Pownall in respect of her sterling achievements as Chair since 2015.

**Date of next meeting**

5.30pm on Tuesday 4 April

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

(Notes by ES)