



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

***Management Committee Meeting
7.15pm on 10th Febuary 2015 at Southside Community Centre***

Present: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Patrick Gibb - West Mains (**PG**) (Treasurer) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) : Jon Gray - Warriston (**JG**) : Neiria McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) : Rik Hart - Warriston (**RH**) : Paul Kerr - Redhall (**PK**) : Rosy Naylor - West Mains (**RN**) : Brian Bleakley - Midmar (**BB**) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) (observer) : Jake Booth - Carrick Knowe (**JB**) (observer) : Liz Grace - Midmar (**LG**) (observer) : Harriet Gash - Bridgend (**HG**) : Mary Anderson - Bridgend (**MA**) (observer) : Peter Shaw - Saughton Mains (**SM**) (observer) + Ian Woolard - City of Edinburgh Council Allotments Officer (**IW**) : Pat Abel - Edible Edinburgh (**PA**).

1. Apologies: Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**) : Colin Stearn - Bridgend (**CS**).

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters Arising: Edible Edinburgh: **PW** introduced **PA**, a member of Transition Edinburgh South's Land Use Group who spoke about the Edible Edinburgh project. She said Scotland's Good Food policy omits reference to growing your own. To help address this she hoped that FEDAGA could bring allotment gardeners together with community growers to promote Urban Growing. There is an ambitious target of bringing 25 acres into production each year and it would be in the interests of both groups to bring this about. **JG** suggested that a lot of open land around the back greens in Restalrig could be developed. **PW** said membership of FEDAGA would give community growers access to discounted seeds, potatoes, etc. **HG** suggested that a link up with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society and Bridgend Growing Communities might be useful. **EW** suggested that information on projects run by Edible Edinburgh could be carried in the Newsletter with a view to encouraging allotment holders to get involved. **ACTION - EW**.

Rent Increase: **PW** said that the Council are going to take the allotment rent rise proposal off the agenda. **ME** proposed a vote of thanks to all who had worked so hard to ensure the campaign was a success. **PW** said the pressure to increase rents would not go away. He was suspicious about the omission from this year's rent invoices of the deductions for Site Association and FEDAGA membership fees. He had been assured by Keith Logie and Bob McAllister that this was merely because the Council has been advised it cannot collect money on behalf of a third party. They indicated that the Site Association and FEDAGA income would be protected as it would in future be donated. **PG** said that he was already liaising with **IW** with a view to payment. **GC** expressed concern that regardless of these reassurances the long-term reality might be that the regular income would be stopped, with serious implications for how FEDAGA and site associations operate. When directly asked about this, **IW** confirmed that it is the council's intention to donate £2.50 per member for the foreseeable future. **PW** said any future rent increases would be discussed

at the next Strategy Meeting, which is scheduled for 4th March. He also noted, with reference to the earlier discussion, that community gardeners pay a peppercorn rent. The allotment movement in Edinburgh had ensured that it is self sufficient. However, the struggle to keep rents fair in the future may well prove to be difficult. **PG** said that regardless of what Council officials have said about the validity of the 2009 agreement which stipulates that between 2015 and 2020 rents would be pegged, FEDAGA should maintain that this be adhered to. It was **AGREED** to ask the Council for a detailed and definitive breakdown of all costs relating to the provision of the allotment service so that negotiations can be started with a view to arriving at a fair level of rent for the future.

Vandalism: **PS** described the vandalism that had taken place over 4 nights at Saughton Mains. 60 plots have been damaged, with sheds burned and greenhouses smashed. Two weeks ago the Police were called after a burning shed was noticed by a member of the public. A 14 year old boy was apprehended and has been referred to the Children's Panel. He had been acting as part of a group whose identities are now known to the Police. **PS** said that his efforts to contact the Police had not been successful until he went to the Evening News and the story was published. Suddenly, the Police were taking the matter seriously. Shortly afterwards, the arrest was made. The vandalism at the allotments was part of a wider campaign, affecting the Water of Leith Visitor Centre, a sheltered housing complex and bus stops. The youth in question has been charged with 29 crimes. The vandals got into the allotments over fences bounding the adjoining cemetery and the Water of Leith Walkway. **PS** is already in discussions with **IW** on improving security. He is asking for 3 lines of barbed wire angled inwards to be fitted to the top of the fence all around the perimeter.

MA said that brambles planted by **IW** by the perimeter fence at Bridgend had been trimmed and now dug up by members of the Health Project. This had made it easier for intruders to gain access. Every shed has had padlocks broken and the contents thrown around. She was also concerned that former users of the Health Project were still able to gain access as they were apparently not handing their keys back. Relations between the allotment community and the Health Project had broken down. **PS** suggested £110 would buy a battery operated motion sensitive infra red camera which would be able to provide evidence of intruders. **DR** said that the Council should concentrate on prevention. Expenditure on security would lessen the repair bills. **HG** made the point that by paying their rent, allotment holders are entitled to peaceful possession. It was the Council's responsibility to do their best to ensure this. **IW** said that repairs to the fence were being made. CCTV would be prohibitively expensive. Experience suggested that these incidents are sporadic. **PW** suggested that the best long-term solution is education. Many sites involve local schools. If younger children have been involved in allotments they will be less likely to be involved in this kind of behaviour when they get older. **EW** suggested **IW** brings in a mediation service to improve relationships between groups at Bridgend. **PW** said as the Council is the landlord, it has a duty to take an active role. **PG** noted that he believed the ploholders at Dumbyden were pressing for extra security measures similar to what is required at Saughton Mains as the fence there can be easily climbed.

4. Allotment Officer's Report: **IW** said that work on the new site at Victoria Park Bowling Green will start soon and be completed by the end of March. 16 half-plots of around 100 square metres will be created at the cost of £50K. There will be a small fence, but he believes this will be adequate as sites with no huts attract far less attention. Toilet facilities will be shared with bowling green users and a room will be converted into a bothy for tool storage.

Outstanding items to be completed before the end of the Financial Year are the repairs to the gate and path at Lady Road, a new fence at Ferry Road and extra security at Saughton Mains. Plotolders are moving onto the new site at Northfield Drive. There are 18 small quarter-plots of around 50 square metres here for which the rent is £25. There is no water supply as discussions are still ongoing on who should pay for installation.

Spending Priorities: DR reported that 8 sites were still to provide details of what they would like to see the budget spent on. He needed to have their input before the next meeting so that a spreadsheet can be drawn up and decisions on how the limited resources can best be spent. This will be done on 10th March. Non-participating sites will be marked down for no expenditure. He indicated that as a lot of smaller-scale jobs were completed last year this year's task will be to evaluate a smaller number of competing "big ticket" items.

5. Consideration of Reports: Secretary's Report: EW referred to his Report, already circulated, which included reference to the Winter Fruit Pruning Workshops, the Talaton Fruit Tree orders (now completed), an approach from an individual suggesting an allotment co-operative be set up to develop new allotment sites independently of the Council, SASA heritage potatoes, glass recycling and Tiphereth compost.

Website and Newsletter: EW drew attention to his inability to update the website as his computer is now too old to log on. He suggested that someone else with more contemporary equipment might want to volunteer to look after the website. No-one indicated that they would be prepared to do this. It was suggested that FEDAGA pay for a cheap laptop that would suffice to keep the website going. It was **AGREED** to refer this to **SMcK**. **ACTION** - **SMcK** and **EW**. Another Newsletter had been issued recently.

Treasurer's Report: PG has supplied a report. Little has changed from last month apart from income of £8.99 from the bank bond and 2 cheques being cashed (£25 Edinburgh in Bloom Third Prize and £50 Southside centre memberships). The current account cash available assuming all expenses are paid is **£4317.67** and the total uncommitted funds are **£8879.73**. He referred to the sites with no bank accounts and reported that he had been requested to send a cheque for £179.70 to Dumbryden as they are now rectifying this. The money held in trust for the 3 remaining small sites (Chesser Crescent, £27.65; Findlay Avenue, £37, and Hutchison Loan, £16) is not significant and will be kept until it is requested or has grown sufficiently to be worthwhile using.

Trading Report: BB reported that the Seed Potatoes will be delivered to Inverleith around 10.30 on Saturday 21st February. All sites with an order are expected to send a representative to help out and collect their order. The onion sets will be supplied to **WA** beforehand, to be bagged up ready for distribution on the 21st. The FEDAGA Shop will be open on Sunday 22nd (staffed by **NMcC** and **EW**) and 1st March (**WA** and **GC**) and thereafter will be looked after by Inverleith representatives.

Site Reports: HG said that the Bridgend Potato Day, run by the Health Project, will be between 11 and 2 on Sunday 22nd February, with all profits going to the Health Project. **RH** and **DR** said that bins had not been uplifted at Warriston and Restalrig. There had been problems with bin uplifts at Saughton Mains but this had been rectified. Those at the top of the Waiting List were being offered plots and **IW** confirmed the New Plotolders' Guide was being sent out to everyone. **WA** reported that stones were still being thrown

from the tram track at Carrick Knowe, with further damage to greenhouses. It is difficult to know what to do about this other than erect a massive fence or netting. **PS** said that solar panels and a battery had been fitted at the Saughton Mains chalet. A new plot holder was offering to refurbish old tools. This will be noted in the next Newsletter. **ACTION - EW. PS** requested that the female toilet at Saughton Mains be repaired. The redundant toilet at Warriston was offered. **IW** will arrange transport. **ACTION - IW.**

Strategy Report: **PW** said a meeting will take place on 4th March. Still on the agenda is the update of regulations. He explained that this has been delayed pending the passing of the Community Empowerment Bill (CEB), but progress on the allotment component is now hanging in the balance as agreement cannot be reached. **SAGS** believes that as so many areas are devolved to Local Authorities the bill can not be supported. Discussions with Ministers and officials are taking place to try to salvage the situation.

SAGS Report: **PW** said the main area of activity continues to be the CEB.

6. Any Other Business: **IW** said that he may have lost the services of the Pest Control contractor after adverse publicity in a story carried by the Scotsman. Currently, only Inverleith has a notable problem but it may be that in future he will not be able to deal with rabbits. **PS** reported that there are mink nesting in the compost bins at Saughton Mains.

7. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10th March.