

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Committee meeting

**5.30pm on Tuesday 6 June 2023
Nunsmoor Centre, Fenham, NE4 5AH**

Present

Frank Lightfoot (Chair), Steven McDonnell, Simon Rutherford, Nick Coster, Sarah Farrell, Emily Sweetman, Susan Pownall, Tony Whittle, Nicola Francis (arrived 6.45pm)

1 Apologies for absence

Barbara Taylor, Richard Littlewood, Karen Brown.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

Emily noted she had yet to post rat information on the noticeboard.

Action: Emily

There were no matters arising. Minutes were proposed as a true record by Steven McDonnell and seconded by Simon Rutherford

Action: Emily to pass approved minutes to Richard for publication on website.

3 Chair's report

Frank reported that he had sought clarification from the Freeman as to the Association's formal relationship with the Newcastle Allotment Working Group (NAWG). The Freeman confirmed that NAWG has an advisory role only and no authority in relation to Moorside. Similarly, there was no formal relationship to Urban Green except in their role as organisers of the city competition and city show. Newcastle City Council remained the authority in relation to tree on the site.

Frank advised that the police had apprehended the bottle diggers, who had damaged the Moor and trespassed on the Moorside site (possibly responsible for stealing some tools from plot holders). The Freeman wished to formally thank Moorside plot holders for their involvement in sharing information leading to the police action.

Frederica Paradiso, the Newcastle University researcher surveying urban pollinators on Moorside over the coming year, was on site last week and was delighted about the range of bees and other pollinators that she observed. Plot 8 was admired as being particularly rich in pollinators.

The damaged poplar tree opposite the Trading Hut was to be removed imminently and Frank would ask workman to be cautious around the potential presence of the

woodpecker. It was AGREED that Frank would explore whether workmen on site were willing to chip the laurel pile, still not removed from the site.

Frank reported that the Plant Scheme had netted £527 so far (£440 in cash was passed to Nicola for banking, along with cash for Plot 75's rent). He gave special thanks to Stan Tortoise, George, Kell, Steve McDonnell, John Purves, Rich Littlewood, Dave Vincent, Gail Young, Eddie Gilchrist, Simon Rutherford and all the others who grew plants, watered, and relocated the greenhouse to the Community Plot. Special thanks also to Jean Hannon, who not only watered regularly, but provided a backstop for plant sales when Frank was not present.

Frank mentioned that a Common Blue butterfly had been spotted on the site which was another unusual sighting in this part of the UK.

Action: Richard to publicise on the website.

5 Updates

Trading Hut

Susan reported takings of £1032.30, in May.

Inspections

Nick reported the morning's inspection round which concluded that four plots required attention (17, 20b, 27a, 90) and eight would be monitored (10, 11, 23a, 52, 91, 92, 95, 107b).

Action: Nick to circulate list.

Action: Frank to speak to the relevant plot holders. Formal action to be taken in the event of no progress next month.

Lettings

Tony reported that 73b and 57b were let in May, 83b was vacant and 27a was expected to become vacant. The committee were reminded that 79a and 79b had been merged as a single plot when recently let, and that rent would need to be sought for the uncollected half.

Action: Nicola to follow up with Plot 79.

4 Treasurer's report

Rent collection was complete, with only the newly allocated tenancies to check. 27a had been issued with a notice of termination of tenancy, with the opportunity to appeal expiring on 9 June.

Emily reported that Karen had not received the necessary form for Santander.

Action: Nicola to resend.

Nicola passed rent forms to the Secretary to be cross-checked with the membership list to identify any changes in contact details.

Action: Emily

Nicola had received no response so far from the Freeman with relation to the lease requirements. Frank advised that he had been invited to a meeting of the Freeman's sites with Alan Bainbridge (Steward) on 15 June.

Action: Emily to confirm Frank's attendance with the Freeman's secretary.

6 Moorside Competition

Frank and Richard had reviewed the categories proposed by Urban Green for the city allotment competition (document circulated). They proposed to include additional categories (some of which were reinstated from previous years) including: Best Large Plot, Best Bee Friendly plot and Young Gardener (for under 12s, working a square metre patch.)

Frank and Richard also proposed to use the Urban Green criteria. This was AGREED.

Action: Richard to publicise and Frank to lead judging, along with other volunteers.

7 Members' Survey

Emily reminded the committee that the survey was issued to members on the 18 May along with the Chair's Update and that it was not yet closed to responses. A summary of the first 20 responses was circulated to the committee. In relation to the annual show / event there was broad consensus so far that respondents most valued an informal growing competition, a social occasion for plot holders, and available refreshments. For information, Emily circulated an email from Pat Francis sharing her views about the merits of certain features of previous shows.

It was agreed to keep the survey open for a further 10 days and to review results alongside firm proposals for our summer/autumn event at the next meeting.

Action: Emily.

8 The Way Forward

Frank set out his thinking in relation to three key areas of development for the association and invited the committee to give this some thought prior to the next meeting:

- Education (Finding ways to share knowledge and expertise with other growers, such as through videos, in-person demonstrations, how-to leaflets, identifying seasoned gardeners who were happy to help.)
- Communications (Routine ways to share essential information such as a succinct guide of dos and don'ts for new plot holders, a buddy or committee contact allocated to new plot holders.) This was in part prompted by a recent spate of overenthusiastic cutting and pruning by new plot holders.
- Site development (General repairs and improvements.) Several committee members had been involved in a short-term crisis recently when a broken tap caused a leak, necessitating water being turned off to the whole site until it was repaired. Ideally, the water network would have isolating valves which would make this more straightforward. Frank mentioned the potential to approach Northumbrian Water's community projects team and enquire as to Moorside's eligibility for funded improvement work.

Action: Frank to investigate.

Sarah noted that the committee WhatsApp group had proved its worth in resolving the leak situation quickly.

Steven noted that Health and Safety was not currently a fixed item on the agenda.

Action: Emily to remedy.

The committee discussed the potential for installing a defibrillator on or near the site, making the first aid kit (currently kept in the trading hut) accessible at all hours, and identifying first aiders amongst plot holders.

Action: Emily to mail and ask whether plot holders with up to date First Aid certificates would be willing to identify themselves.

9 Any other business

Frank noted that the police had been spotted on the site few weeks previously and asked for clarification as to their purpose. Susan confirmed that they had come to speak about the bottle diggers.

Steven had submitted receipts for plant scheme seeds and asked Nicola to check whether payment has been made via BACS.

Nicola gave apologies for July's meeting.

10 Date of next meeting

5.30pm on Tuesday 4 July 2023