



THE FEDERATION OF  
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT  
ALLOTMENTS AND  
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

***Management Committee Meeting  
7.15pm on 11th October 2016 at Southside Community Centre***

**Present:** Committee: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) (Treasurer) : Stuart McKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JohnMcK**) : Rosy Naylor - West Mains (**RN**) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : Jon Gray - Warriston (**JGray**); Observers: Alison Hewitt - Warriston (**AH**) : Jenny McKenzie - Dumbryden (**JenMcK**) : Alice Bain - Warriston (**AB**) : Rosina Weightman - Saughton Mains (**RW**) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) : Liz Grace - Midmar (**LG**) : John Grace - Midmar (**JGrace**).

**1. Apologies:** Neira McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) : Paul Kerr - Redhall (**PK**).

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting:** The Minutes of the 13th September meeting were approved.

**3. Matters Arising: Collection of Subscriptions - EW** reported on a proposal received on how to respond to the Council's intention to give ploholders the option of not paying subscriptions. Once FEDAGA's position was explained the member withdrew his proposal. **PW** reminded the meeting of FEDAGA's approach and the meeting **AGREED** to proceed as set out earlier this year.

**Council Allotment Strategy - PW** said the draft Strategy document had been circulated. There were no comments on the contents. He proposed that FEDAGA issue a press release focussing on the fact that the document contains an admission that the Council has no capital expenditure budget to increase the number of allotments. **JGrace** asked if this position is compliant with the Community Empowerment Act. **PW** said that it is as the Council intends to provide suitable land and charge a peppercorn rent to groups of self-organising aspirant ploholders on the waiting list. It will be up to these individuals to source funding and build the sites themselves. FEDAGA will give what assistance and support it can. **PW** said he is in the process of writing a paper setting out how he sees the process working. **JenMcK** said there should be a discussion among members about how FEDAGA defines its purpose and vision. **PW** said he will circulate his paper setting out how FEDAGA and the Council should proceed. **JenMcK** said it was important not to polarise the debate and re-enact the battles of the past. **SMcK** said FEDAGA have no responsibility to create new allotments as that is for the Council. He was clear that FEDAGA should focus on providing the best deal for existing members. After a wide ranging discussion it was **AGREED** to put the press release on hold for the time being.

**GC** noted the increase in allotment rents recently proposed was supposedly to pay for capital expenditure. Now there is to be no such expenditure the rent should be reduced accordingly. **PW** urged caution and said that currently there is a £17K subsidy to the service. **JohnMcK** noted that the Strategy document makes no specific mention of rent increases. **SMcK** said the Council is keeping its options open on the matter.

**AGM** - Arrangements were discussed for the AGM on 25th October. Nomination papers had been received which filled the office bearers and all 14 Management Committee positions. **JGrace** agreed to be nominated by the Management Committee as Show Secretary.

**Apple Press** - **DR** said Midmar will have the Apple Press this coming weekend. **LG** will liaise with the Midmar representative and ensure keys are available for uplift of the equipment. **ACTION** - **LG**. **DR** reported that charity Carr Gomm had borrowed the Apple Press a couple of weeks ago. The Restalrig Apple Press weekend had to be postponed and will be rescheduled. **ACTION** - **DR**. **SMcK** said he will arrange for the Apple Press to be made available at Inverleith. **ACTION** - **SMcK**.

**Leith Links** - There was no further news of the proposed development at Leith Links.

**Telferton** - **DR** reported on the latest ruling by the Reporter in favour of the allotments at Telferton, again rejecting the developer's attempts to build on the ground. They can now only appeal on a point of law. However, when the next Local Development Plan is issued they are expected to try again. He explained how the process has greatly strengthened the allotments' case. Lottery funding to support a community buy-out is being explored. The Reporter has ruled that if the site was ever lost to development the Council would have to provide equivalent allotment land elsewhere in compensation. This appears to set a precedent as hitherto this had only applied to Council-owned allotment land.

**4. Allotment Officer** - There was no report received from the Allotment Officer. It was suggested this could be because an announcement is expected soon about wide-ranging staffing and departmental changes at the Council. There was a discussion about the continued lack of effective management of sites. By way of example, **WA** reported that a request to the Council to maintain the bund at Carrick Knowe, between the allotments and the tram track and now badly overgrown by weeds, was passed on to Edinburgh Trams who refuse to get involved. The allotments are now subject to flooding and wind-blown weeds without any prospect of resolution. **GC** noted that if volunteers cannot persuade officials to do their jobs they may become despondent and give up. He suggested the solution is to take the matter up with Councillors. There was also a discussion about the difficulties caused by a poorly administered inspection and termination of lease process. **PW** noted the Strategy Document makes no definition of the term "robust management" and the agreed procedure is not adhered to. **JenMcK** said a new approach should be discussed at the AGM.

**PW** said FEDAGA had agreed new regulations in 2012 but these had not been enacted as they are still awaiting ratification by Parliament. **SMcK** said the Community Empowerment Act may provide a solution as the Council will have a statutory obligation to reduce the waiting list and will be forced to be more effective. He said FEDAGA could contribute ideas to how the process could be managed more creatively such as incentivising ploholders to give up a plot they were not using properly. He said that it seemed that about 5% of plots would always be substandard and this represented a waste of resources. In conclusion, it was recognised that the Allotment Officer does not have an easy job.

**5. Consideration of Reports - Secretary's Report:** **EW** reported on the responses from members who are interested in appearing on the allotments segment of the STV Live At 5 show. They have been put in contact with journalist Moira Warren. **WA** said the first piece which featured beekeeping at Bridgend was broadcast last Friday. A Warriston member has enquired about the Bridgend beehives and has been put in touch with those involved there. **AB** and **AH** asked that her details be passed on to them so that they might explore the creation of a beehive area at Warriston together. **ACTION - EW.**

A ploholder from Midmar has expressed interest in participating in the Lothian Pollinators Project after an article on this in the Newsletter. **EW** will put her in touch with **SMcK**, who along with Andy Crofts is working with the Project to encourage bees in allotments. A recent study has found that allotments are the best places for healthy and diverse bee colonies in the UK. One of the plans being worked on is installing bee boxes made by ex-offenders. **ACTION - EW.**

**EW** reported that the Newsletter was published twice in the last month and he thanked all contributors, especially **JenMcK** for her articles on Midmar and Stenhouse. He said there is a proposal to broaden out the editorial responsibility for the Newsletter and in future it will be published under the editorship of **JenMcK**. **JohnMcK** complimented those involved on producing such a consistently interesting publication.

**Treasurer's Report:** **DR** presented a summary of accounts to 22nd September which showed total assets stood at £12,232.46. However, most expenses for the Allotment Show are yet to be deducted. The spend for this was £795, which is £5 under budget. Although the position is currently healthy there is uncertainty about how things may change with the introduction of the opt-out subscription arrangements. **DR** reported that at long last he receives statements and the 3 new signatories have been recognised by the bank. However, he is still waiting for internet access to be granted.

**GC** suggested that as the funds are healthy the FEDAGA contribution to SAGS should be doubled. **JGrace** agreed, saying that SAGS had done sterling work on the Community Empowerment Act. **PW** said that the relationship with SAGS in the past has been good but had in recent months encountered difficulties. **JenMcK** suggested an invite to SAGS be extended to improve matters. **GC** said that there should be more than 1 FEDAGA representative. **EW** said that until recently it had proved impossible to find even 1 representative. **DR** suggested that travel expenses be provided for any future representative to SAGS. This was **AGREED.**

**Trading:** **EW** said representatives had reported that the order forms for Potatoes and Onions were not provided. **SMcK** said that he had drawn up forms for Inverleith and would provide them for general use. It was noted that the instructions for sending in orders were potentially misleading and members were not to send their orders direct to the Trading Secretary. For avoidance of doubt the procedure is that orders are taken on site and the site order with a cheque to FEDAGA is sent to the Trading Secretary. **AB** and **AH** said that they had only recently received the order details and would not have long to speak to members. It was **AGREED** to tighten up the order procedure next year to avoid these problems. **WA** agreed to take responsibility for bagging up the onions as in previous years. **ACTION - WA.**

**SAGS Report:** There was no report.

**Site Reports:** **JohnMcK** said the bin uplift at Craigentenny continued to be erratic. Members have installed a water harvesting apparatus taking water from the communal hut to replenish the pond.

**RW** said the communal hut at Saughton Mains had been re-roofed and painted by members in time for the AGM. She also reported trouble with the emptying of bins. **AB** and **AH** said that after constantly badgering the Allotment Officer the emptying of bins at Warriston has been sorted out and with vigilant attention and a sign installed giving instructions on how to use them, for the first time ever the bins are not overflowing and surrounded by debris. **WA** said the bin at Carrick Knowe had not been emptied for a while now apparently because the Biffa lorry can't gain access under a bridge to the site. **PW** said the budget for bin emptying is £7K and questions must be asked if the service is not dependable. **RN** reminded the meeting that some sites don't enjoy a bin service. West Mains hires a skip every 18 months or so, paid for by money raised at the Open Day, and also encourages recycling and swapping of unwanted items.

**ME** said the Lady Road AGM had rejected the proposal to levy members £20 each every year to pay for communal maintenance. Instead a notice will be erected listing jobs to do which members are encouraged to volunteer for and put their names against. As yet, no names have been added. There has been a meeting with a local Councillor to raise the problems encountered by members parking on Lady Road. Cars parked on the public highway by members are being stickered by vigilante residents.

**WA** said he had again spoken to the Allotment Officer about trees at Carrick Knowe which should have been cut down 5 years ago, were still to be dealt with and were now in a potentially hazardous condition. Also, the waste bin had been stolen.

**JGrace** reported on the Midmar Open Day which was a great success despite heavy rain. Also, despite minimal action being taken the rabbit population had dwindled and now they have all gone.

**RN** also reported a successful Open Day, with around £400 being made for site funds at West Mains. She noted that the event encourages ploholders to spruce up their plots. The AGM was well attended, the lure being an offer of free compost.

**DR** said a communal clear-up was conducted at Restalrig. Controversy was ignited when neighbouring potholders at Prospect Bank took the opportunity of freshly emptied compost bins to deposit rubbish from an unkempt plot on their site. When challenged, they said the Allotment Officer had suggested they do this. **EW** said that the path at Cambridge Avenue has been improved by the spreading of whin dust provided by the Council and laid by members.

**6. Any Other Business:** There was no further business.

**7. Date of Next Meeting:** 8th November.