



THE FEDERATION OF  
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT  
ALLOTMENTS AND  
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

7.15pm on 20th October 2015 at the Southside Community Centre

President: **Peter Wright** (Lady Road).

In attendance: Around 50 members were present, but not all signed the attendance record.

**Liz Aitken** (Carrick Knowe) : **K Allanach** (Carrick Knowe) : **John Barclay** (Pilrig Park) :  
**Jack Booth** (Carrick Knowe) : **Pauline Calder** (Lady Road) : **Robin Cathcart** (Stenhouse)  
: **Gilbert Clark** (Midmar) : **Mairianna Clyde** (Redhall) : **Lorraine Corbett** (Ferry Road) :  
**Andy Crofts** (Inverleith) : **Maureen Edwards** (Lady Road) : **Lorna Frost** (Baronscourt) :  
**Philip Garner** (Carrick Knowe) : **John Grace** (Midmar) : **Liz Grace** (Midmar) : **Jon Gray**  
(Warriston) : **Rik Hart** (Warriston) : **Lorna Henderson** (Carrick Knowe) : **Chris Hughes**  
(Warriston) : **Mick Kadlubowski** (West Mains) : **Paul Kerr** (Redhall) : **Neiria MacClure**  
(Claremont Park) : **Pam MacDiarmid** (Portobello East Junction) : **John McKinlay**  
(Craigentinny) : **Libby Macneill** (Leith Links) : **Rosy Naylor** (West Mains) : **Kathy Parkes**  
(Inverleith) : **Charles Passmore** (Midmar) : **Neil Pike** (Carrick Knowe) : **Ewan Renton**  
(Carrick Knowe) : **Dave Roberts** (Restalrig) : **Mary Simpson** (Saughton Mains) : **Tony**  
**Stanton** (Saughton Mains) : **D Stevens** (Lady Road) : **Donald Stevenson** (Saughton  
Mains) : **George Sutherland** (Saughton Mains) : **Stuart Swarbrick** (Ferry Road) : **Ernie**  
**Watt** (Cambridge Avenue) : **Alan Wilson** (Stenhouse).

**1. Apologies:** **Willie Aitken** (Carrick Knowe) : **Carolynne Doig** (Chesser Crescent) :  
**Alison Hewitt** (Warriston) : **Julie King** (Restalrig) : **Lesley Munro** (Restalrig) : **Stuart**  
**McKenzie** (Inverleith).

**2. Minutes of Previous AGM:** There being no objections, the Minutes were proposed by  
Peter Wright (**PW**) and seconded by Jon Gray (**JG**).

**3. Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.

### **4. President's review of the Year 2014-15:**

**PW** gave the following appraisal of activities carried out by FEDAGA.

#### **City of Edinburgh Council:**

The Council Budget Proposals of September 2014 by the BOLD team were cancelled after a well supported campaign. Thanks are due to you for lobbying your Councillors, and the campaign team set up by FEDAGA to plan and conduct the campaign, especially Donald Rennie, a retired solicitor well versed in crofting law, who not only advised us but gave valuable insight into landlord-tenant relationships.

Our subsequent relations with the Council have been scarred by the lack of trust, lack of communications, and lack of transparency that the BOLD proposals created.

Discussions with the Council have raised the following points on which we would like your comments:

- Future management of Allotments, including options for devolved management.
- Inspections of allotments.
- The recent Survey, results of which were released earlier today.

- Rents and the Future.

**Allotment Show:** There was no show again this year. I ask yet again do we have a volunteer to take on the task? We have all the assistants in place and the format. All that's required is an organiser.

**Secretary:** Our secretary, Ernie Watt, deals with correspondence from members, liaises with Site Reps and writes and publishes Minutes of all meetings. He is also our web master and Newsletter editor and I commend him to the meeting.

**Treasurer:** Patrick Gibb moved away from Edinburgh and was succeeded by Dave Roberts (**DR**). My thanks to them both. Last year we updated our constitution to include examiners of our accounts. We have followed our new constitution.

**FEDAGA/Council Meetings:** Unfortunately, the Allotments Officer no longer attends the FEDAGA Management Committee meeting. It would appear he was unhappy with the grilling that he had to take on behalf of the Council. He stated the meetings were no longer productive. Repairs and maintenance orders are prioritised by the FEDAGA Management Committee after discussions with Site Associations. Neira MacClure leads and monitors progress, working with the Allotment Officer, who reports back on work in progress and inspection results. Of late this has been more sporadic and lacks sufficient detail for Site Reps to follow up on.

**Planning:** We needed a replacement for our planning overview function. There has been no resolution of the possible addition of 3 small parcels of land to Stenhouse after completion of the tramway system and the former Balgreen site looks as though it has been lost to housing.

**Allotment Strategy Steering Group:** This is the main area of work. There is a programme for new allotment sites. Next in line: an extension to Pilrig. The Council have ten more lined up for the next few years. Updates to the allotment regulations, last reviewed in 1924, and missives of let are still stalled, waiting for government guidelines following on from the Community Empowerment Act. Further consultations with the general public are ongoing. The Local Authorities fought hard to get the proposals diluted, and the battle continues.

**Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society:** The main work has been on the Community Empowerment Bill, now enacted. Members have been involved with the lobby process, which was successful. The Grow Your Own Working Group is still ongoing providing input on allotments to the Government.

**Site Associations:** The association representatives who sit on the Management Committee can discuss their particular site problems with the other reps. and until recently with the Allotment Officer present. Any site association can send observers to these 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.

**Newsletter/Publicity:** The newsletter is now issued monthly to all site reps. and those on the FEDAGA mailing list. We would urge all to sign up to the list. We no longer have the luxury of the Council's mailings. Thanks are due to Ernie Watt for his efforts here.

**Trading:** On-line trading with King Seeds continues with great success and thank you to all who participate. Kings very happy as they do not have to produce so many catalogues and it's all done through the FEDAGA website. Discounts via FEDAGA are 45% to ploholders, with a further 10% remitted to Site Associations. High quality seeds are available at any time of the year. The seed potatoes, onion sets etc. Trading Scheme has also been streamlined to reduce the amount of work and paper. Thanks are due to Stuart McKenzie and Brian Bleakly for organising this. However we note that many supermarket chains and bargain stores are offering very competitively priced seeds and potatoes. The potatoes can even be purchased as single tubers at Dobbies so the FEDAGA scheme is not as successful as it was in the past. This is of concern as it represents an important income stream.

Finally, on behalf of all plot holders in Edinburgh can I thank a very dedicated hard working committee of volunteers. Without enthusiastic volunteers FEDAGA would not exist. I would also inform the meeting that if I am re-elected as President of FEDAGA then I shall retire at the next AGM in 2016 and make way for a younger hand at the helm.

The President's Review was proposed by **PW** and seconded by **JG**, after which **PW** addressed the results of the Allotment Holders and Waiting List Surveys, which were only issued a matter of hours before the meeting. He noted that participants were generally satisfied with how the Council manages the allotments and clearly prefer that the Council to continue managing allotments into the future. A very clear message that had consistently been delivered over the past year is that there is no enthusiasm for devolved management of allotments. However, with more sites created, more plots subdivided and more ploholders year on year, the Allotment Officer is more than overwhelmed. If Site Associations and FEDAGA don't help the service will inevitably deteriorate further.

There were contributions from the floor that suggested that the Allotment Officer was not consistent in how he managed introducing new ploholders to sites. Andy Crofts (**AC**) said at Inverleith he had allowed the Site Association to do this, but recently had taken this duty back. **JG** said that that improvements at Warriston such as path repairs formerly carried out by the Site Association have been stopped due to Health and Safety legislation. Rik Hart (**RH**) said that ploholders pay handsomely for a service and are not satisfied.

There was a question about how the budget was spent. **PW** said it had proved difficult to get accurate figures. Over the last six years figures from the Council had varied from £60K to £160K but is currently given as £101K. One of the uncertainties is what factors are counted, which have varied from time to time.

Mairianna Clyde (**MC**) told of "efficiencies" that end up costing a lot more. Recently at Redhall a subcontracted van on site collided with a stand pipe. The Council were called out 4 times to have it fixed as each repair was substandard. Without sight of invoices it is hard not to suspect that the Council were not being "hosed". She wondered why the Council was not covered by public liability insurance and felt self management would help.

Lorraine Corbett (**LC**) said that as the Council is a large organisation it seems almost impossible to avoid such situations. She expressed sympathy for the Allotment Officer as

she believed him to be restricted by EU legislation governing procurement procedures. She said it is difficult to reach a judgement without access to all the facts.

**PW** turned to the matter of plot inspections, which the Survey showed was a big concern as participants indicated the poor state of neighbouring plots caused annoyance. At this point Gilbert Clark (**GC**) stated an objection to further discussion of the Survey results as people would not have had time to read and digest them. **PW** asked the meeting if they were satisfied with how the inspection process is carried out. The meeting resoundingly agreed that they were not satisfied. **PW** concluded by emphasising that no-one should believe that the Survey was approved by FEDAGA.

**PW** said that it was important that all sites send representatives to attend some Management Committee meetings so that their ploholders' concerns can be properly voiced. Tony Stanton (**TS**) said that the meetings, at once a month, are too frequent and most people cannot commit to such an undertaking. Further, he contended that the meetings are repetitive and don't seem to be able to resolve issues. This was contested by John McKinlay (**JMcK**), who gave by way of example the successful anti-rent rise campaign. He suggested that representatives were not obliged to attend every meeting, but should try to come to some.

**PW** turned to the recently issued Council proposal to increase rents and reduce services. By combining these measures ploholders were expected to pay more to receive less. Again, the Council are seeking to breach the agreement of 2009 which, after a series of increases over five years, promised a rent freeze from 2014 to 2020. He asked the meeting what position FEDAGA should adopt in discussions with the Council. The unanimous verdict was to oppose the proposals. **ACTION**: Seek to prevent the 2016-17 Budget proposals regarding allotments.

**PW** considered age demographics and said it is inevitable that the proportion of older people working allotments will increase. He said the 50% concession is generous when compared with allotment services elsewhere and concessions for other leisure pursuits. **MC** accepted the Council is in difficulties as it seeks to bridge a £20M funding gap, but it should not apply disproportionate measures. The proposals will hit allotment holders hard and the saving of £21K is a drop in the ocean.

**GC** suggested that administratively, small sites cost a lot more to manage and therefore larger sites are discriminated against. His solution would be to charge more for plots on smaller sites and less for those on big sites where there are economies of scale to be enjoyed. He stated that for the £19K rents that Midmar ploholders pay, they get virtually nothing in terms of services. He suggested that allotments may manage a lot better without the Council.

**PW** noted that recently created Neighbourhood Partnership-sponsored sites which have much smaller "raised bed"-style plots do not charge users anything. He questioned whether this was justifiable. He also cited the argument used to justify FEDAGA's case against last year's rent rise proposal which is that modern allotments are not primarily for the growing of food, but a "lifestyle choice". If you want cheap food, go to a supermarket. Factor in your labour at minimum wage rates and it is not economically justifiable. Working a plot is a hobby providing exercise, fresh air, social contact and, eventually, good food. It should be compared with other leisure pursuits such as golf - which enjoys a subsidy. He cited Edinburgh Leisure, which gets a £6.6M subsidy this year from the Council.

## 5. Treasurer's Report:

### Statement of the account for the period 1 August 2014 to 28 July 2015

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>Debit</b>
Previous Bond Interest	£51.30	
Fee from Portobello	£51.00	
WCF potatoes	Overpayment	£97.30
City of Edinburgh Council (CEC)	£3,422.50	
Shop cash	£216.10	
Shop cash 2015	£92.50	
Kings seeds	£314.56	
<b>Trading</b>		
Cheque to WCF (Potatoes)		£915.10
Site cheques deposited	£1,204.00	
<b>Trading profit</b>		<b>£386.20</b>
<b>Income Total</b>	<b>£5,449.26</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Potato & Onion refund to sites		£167.25
Kings seeds & CEC refund to sites		£648.39
Sags 2014		£75.00
Sags 2015		£75.00
Treasurer and Secretary expenses		£164.56
Secretary PC purchase		£70.00
Apple press hire		£30.00
Apple press and Masher purchase		£392.00
Site fees and commissions		£743.68
SSC (South Side Centre) hall hire		£20.00
BBQ		£225.90
Third Prize allotment competition		£25.00
SSC membership x10		£50.00
Bags for shop		£8.39
PW legal advice Donald Rennie		£160.00
<b>Expenses Committed but not yet Banked</b>		
Cheques, Kings seeds & refunds to site		£976.27
Sites with no accounts still dueDumbryen		£179.70
Findlay Avenue		£37.00
Hutchison Loan		£16.00
Chesser Crescent		£27.65
<b>Total</b>		<b>£5,006.89</b>
<b>Net profit</b>		<b>£442.37</b>
Bank balance 1 Aug 2015	<b>£5,702.53</b>	
Bank balance 28 July 2015	<b>£7,379.02</b>	
Committed cost	£1,236.62	
funds minus committed funds	£6,142.40	
Bond(1)	<b>£4,510.56</b>	
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>£10,652.96</b>	

Total balance of FEDAGA assets on 31 July 2014 was **£10,210.59**

Total balance of FEDAGA assets on 28 July 2015 was **£10,652.96**

Note - Bond is now on 0.025% awaiting the outcome of CEC price Rise before committing funds to a fixed term investment.

**DR** introduced the Financial Report, saying that over the last year there have been three Treasurers and therefore it had been a challenge to work out the finances, but he has been able to account for every penny. He thanked Neiria MacClure and John Grace for examining and signing off the accounts.

Income comprised interest accrued from the Bond, members' subscriptions paid by the Council from rents and the Trading Scheme. The trading income from seed potato and onion set sales was roughly half from pre-ordered sales and half from the FEDAGA Shop. £172.75 was returned to site associations. In addition, £314.56 was returned from Kings Seeds to site associations.

Expenditure was mainly the purchase of seed potatoes and onion sets, SAGS membership (for two years), the Southside Community Centre for hall hire, administrative costs for the Secretary and Treasurer, a BBQ for last year's allotment competition winners, purchase of the apple press, legal advice and site association subscriptions.

There is a profit of £442.37 which is in line with last year, discounting the exceptional purchase of the apple press. Expenses committed but not yet banked total £1236.62. **DR** urged site associations that do not have a bank account to obtain one. It has been agreed not to move the Bond to a termed account as it was expected to be needed for legal advice. The total assets on 27th July were £10,652.96.

The Financial report was proposed by **PW** and seconded by **JG**.

George Sutherland (**GS**) asked for clarification on the figures for Kings Seeds and Council refunds as they appeared to be combined. It was explained that on top of the 45% discount enjoyed by members, there is an extra 10% returned by Kings to FEDAGA. This is in turn returned to site associations on a pro rata basis according to the uptake of the offer by members. **DR** agreed to issue a paper showing the payments for each site of the Kings rebate and members' subscriptions received from the Council. **ACTION - DR. PW** emphasised that FEDAGA does not earn anything from the on-line seed scheme as, after having set it up, it requires minimal work from us.

**GC** noted that FEDAGA is in an insecure financial position as the greatest part of its income is provided by the Council, who collect rent from ploholders and pass on £2.50 for each member, £1 of which is returned to site associations. This could be cut off in a flash if the Council chose. He also suggested that if members disagreed with FEDAGA they could retain the £2.50 payment. **DR** agreed this was so, but said that they would be breaking a longstanding arrangement. **PW** said that the Council prefers to talk to FEDAGA as a representative umbrella body rather than 1400-plus individuals and so the arrangement suits them well. They would be unwise to disrupt it.

Lorna Frost, who said it would not be practicable for a small site such as Baronscourt to set up a bank account, asked if money owed could be paid in kind, such as in a quantity of seed potatoes. **DR** said this could provide a solution and would be looked into. **ACTION - DR.**

## **6. Election of Office Bearers and Management Committee:**

**EW** said that all existing office bearers and committee members have been nominated by Lady Road. In addition West Mains have nominated Rosy Naylor. Accordingly, the following have been elected to serve for another year:

**President - Peter Wright.**

**Secretary - Ernie Watt.**

**Treasurer - Dave Roberts.**

**Show Secretary -** There were no nominees.

**Management Committee:**

**Brian Bleakley, Gilbert Clark, Maureen Edwards, Jon Gray, Rik Hart, Paul Kerr, Stuart McKenzie, Neiria McClure, John McKinlay and Rosy Naylor.**

**GC** observed that there appeared to be a discrepancy in representation in that there were too many officials from small sites. He said that to better represent the majority of members some of these positions should be taken by members from sites such as Warriston, Midmar and Saughton Mains. **PW** said that FEDAGA needs more people to volunteer to serve. Maureen Edwards (**ME**) said that if sites cannot summon representatives to serve they have no cause for complaint. Two examiners to scrutinise the financial accounts were requested. John Grace and Neiria MacClure agreed to act as examiners again.

#### **7. Forward Plans for the Coming Year 2015-16:**

Donald Stevenson (**DS**) kicked off the debate by stating his strong objection to the proposed removal of the waste collection service. **LC** asked if the Council had given thought to where allotment waste material goes. **PW** said he would play the Devil's Advocate on this one. All waste material on allotment sites has been brought in by ploholders and should be taken out by ploholders. It should be part of the allotment ethos that what can be will be recycled, composted, or burned. Also, some sites such as Bridgend do not presently enjoy such a service. **MC** said that very often new ploholders when taking on a new plot find it to be in a bad state due to poor management and it contains a lot of rubbish that has to be removed. Often this material is dangerous. **TS** said that after a series of attacks by vandals at Saughton Mains recently a lot of greenhouses were smashed. The resulting broken glass was beyond the ability of many ploholders to clear up and dispose of. Also, any asbestos found must be disposed of legally and properly, which again is beyond an individual's resources. There are always going to be exceptional circumstances which will require a waste disposal service. **RN** said that West Mains, another site with no waste removal service, the site association pays for a skip every 18 months or so to remove waste. **NMcC** said that at Claremont Park members arrange for a van at £40 a day, which is cheaper than a skip, to take rubbish to the dump.

**AC** said there is an argument here for some devolution of responsibility. No-one wants to be involved in evictions and that should be done centrally, but much can be done at a local level, such as fixing broken water pipes, and at a much cheaper price than that which the Council is forced to pay. **MC** agreed, citing the collection of waste metal at Redhall which was sold to a scrap metal merchant for a profit. She said that governance issues inevitably get personal and cause problems on the site but dealing with rubbish, fence repairs and such like can be tackled collectively, building team spirit. Stuart Swarbrick warned of

problems encountered by Ferry Road members on taking a van to the dump when they were stopped by an official. On hearing that the rubbish was from a Council allotment he said they would require authorisation from the Allotment Officer and would have to use the Trade Waste facilities. To take waste to the dump directly will require the Council's various arms to talk to one another, which might be a challenge.

**GS** said that in the past a Saughton Mains committee member went round with the Allotment Officer on site inspections. He himself was involved in this and when, eventually, the Allotment Officer was persuaded to write an eviction letter his own plot was vandalised. Kathy Parkes said a third party could be employed to operate the inspection and eviction procedure. **RH** said FEDAGA had already suggested something similar to the Council and had it batted back. **PW** said FEDAGA had nominated a group of Committee members to receive training and participate in inspecting plots on sites other than their own, but this too has been rejected on the grounds that as they know site reps. across the city they will be open to accusations of bias. Instead, it may be necessary to find a body of volunteers who have no possible contacts on other sites.

#### **8. Any Other Competent Business:**

**ME** said that there had been discussion among the Management Committee about reviving the Allotment Show for a one-off trial event next year. She suggested that as all of our activities these days seem to be combative it would be good to be able to do something celebratory instead. She said that Stuart McKenzie had raised this and he was willing to take a leading role. **MC** agreed, suggesting an alternative might be to hire a bus and have a day trip to look at gardens, willow cultivation, organic methods, or whatever. **TS** said this had been done in the past and destinations had included the Dundee and Ayr Flower Shows and the Invergowrie Crop Research Institute. He said that if Stuart McKenzie is willing to organise, we should support him. **PW** said that as the Allotment Show had consistently failed to attract a sufficiently large number of exhibitors and exhibits to bring the cost down below £30 per exhibitor it had no longer been financially viable to continue. There had been some acrimony over the matter as it had not proved possible to stage the Show without losing further money. **TS** gave a caution regarding excursions. He said that the discounts available to group bookings in the past were no longer so generous as they have become more commercial and the advent of universal free bus travel for those over 60 took away the incentive for them to pay £10 for a seat on a hired bus. **MC** said it should be possible to apply for a community grant to subsidise such an event. Charles Passmore suggested that the Gardener's Cottage at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh might be a suitable venue, although it may be a bit small. Alternatively, he believed St. Stephen's Church in Stockbridge may be able to provide affordable space. On a show of hands it was **AGREED** to stage an Allotment Show next year.

**GC** noted the Allotment Strategy Working Group meeting with Council officials next week which will consider the next Five Year Allotment Strategy and strongly suggested that unless there is a councillor in the chair FEDAGA should not agree to meet. **PW** considered this to be counter-productive as the last meeting was in May and progress has badly stalled since then. He would not be party to a boycott. **TS** advised that it was too soon to discuss the Surveys as FEDAGA should wait until Site Associations have had time to consider them and provide feedback. **PW** agreed with this. He concluded by emphasising the importance of all associations being fully involved and thanked all for attending.

#### **9. Date of Next Year's Annual General Meeting: 18th October 2016.**