



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

Management Committee Meeting

7.15pm on 1st April 2014 at Southside Community Centre

Present: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Brian Bleakley - Midmar (**BB**) (Treasurer) : Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : John Gray - Warriston (**JG**) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) : Patrick Gibb - Dumbryden (**PG**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Rik Hart - Warriston (**RH**) : Paul Kerr - Redhall (**PK**) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) (observer) : Christine Flannery - Findlay Avenue (**CF**) (observer) : Neiria McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) (observer) : Ian Woolard (**IW**) - City of Edinburgh Council Allotments Officer.

1. Apologies: Barbara Seel - Leith Links (**BS**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**).

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: The Minutes for the 4th March meeting were approved.

3. Allotment Officer - Spending Priorities: It was **AGREED** to make the following items a top priority and ask **IW** to proceed with them immediately: (1) Repairs to fence and addition of rabbit proofing at Carrick Knowe; (2) Rabbit control at Midmar - fencing and eradication; (3) Repair loose support to gate at Saughton Mains; (4) Rat eradication at West Mains; (5) Tree work at Carrick Knowe, Craigentenny, Inverleith, Leith Links, Midmar and Warriston. Dates for the tree work should be supplied by **IW**. **ACTION - IW**. There is concern that this may slip as it has in previous years. **IW** said that this work can only be done after the Forestry Team has completed Dutch Elm Disease work. It now looks like this won't happen before May. **LG** emphasised that falling branches could be hazardous to ploholders working underneath.

DR said that these priority jobs should be treated as matters of urgency. Other items on the spreadsheet should be dealt with over the course of the year. **PW** looked for a commitment to deal with the tree work as soon as possible. **IW** said this would be his best intention. **PW** said that if the work was not done as scheduled then he would take the matter up the line to **IW**'s manager. **IW** confirmed that the tree work had already been paid for from the 2013-14 budget and that he would meet the Forestry Team manager tomorrow. **EW** will copy a list of the priority tasks to **IW**. **ACTION - EW**. **DR** said that FEDAGA will track the progress of all the other items identified on the spreadsheet.

It was noted that the priorities did not include toilets at Dumbryden. This was because of the large cost. **PG** said that toilet provision is required due to the Council's no-hut policy on this site. To maintain walls, **IW** said that the stonemason service will have to be bought in. **DR** said that it is imperative that a structural survey be done on any potentially hazardous walls. **IW** said that repointing should make all walls safe. However, the scale of the task at Redhall will require a separate operation outwith the programme for other sites. When pressed for a timescale, **IW** **AGREED** to send a report to FEDAGA for the May meeting and will personally report on this at the June meeting. **ACTION - IW**. **GC** noted that, such

is the scale of work required, hugely outstripping the available budget, he had identified 18 items requiring attention at Midmar which had been reduced to 2 and presented as part of the submission.

Report: **IW** presented his monthly report. Looking at the items of expenditure, **PW** asked which site has electricity. **IW** said it is Bridgend. It is required to power the water supply pump. It was explained that this is due to Scottish Water's insistence when the site was opened that to prevent any possible back-flow of polluted water into the mains a holding tank be installed with pumps to supply pressurised water to the taps. **PW** noted Scottish Water no longer insisted on this. It is possible to use non-return valves. The arrangement at Bridgend should be revisited.

PG queried the cost of Trade Waste Bin uplifts. **IW** said it was around £7K. Noting this was nearly the cost of the toilet Drumbryden needed and that Drumbryden did not enjoy an uplift service, **PG** asked why some sites were provided for and others were not. **PW** said that older sites have accumulated a historical level of debris that has been brought in by past ploholders. New ploholders have to deal with this. In theory, the Council should pursue previous tenants for the cost of clearing the rubbish and reinstating the plot, but this never happens. **NMcC** said that many ploholders don't have access to a car and cannot remove the debris any other way. **PG** requested that Drumbryden be provided with a regular Trade Waste Bin uplift. **PW**, noting that the uplift was introduced in recent years as it was cheaper than employing a Task Force to clear sites, said that allotment holders should be recyclers and not creators of waste. Conceding **PG**'s principle as sound, he said he would prefer the allotment community to move towards no need for regular uplifts, with an annual skip provision based upon the number of ploholders. **GC** suggested a £5 discount from the rent for sites with no rubbish removal facilities.

IW said that for the first time ever there were no burst pipes upon turning the water back on. However, this was followed within days by a sharp frost that damaged pipes at Pilrig, Stenhouse and Warriston. He reported problems with the recommencement of the Trade Waste Bin uplifts at the start of March, but this has now been rectified.

DR asked if all of the current year's budget had been spent. **IW** said it was now in overspend. The aforementioned tree work and the Capital Skills project on the banking at Midmar are the only projects paid for from this year's budget but not yet completed. **RH** said the drainage work at Warriston was not satisfactory. **IW** said the contractors had been paid and further payment would have to be made to have them return. He maintained that the work had been well done, but the scale of the problem was greater than had been expected. Work ongoing at the moment included pest control operations at various sites. Concern was expressed at the open-ended nature of this significant item. When pressed for a figure, **IW** estimated that this may cost in the region of £3K. **PW** asked how the £38,700 budget was set and how the standing charges were arrived at. **IW** undertook to report back on these questions. **ACTION - IW**.

WA said the fence repairs made in December at Carrick Knowe did not include rabbit proofing. He offered to arrange for ploholders to install this if the chickenwire was provided. **IW AGREED** to do this. **ACTION - IW**. **SMcK** said there was now evidence of rabbits at Inverleith. **IW** said that as none had been expected at this urban site no protection had been installed. He undertook to add Inverleith's rabbits to the pest control officer's list. **ACTION - IW**.

IW also noted 35 new ploholders this year, including 27 at Baronscourt and Kirkliston. A new site is to be opened at Drum Brae soon, with 17 raised bed plots.

4. Matters Arising:

Support for Site Committees: **PW** reported on the members' meeting at West Mains. A temporary committee has been set up to work towards a Special General Meeting when it is hoped a new committee will be elected and fresh constitution adopted. Fiona Wolfenden will give details to **IW** who will post them out to members. It was **AGREED** to pay for a meeting to take place at the Reid Memorial Church and to be attended by **PW**. **ACTION - PW**.

RH reported on the members' meeting at Warriston. There was unanimous support for a new committee and the bank books had been handed over to a temporary committee of 16 which includes representatives from each of the various sections of the site. A fresh constitution will be put to a Special General Meeting at which a new committee will be elected.

NMcC said that a new committee had been elected at a special meeting of Claremont Park members and all was now going well. The meeting was attended by **JG**, who reported a good turnout. The bank books had been handed over and a new constitution had been adopted. She thanked **PW** for his help in this.

CF said there was no constitution at Findlay Avenue and no bank account as the site was so small. It was suggested that **BB** could hold Findlay Avenue's money on their behalf and release it for a specific purchase when required. **EW** said that Cambridge Avenue, another very small site, has no constitution or committee, but does have a bank account. **PW** said that a voluntary levy on Kings Seeds orders to help site funds at Lady Road is in place to help site funds.

Edinburgh in Bloom: **EW** reported that Entry Forms will be posted on the Council's website in a few days' time. A link will be provided on the FEDAGA website. **ACTION - EW**. **PW** said he is again able to get the SAGS trophies for presentation to the winners.

Allotment Show: **PW** asked if anyone would volunteer to act as Show Secretary. There were no volunteers, so no show. It was **AGREED** to provide information about the surviving shows at Ayr and Dundee in the Newsletter. It was noted that in the past subsidised transport had been provided to these shows, but this had been discontinued due to diminishing interest. **JG** said that a lot of the smaller, more local shows have also ceased. **PW** said for the FEDAGA Show to succeed, two issues have to be addressed: the show needs an organiser and the cost issues must be addressed.

Apple Press: It was **AGREED** that the Apple Press be sited at Craigentenny, Inverleith, Lady Road and Midmar. **DR** will deliver the press at the start of the week and take it away at the end, but separate arrangements will have to be made to move it from site to site. The dates will be confirmed nearer the time. **ACTION - DR**.

Website: **SMcK** said the new website has gone live. **IW** said he'd looked at it and thought it very good. **SMcK** said that it is easy for individuals to contribute and will run a "workshop" for anyone interested. **RH**, **EW** and **PK** expressed interest. **ACTION - SMcK**.

Newsletter: **CF** reaffirmed her interest in taking responsibility for the Newsletter. **EW** said he had spoken to the former editor Maggie Sinclair and she had said she would be able to get involved again. It was **AGREED** that **EW** and **CF** meet with Maggie Sinclair to discuss how to proceed. **EW** said the new website affected the distribution of the Newsletter as the Mailing List was now held on it and would require assistance from **SMcK** before the next edition is issued. **ACTION - CF, EW and SMcK.**

4. Consideration of Reports: Secretary's Report: **EW** noted Bridgend's decision to recommend beekeeping on the site. This is with **IW** who is investigating how to proceed. **ACTION - IW.** There had been no response from the Council official responsible for the development of the former allotment site at Warriston Crescent. **IW** said he had effectively been told it would be converted for use by a local growing group of local residents. There was a discussion on how this stood legally. Although a Finance Minister had stated in Parliament that no allotment in Scotland would be closed without ministerial approval this had yet to be enacted in law and so was merely an aspiration.

Treasurer's Report: **BB** said the balance on 1st March was £4201.02. Income was £8.99 interest and £93 affiliation fees from Telferton. With no expenditure the balance is now £4303.01. He has raised an invoice for fees with the Council. **IW** estimates the number of ploholders as being 1362. There was a number of disputes over the figures given for various sites. It was noted that the agreement FEDAGA has with the Council is that the figures are based on the previous year's totals. **PW** said that if this was followed it should be possible to identify the totals for each site at the beginning of January and have the cheques issued by February in good time for sites to pay for their projects. He expressed frustration that this was again being allowed to slip. **BB** assured him that with the figures now agreed the cheques, including potato order dividends will be issued next week. **ACTION - BB.**

It was **AGREED** that fees for Baronscourt and Kirkliston should be paid on the basis of this year's figures. These new sites would be paid £1 per member. All other sites would benefit from the decision recently taken to double the rebate to £2 for this year only. **ACTION - BB.**

EW said he had been contacted by a representative at Inchkeith Court who wished that site to affiliate to FEDAGA. **IW** confirmed that their rent arrangements are different to other sites and they do not pay site fees, so it is appropriate for them to pay directly on a voluntary basis. **ACTION - EW** to provide Inchkeith Court with details on how to affiliate. **PW** said the amendment to the Constitution to be voted on at this year's AGM contains a provision for such sites to affiliate "at an annual fee for each individual, the amount shall be decided by the Management Committee, payable on 1st January".

Trading Report: **SMcK** said he had yet to get a breakdown of order totals from Kings so was unable to calculate the 10% dividend payable to sites. The first year saw a doubling of orders over the old paper-based system and it is likely to have further increased this year. **EW** raised a problem which has arisen when plots are subdivided. The database held by Kings has to be manually updated to include the new plot identifier to enable the ploholder to log on. **SMcK** and **IW** will liaise to keep the database accurate. **ACTION - SMcK and IW.**

SMcK said management of the Shop reverts to Inverleith this Sunday. There are still quite a lot of potatoes to be sold, mainly because of the oversupply of Red Duke of York and Lady Christl.

Site Reports: **ME** said a plot holder had given up their plot at Lady Road due to asbestos being identified there. This is in the form of concrete ribbed insulation sheeting. She asked **IW** for Council policy on asbestos on allotments. **IW** said that the Asbestos Officer advises that if intact it is best left undisturbed. **JG** said the best thing to do is paint it to seal it and avoid damaging it. **PW** said that to dispose of asbestos is a specialised task. **PK** said it cannot go in the usual waste uplift. **PG** asked if the Council does not have a duty to remove it. **IW** said that if it is in an open environment and is undamaged then it is safer to leave it. **PW** suggested advice from the Asbestos Officer be sought for publication in a forthcoming Newsletter. **GC** said that **IW** should have all sites inspected and if any dangerous asbestos is found it should be safely removed. **PW** urged caution as when this was done in Glasgow three sites were closed, one of which was never reopened. He said the best way to proceed was to seek expert advice from the Council's Asbestos Officer.

Strategy Report: **IW** said he's working on a biodiversity policy at the moment. **PW** has been in correspondence with Peter Watton over the reinstatement of Balgreen. He has objected to the Council's position and is awaiting a reply. **IW** said he is satisfied with the provision of new small sites and is now focussing on larger sites, similar in size to Drumbrayden. The most urgent demand is in the Leith area.

SAGS Report: **PW** said SAGS is analysing the responses to the CERB consultation. Of 430 responses, 200 were about allotments. This was encouraging, especially as there were only 4 paragraphs on allotments out of a total of 74. SAGS is formulating a strategy to take the debate forward. There will be further consultation as the bill reaches the committee stage. SAGS is also revising the Allotment Audit, completed in 2007. It appears that the number of sites has risen since then from 200 to 300 and the number of plot holders has gone from 6000 to over 7000. The SAGS AGM will be in June. Further details to follow.

There was a discussion on demand and supply of allotments across Scotland. **PW** noted that in Edinburgh it is Council policy for every new development to have an allotment provision. This requires action to ensure it happens. **IW** said the Waiting List is currently around 2500 as he has removed applicants who have not responded to his recent enquiries. His interrogation of the Waiting List is continuing. He suggested that if enough people were interested he would organise transport to take FEDAGA representatives around the sites on an inspection tour. He suggested the third week of July. A number of people expressed interest.

6. Any Other Business: **GC** said that the draft Constitution should contain a clause that delays the dissolution of assets for a year. This would make it easier to reform the Federation if it collapsed, as it has done in the past. He suggested a subgroup be formed to ensure the redraft is the best possible.

7. Date of Next Meeting: 6th May.