



THE FEDERATION OF  
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT  
ALLOTMENTS AND  
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

***Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in the Southside Community Centre, at 7.15pm on Tuesday 21st October 2014.***

**Present:** Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President); Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary); Brian Bleakley - Midmar (**BB**); Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe; Ron Anderson - Stenhouse; John Barclay - Pilrig Park; Jack Booth - Carrick Knowe; Gilbert Clark - Midmar; Lorraine Corbett - Ferry Road; Andy Crofts - Inverleith; Carolynne Doig - Chesser Crescent; Maureen Edwards - Lady Road; Harriet Gash - Bridgend; Liz Grace - Midmar; Rik Hart - Warriston; Holly Hetherington - Midmar; Patrick Gibb - Dumbryden (**PG**); Jon Gray - Warriston; Alison Hewitt - Warriston; Chris Hughes - Warriston; Diane Hughes - Warriston; Barbara Hunt - Lady Road; Paul Kerr - Redhall; Neiria McClure - Claremont Park; Pam MacDiarmid - Portobello East Junction; Margaret McLennan - Bridgend; Stuart McKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**); John McKinlay - Craigentenny; Janice McPherson - Ferry Road; Alan Melville - Warriston; Rosy Naylor - West Mains; Lily Pike - Carrick Knowe; Neil Pike - Carrick Knowe; Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**); Jude Rowan - Claremont Park; Donald Stevenson - Saughton Mains (**DS**); George Sutherland - Saughton Mains; Stuart Swarbrick - Ferry Road; M Warren - Bridgend; Keith Wilson - Carrick Knowe; Mary Wilson - Carrick Knowe; [illegible] - Ferry Road; [illegible] - West Mains.

**1. Apologies:** Lorna Henderson - Carrick Knowe.

**2. Guest Speaker:** There is no guest speaker. It had been hoped to have a speaker from the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to address the rent rise proposal but they were unable to provide anyone.

**3. Minutes of the 2013 AGM:** The minutes were approved. **PW** picked up on the actions from the meeting. There has been some interest from ploholders in beekeeping on allotments but in each case when the implications were looked at none took it forward. The trial at Portobello East Junction has been discontinued as a ploholder is allergic to bee stings. However, a procedure is in place and the Edinburgh Bee Keepers Association are ready to provide instruction and resources.

**EW** said that FEDAGA has implemented a programme taking priorities from the Wish List provided by site associations and is ensuring that the CEC is spending its budget in a more coherent and effective way.

**PW** said that the continued problem of finding auditors as per the constitution had been addressed by taking advice from the EVOC, the Council for Voluntary Service for Edinburgh. Their suggestion of having accounts examined by volunteers from the Management Committee has been taken forward and will be voted on later in the meeting.

**4. President's Review of the Year 2013-14:** **PW** gave the following statement:

The CEC budget proposals have overshadowed all. FEDAGA has been in contact with the CEC. FEDAGA obviously opposes the budget proposals and have devised a four-pronged strategy:

1. Discussions with Councillors Lesley Hinds and Adam McVey (leaders of the Transport and Environment Committee, which has oversight of allotments).
2. Objections to Councillors by members using a style letter, available at the web site.
3. Detailed objection by FEDAGA.
4. Use of the media, on line petition, twitter, facebook, newspapers etc.

If the proposals are confirmed FEDAGA should immediately go to Judicial Review. Recent cases in England where rent rises of a lesser degree were proposed were thrown out by the judge under a judicial review. Delegates and other attendees were asked to lobby their fellow plot holders to discover if there are trained legal minds among the allotment community.

**Allotment Show Report:** No show again this year. George Sutherland's suggestion last year to return 50p per plot to site associations was responded to with a rebate of £1 as with no Allotment Show expenses FEDAGA has no need for the extra money. However as there may be a need to employ legal advice there cannot be any similar commitment this year.

**Secretary's Report:** Our secretary, **EW** does an excellent job as your minute secretary, web master and newsletter editor and I commend him to the meeting. Without him, FEDAGA would be of lesser value.

**Treasurer's Report:** This will be given in detail later in the meeting. FEDAGA has taken action to solve the past auditing problems, by updating the constitution. There is a motion to address this to be heard later. In addition the treasurer's function will be divided into two as in the past, with a separate post holder for trading duties.

**Liaison with the CEC:** The Council's Allotments Officer (AO) attends the FEDAGA Management Committee (MC) meetings on a roughly bi-monthly basis. Maintenance is prioritised by the MC with **DR** taking a leading role. The AO reports on work in progress and inspection results. It should be noted that Parks and Greenspaces officials did not support the CEC rent rise proposals.

**Planning Report:** FEDAGA still needs a volunteer to monitor planning proposals. The completion of the tramway system did not, as had been promised, return the three small parcels of land at Stenhouse and the former Balgreen site and it looks as though these are lost for the time being.

Strategy Steering Group Report: The main areas of work are:

- (1) New allotment site at Baronscourt and Kirkliston opened. Consultations still in progress at Baird Avenue. Drumbrae and Northfield Drive raised bed sites opened. FEDAGA is not happy with the cost of developing these raised bed sites. This amounts to £75K per standard sized plot as opposed to £3.5K for a plot if it were on a traditional site. Next in line are extensions to Pilrig Park and Stenhouse, both in 2015. The CEC have 10 more lined up for the next few years.
- (2) A review of the CEC's Allotment Regulations, last updated in 1924, is still waiting for the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (CERB) to be passed by the Scottish Government. Once the implications are known a further public consultation will be required. The Missives of Let will also be updated, along with the Regulations review.
- (3) Discussions on the parameters for devolved management on CEC sites as per the Strategy recommendations have stalled.

**Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) Report:** SAGS' main work has been on the CERB. Members have been encouraged to be involved with the consultation exercise. SAGS will be called shortly to the committee stage to give evidence. One important omission from the draft legislation is a provision for a fair rent, which is opposed

by local authorities. SAGS are working hard to include this and also to legally define an allotment garden as measuring around 250 square metres. The Scottish Government "Grow Your Own Working Group" is still ongoing and providing input on allotments to the Scottish Government.

**Associations Reports** The site association representatives who sit on the MC can discuss their particular site problems with the other representatives and now directly with the AO. Any site association can send observers to the MC meetings and participate in discussions. However there is a problem for those sites which are either not represented, or do not communicate with FEDAGA. This is particularly worrying for the treasurer who needs to have duly elected representatives with whom he can communicate and forward their subscriptions.

**Edinburgh in Bloom:** The allotment competition was again run by FEDAGA. Thanks are due to Rik Hart and John McKinlay for organisation, our judges Andy Crofts and Kathy Parker, and all participants.

**Newsletter/Publicity:** The newsletter is now issued monthly to all site reps and those on the FEDAGA mailing list. All ploholders are urged to sign up to the list. FEDAGA cannot access members' contact details due to the Data Protection Act and the CEC no longer provide a postal facility. Thanks are due to **EW** for his efforts with the newsletter.

**Trading:** On-line trading with King Seeds continues with great success thanks to all who participate. Kings very happy as they do not have to produce so many catalogues. All orders are done via the FEDAGA website. Rebates to site associations are even higher than before. The quality of seeds is good and orders can be made at any time of the year. Seed potatoes and onion and garlic set orders have also been streamlined to reduce the amount of paperwork. Thanks are due to **SMcK** and **BB** for organising the trading schemes.

On behalf of all plot holders in Edinburgh and District **PW** thanked a very dedicated hard working committee of volunteers. Without enthusiastic volunteers FEDAGA would not exist.

**5. Motion to Adopt the Amended Constitution and Standing Orders:** **PW** proposed and **EW** seconded the Motion to adopt the Constitution and Standing Orders for Management Committee Meetings and Special and Annual General Meetings. **DS** said that Saughton Mains objected to the proposal for both examiners to be on the committee. He would prefer to see an independent examiner. **PW** said that SCVO had advised that as the cash flow was so small this was not necessary. **DS** said that if more money was being handled the rules would have to be changed. He said that more transparency was required. To this end, it may be useful to have someone not on the committee to question the accounts and the examiners. **PW** said this brought us back to the starting position of not having volunteers to do this work. To ask for external examiners when it is not possible to find external auditors takes us no further forward. As FEDAGA had not enjoyed a full committee for the last 5 years it could not afford to have volunteers sit outside of the committee and not be active for the benefit of members.

**PW** addressed other areas of change. If adopted, the new constitution would allow for individuals and gardening groups to join. A dissolution clause has been introduced to protect assets if FEDAGA is wound up. This would hold the assets for a determined period in case a successor organisation was formed, failing which the assets would be disbursed to similar or like-minded organisations.

**PG** noted that the AGM is an opportunity for members to examine the summary of accounts that is presented. It could be possible for members to examine these prior to the AGM. **SMcK** said that these examiners could comprise one external person to ensure independence and one from the MC who could provide explanations for transactions.

**PW** called for a show of hands to decide the matter. The Motion was carried by a majority. The draft documents were adopted.

**6. Financial Report by Treasurer: BB** presented the summary of accounts from 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014 to the meeting. He said that, in the absence of auditors, they had been examined by **RH** and **PG** and had been signed off. **BB** explained that the income from membership fees had declined as fewer independent sites had affiliated this year. This drop had been partially offset by a greater income from CEC sites due to their expansion programme. The summary of accounts was proposed by **BB** and seconded by **JMcK**. They were put to the meeting and unanimously accepted.

**FEDAGA's total assets on the 31st July 2014 are £10,210.59 of which £4508.06 is in the bond account and £5702.53 is in the current account.**

Total balance of FEDAGA assets on 1st August 2013 was **£9,398.58** (1)

Total balance of FEDAGA assets on 31st July 2014 was **£10,210.59** (1)

Total profit for 2013/14 was **£812.01**

<b><u>Income</u></b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
Interest on Bond	£117.17	£96.95
Membership fees	£3498.00	£3,604.00
<b>Trading</b>		
Commission from Kings on Seeds	£328.76	£336.66
Sale of Potatoes and onions	£1720.95	£2052.57 (2)
<b>Allotment Show</b>	nil	£356.18 (3)
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	£15.00	nil
<b><u>Total income</u></b>	<b>£5679.88</b>	<b>£6446.36</b>

<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
Site fees returned to sites	£2334.00 (4)	£713.00
Memberships of ext. organisations	£20.00 (5)	£95.00
<b>Trading</b>		
Cost of Potatoes and onions	£1481.90 (6)	£1250.80
Commissions on above to sites	£203.55	£191.60
Seed commissions to sites	£521.29 (7)	nil
<b>Allotment Show</b>	nil	£931.15 (3)

## Administration

Expenses	£117.58	£47.29
Newsletter	nil	£208.00
Web nil £58.18		
Edinburgh in Bloom	£25.00	nil
Start up help for new Site Committees	£164.55	nil
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£4867.87</b>	<b>£3495.02</b>

## Notes

- (1) Current account and bond account.
- (2) Advance orders and shop sales.
- (3) No Allotment Show in 2013, however money for the 2012 show came in and out in 2013.
- (4) Fees awarded at £2 per plot because of no Allotment Show to fund.
- (5) SAGS £75 annual subscription for 2014 paid after 1<sup>st</sup> August so will show as double payment next year.
- (6) Extra cost as 2 suppliers used.
- (7) Includes seed commissions from previous year.

**7. Election of Management Committee:** The following office bearers were nominated:

**President - PW** was nominated by Carrick Knowe, Claremont Park, Lady Road and Warriston. There being no other nominees, **PW** was elected as President.

**Secretary - EW** was nominated by Carrick Knowe, Claremont Park, Lady Road and Warriston. There being no other nominees, **EW** was elected Secretary.

**Treasurer - BB** had been nominated but declined. **PG** was nominated by Lady Road. There being no further nominees, **PG** was elected Treasurer.

**Show Secretary** - There were no nominees. **GS** asked if the requirement to have a Show Secretary was still in the Constitution. **PW** replied that it is, but as no-one is willing to take the task on there can be no show. He was asked how much work the post entails. He estimated that it took around 2 hours per week spread over the year but depended on being able to organise a group of 8 or 10 volunteers to take on tasks prior to and on the day. He related the declining numbers of exhibitors and exhibits over the 9 years he was Show Secretary. The cost to FEDAGA was estimated at around £30 per exhibitor. The Show was good publicity for FEDAGA but against this the question of value for money for members had to be asked.

**Management Committee:** The following were nominated and elected to the MC: Brian Bleakley, Gilbert Clark, Maureen Edwards, Jon Gray, Rik Hart, Paul Kerr, Stuart McKenzie, Neiria McClure, John McKinlay, Rosy Naylor and Dave Roberts. It was agreed that Brian Bleakley will act as Trading Secretary.

**PW** asked sites without a representative on the committee to consider sending observers. They will be able to participate, but not vote. However, agreement was usually reached by consensus.

**8. Election of Auditors:** As the new Constitution had been adopted this item was redundant.

**9. Forward Plans for Coming Year:** **PW** said the priority for next year must be for FEDAGA to attack the CEC's draft budget proposals for allotments which, if implemented, would raise the revenue by £150K and raise rents by up to 500%.

**SMcK** said the campaign has started very well. Plotholders are writing to councilors and to the draft budget email address. The Evening News has alerted Edinburgh to the proposal and we may get more support. The online petition has over 1,000 signatures. We seem to have enough reasons why the rise is unfair and therefore unlawful:

Allotments Act 1950.

Unfair Terms in Consumer Contract Regulations 1999.

Our Agreement with CEC which protects rent increases to 2020.

Similar cases in England that were ruled against.

Current regulations in Scotland require the approval of the Scottish Parliament.

The Council are now well aware of these reasons after a meeting with Lesley Hinds and Adam McVey. The additional £150K came from a Council 'think tank' known as BOLD (Better Outcomes, Lean Delivery). He suggested FEDAGA fight back with BALD (Better Allotments despite Ludicrous Decisions). The increase was most likely proposed by someone who saw waiting lists as latent demand and applied the same logic you would do to a Fitness Club.

In the meeting with senior councillors our representatives discussed the legal side and how other leisure activities are funded, such as CEC grants to Edinburgh Leisure. Both councillors were supportive of allotments and the work put in by FEDAGA to improve them. They appreciate value allotments provide to schools, the local community etc. but they cannot guarantee what the Council decides as other Councillors may take a different view. Despite having made the argument there is still much work to do. We need to keep up the pressure by writing to Councilors and to the Budget email box on the CEC website. FEDAGA recommends that the campaign will stand a greater chance of success if alternative proposals are made about how Allotments can raise money for the CEC. Imagine you are a company that has a huge waiting list for the products you make, what do you do? Yes, make more products. A lot of what will help make more products or improve the existing service has been talked about at meetings for years. We now have a opportunity to put them forward as viable counter proposals to the rent increase. We need to come up with revenue generating ideas that they will act upon -

- IDEA 1 - Close a golf course, set up allotments and get people off the waiting list - this was brought up at the meeting and wasn't discounted! It's not known by how much golf courses are subsidised, but allotments generate a surplus.

- IDEA 2 - Charge to be on the waiting list - again: not discounted. **JMcK** suggested that £20 be charged to join the waiting list which can be taken off the first rent invoice. It demonstrates a commitment on the part of the applicant and gives some money to the CEC upfront. It could provide £4K.

- IDEA 3 - Raise money from fines for dirty plots - as with parking tickets, but administered by Environmental Wardens. **SMcK** noted Cllr. Hinds hates people not looking after their plots. This could help and generate income. Also, given the number of plotholders holding on to dirty plots and refusing eviction this measure may encourage them to evict themselves.

- IDEA 4 - Start replacing some vacant plots with raised beds. On a typical plot you could get 8 raised beds at £25 a time generating £200. Double rent. These are nursery beds for new allotmenters where they can build up the skills required to manage a larger plot and

reduce the number who give up in their first year. **SMcK** said this is being trialled already at Inverleith.

- IDEA 5 - Ask if current ploholders would like to reduce the space they have and perhaps take a raised bed or two. **EW** said that as ploholders become more aged or are hit by ill-health they may welcome an opportunity to keep some land but not have to worry about the upkeep of a larger plot.

- IDEA 6 - Stop spending on Council-built raised bed type "allotments" and get new ploholders to do it themselves: buy wood and top soil but stop wasting £1000s as was seen in recent developments. **PW** said that for the money spent on the 21 plot raised bed site at Drumbrae a 40 plot standard allotment could have been created if the CEC provided scaffold boards and topsoil and allowed ploholders to get on with it themselves. He noted that you love your plot more if you've invested your blood, sweat and tears into it.

- IDEA 7 - Improve the Allotment Service by employing extra administrative help for the AO. This was actually suggested by Cllr. Hinds.

**SMcK** asked for more ideas. He suggested that in response to those who suggested that allotments are a bargain already that if they felt they could pay more then there was nothing to stop them doing so voluntarily.

A representative from Ferry Road said that on their site there is a sizeable area of mature woodland. It could be possible to get a grant to encourage wildlife. **LG** spoke of the successful National Lottery grant applications that had benefited Midmar. There was also money available from Neighbourhood Partnerships. **SMcK** suggested that the CEC approach the Climate Change fund for assistance in converting a golf course into allotments.

**PW** noted that the CEC does not collect rent for many raised bed sites. He suggested a minimum rent of £25. **DR** suggested that former golf course officers could be retrained as allotment officers.

It was suggested that a Freedom of Information request to ascertain the subsidy given to Edinburgh Leisure. This was **AGREED**.

**DS** suggested withdrawal of co-operation. If the site associations stopped organising voluntary repairs and upkeep the CEC would have to spend much more money. **PW** said Cllr. Hinds is well aware of the contribution that ploholders already make to the service. He suggested that ploholders could pay quarterly, as provided for in Allotment legislation. That would hit the CEC in the pocket and mess up their administration. However, he wanted to avoid direct confrontation at this stage. **SMcK** said the best strategy would be to switch negativity into positivity.

**PW** suggested that a deposit of £10 for a key was suggested in the past but not progressed. He said that if a larger deposit, say £100, could be returned on vacation of a clean plot. If it required improvement before being let to the next tenant the money could be retained and used to bring it back into line. This would provide upfront income and help the persistent problem of unkempt plots being let to new ploholders.

**JMcK** summarised what FEDAGA was asking of its members:

1 - Contact or write to your Councillors and MSPs and put the case for rejecting the rent rise.

2 - Sign the online petition and ask family and friends to do so as well.

3 - Contribute ideas on how to take the campaign forward to site reps and FEDAGA.

**SMcK** concluded by saying that FEDAGA wants to be able to say the rent increases are unfair but we also want to help get more people onto allotments and therefore generate more money. Turn the negative messages into positive "can do" ones.

He asked members to think about how they would improve the service, get more people off the waiting lists, onto plots and paying rents. FEDAGA needs more ideas about the day

to day running of the service, such as grass cutting, pest control, etc. We should try to cover everything.

He asked that members send their ideas in and FEDAGA will try to put together a consolidated plan that will make money for the CEC by improving the service as opposed to just putting up rents. The deadline is the end of November.

**10. Any Other Competent Business:** During the discussion on the rent rise a Carrick Knowe plotholder mentioned serious vandalism at Carrick Knowe. Stones are regularly being thrown from the tram track onto the site damaging greenhouses and on occasion narrowly missing plotholders. The police have responded but all they suggest is that plotholders install CCTV cameras. The problem was noted and will be addressed by the MC.

**11. Date of Next AGM:** 20th October 2015.