



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

Minutes of FEDAGA Management Committee Meeting 7 pm Tuesday 8th February 2022 - Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Present

Stuart McKenzie (SMcK)(Inverleith)(President); Dave Roberts (DR) (Telferton; Craigentenny)(Treasurer); Liz Grace (EG) (Midmar)(Secretary); John Grace (JG)(Midmar)(Allotment Show); Ernie Watt(EW)(Cambridge Ave)(Newsletter); Alison Hewitt (AH) (Warriston)(Planning); Paul Kerr (PK)(Redhall) (Minutes); Alice Bain(AB)(Warriston); Margaret Williamson (MW)(Stenhouse); Neiria McClure(NMcC)(Claremont); Heather MacPherson (HMacP)(Northfield); Stuart Swarbrick (SS) (Ferry Road); Alan Gordon(AG)(West Mains); Pamela McKay(PMcK) (Lethem Park); John Nisbet (JN) (Craigentenny/ Telferton); Michael Muirhead(MM)(Wester Hailes)an invited observer; Chris McKinnel)(CMcK) (Lady Road)

1. Apologies

Jan Bradbury (Saughton), Nils Tomes (West Mains), Steve Mathieson (Leith Links), *Maureen Edwards (Lady Road)**

- *Maureen remains on the committee but is unable to join the Zoom meetings*

2. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting

Adoption of Minutes of meeting on Tuesday 7th December 2021 Proposed by NMcC Seconded by EW

The brief meeting on 11th January was solely to discuss arrangements for distribution of the FEDAGA potatoes/onions etc and was not formally minuted.

3. Matters/Actions Arising

Discussion of instances where site representatives are not alerted to the introduction of new ploholders as per the Allotment Strategy guidelines. To be raised again with Ian.

4. Site Reports

An invitation was extended to Michael Muirhead from the devolved allotment site at Wester Hailes to give a short presentation.

Wester Hailes (an unaffiliated site)

Michael Muirhead(MM), who recently was elected as Chair of Wester Hailes allotment association, was invited to the committee meeting gave a short presentation which was followed by a question and answer session.

It has been an independent site for 44years. There are about 100 plots; the site is split into 2 by the road to Baberton. The land is mostly owned by the city council but some is leased from a local landowner.

SMcK enquired how self-managed sites such as Wester Hailes manage to keep on top of what happens on their sites. MM explained a warning letter is sent to a plot holder when there is a problem on their plot and the situation is then re-assessed after three weeks. If there is no improvement within

a reasonable timescale then there is a potential Notice of intention to evict. There is also an appeals process. There are about 80-90 people on their waiting list. JG enquired how large the plots were and how much the cost per annum. MM – all plots are of a similar size approximately 20m x 10m. The rent is relatively low, currently at £25 pa. EW enquired about site insurance. AG advised that site insurance could be purchased through The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to cover equipment and public liability. MM advised that they would be looking into this. SMcK enquired if it was possible to arrange a visit to Wester Hailes allotment site. **ACTION-** DR to arrange this.

MM indicated his interest in visiting other sites within Edinburgh.

Other sites' reports

Ferry Road

- We had a very successful site tidy day on Saturday 22nd January: we had at least 20 ploholders popping in and out over the course of the day, cutting back Brambles, clearing old wood to the gate and shifting the mounds of stuff to be chipped. It really made a huge difference, things are looking much, much tidier.
- On the Monday following, we had a contractor in with a mini digger, leveling and shifting soil for space for us to build our new compost heaps, new chipping area, and improving the layout of the grounds.
- There is one tree stump that we couldn't get out, even with the digger, and so we have a different contractor coming to grind down the stump on Thursday.
- There was a not so successful dump run: I hired the van, loaded it up and got down for my booked slot at 8:30am on Saturday 29th - only to be told the dump was closed, so had to go back and unload it all again. Took the scrap metal to Dalton's so that helped break even.
- Ian Woolard has been busy pruning back some of the overhanging trees on the Cycle path side.
- Re: GCFF - have ordered the Hot Bin Composter unit, still working on the Solar Panels.

Leith Links (BS)

The communal shed is letting the water in and needs some roof repairs. Do we need to raise this with Ian or do FEDAGA still draw up the list with him?

The saga with the developers on the other side of the wall continues:

The contractors have drilled at least 25 drainage holes through the wall without our consent - ploholders suddenly discovered them at the weekend. The new development site is higher than the allotment plots and it seems the new road will now drain onto the plots, potentially flooding plots in heavy rain and bringing salt and other road toxins into our veg patches, and potentially undermining sheds and greenhouses. I can send some photos.

Lady Road (CMcK)

We are considering 2 possible big projects for this year.

1. Looking into possibility of building communal composting bays similar to ones built at Saughton by The Conservation Volunteers. The cost is pretty hefty for us, so trying to find ways of saving money on timber. Does anyone know of a secret stash of wooden pallets??

2. Ian Woolard has promised materials for flood mitigation. But some ploholders are concerned that protecting some plots, alongside our burn, will just make the problem worse for other plots by simply diverting floodwater. We may need to take advice from someone with knowledge of hydrology/flood management.

Warriston (AB&AH)

The council has funded and completed restoration work on the stone wall at the east end of our communal area, creating a beautiful finish to a space we have been working on for a number of years. The wall now permanently supports the slope above it, making future maintenance very much easier than it would have been otherwise. We have received delivery of, and are delighted with, our new equipment funded by the Gilbert Clark Foundation, and are in the process of training plot holders to use the council funded shredder. Burning on site is very much reduced this winter which is good environmental news

Saughton Mains (JB)

The site has been fairly quiet over the last couple of months, but plants and more people are reappearing after their winter hibernation !

We are delighted to report that there have been very few recent sightings of rats on site, long may that continue. Thanks to Ian Woolard and the Council Pest control team for their perseverance.

Many thanks to FEDAGA for the grant from the Gilbert Clark Foundation for a contribution towards the costs of building a second pair of green composting bins. These have been constructed adjacent to the first pair built last April, and we look forward to increasing the amount of green material we can compost on site.

Our chalet has survived the winter gales, but the veranda is in need of significant repair dating back to when the roof of the chalet was damaged last year. While the roof has been battened down the work on the veranda is outstanding and needs attention. A couple of sheds were blown over in the recent high winds but generally damage was limited.

A number of plots are looking neglected. Some ploholders are known to have given up their plots, others have been reallocated, but as an Association we do not know the current situation. We would like to have the name of any new member and their plot number so that we can introduce ourselves and let them know about the site's facilities.

West Mains (NT)

There is a planning application to develop the St Crispin's School site immediately to the north of the allotments. This proposal will be reviewed in committee on 6th February 2022 and the Council's recommendation is that planning permission should be granted. We remain concerned that the proposed design will increase flooding along our northern boundary.

West Mains received a powerful shredder from the Council in December and have been making good use of this in our winter clear-ups. We were delighted to be awarded a capital grant from The Gilbert Clark Foundation to purchase additional equipment to enhance safety and efficiency.

Midmar (JG)

The recent storms have done very little obvious damage. Important promised maintenance work carried out on behalf of the Council includes: (i) erection of safety railings at points where the path is unsafe because of steep slope and/or a sharp fall from the path-edge to soil level; (ii) Improvement of drainage between Fields 1 and 2 where a 'spring' crosses the path. Several plot-holders have erected new sheds and raised-beds in preparation for the growing season and the overall level of cultivation across the site is good.

5. President's Report (SMcK)

SAGS is still keen on getting a voice from FEDAGA. A tri-partite meeting is to be arranged with the Scottish Government and local councils (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife etc.); arrangements are moving at a snail's pace. SAGS are about to start a £12,000 grants scheme. SAGS are looking for volunteers to participate in the organisation. Please contact SMcK if you are interested.

AGM – SMcK proposed a virtual meeting. DR suggested the church hall in Portobello could be hired at a reasonable cost. A hybrid meeting was also suggested. **Proposed date 25th October 2022**
ACTION EG/DR

6. Secretary's report (EG)

Edinburgh Evening News reporter looking for information regarding a discussion introduced by Miles Briggs in the Scottish Parliament regarding allotments. He was referred to Stuart McKenzie. Report to be presented at next meeting.

There have been quite a lot of recent enquiries from ploholders wanting to take advantage of the Kings Seed Scheme

7. Treasurer's Report (DR)

Financial statement previously circulated. Balance £13,991.33.

Gilbert Clark Foundation grants update - a quarter of the available money has been spent.

8. Maintenance (NMCC)

NMCC has updated the site maintenance list. IW has been in contact and advised that £20,000 has been spent on allotments in the last 2 weeks. IW will be coming to the March meeting of FEDAGA and will discuss next year's allotment spend.

Chris(CMcK) at Lady Road advised that they were looking at the possibility of building a communal composting area and enquired if anyone knew of a source of inexpensive wood. IW was due to provide materials to help prevent flood prevention on the site. DR – the Nairn Biscuit Factory has a huge pile of wooden pallets – maybe worth an enquiry.

SMcK – Paint Shed on Blackford Ave opposite West Mains Allotments has old pallets available for free.

9. Planning (AH)

No new applications affecting allotments found.

However, AG gave an update on the proposed construction of 49 houses by CALA homes on the former site of St Crispin's school. There are 471 documents associated with it, 200 of which are objections. It will be going to the planning Committee tomorrow (09/02/2022).

There will be an opportunity for three people to speak at this meeting. There are concerns about rainwater drainage and flooding on the allotments and the allotment site has been working closely with local residents. The planning officer has recommended it for approval. Ploholders are concerned about the potential impact of the development on allotment site drainage.

10. Trading (AH)

Potato and onions have been distributed to sites, which went well with the time slots on the Doodle poll. The FEDAGA Shop will be open on 13th and 20th from 1 to 3pm at Inverleith to sell off surplus stock. Lots of lessons have been learned this year. There was a disappointing number of substitutions this year as items were out of stock, some on ordering, and some on delivery. We were able to source the same items elsewhere, but some had to be substituted for alternatives. The Yellow Moon shallots were of poor quality when they arrived. The haulage companies also came with their challenges and

involved a lot of waiting around for deliveries which didn't come.

The orders were larger than previous years and it became obvious that the current premises at Inverleith were too small. Does anyone have any suggestions for a frost free, secure storage area at least the size of two shipping containers, which is easily accessible for cars to collect orders? It would be required for about two weeks in late January, early February and be affordable.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped with weighing and bagging onions, assisting with deliveries, site collections and staffing the shop.

DR – the second Sunday on 20th Feb may not happen if all of the surplus stock is sold on 13th – so get there early.

11. Food Growing Strategy (MW)

A workshop took place recently. Some extra budget is going to promoting growing in schools and in promoting people buying food nearer to home -sustainability of local food. There is an event on 25th February at Granton Campus. People can sign up for the event on Eventbrite – expecting around 100 people to attend. There will be talks, food demos and chefs cooking between 11.00- 12.30. The event will be encouraging people to grow even if they do not have a garden or allotment. SMcK suggested a Zoom meeting later in the week to discuss. JG/EG volunteered to attend. DR volunteered ideas and some potatoes; onions; leeks; Brussels sprouts stalks.

SMcK requested photos of previous FEDAGA Allotment shows be sent to him – **ACTION** EW and PK.

12. Annual Allotment Show (JG)

After twice running the Annual Show as a virtual event we should now plan for a 'real' event. I would like an event which goes beyond the traditional show: we should engage with Edinburgh Council's activities, perhaps in the context of Edible Edinburgh and the food growing strategy, to hold a Show which is broader in Scope and more inclusive, possibly using a marquee.

13. AOCB

JG/EG have written a detailed report on the provision of toilets on allotment sites. See Appendix 1 for full report. Larger sites would probably require two underground vaults. The cost could be up to £10,000 for each green toilet facility. Sites would need to raise substantial funds to provide these new facilities. JG gave a brief description of the Natsol toilet operation and asked how FEDAGA could progress this and take it forwards. DR proposed we take the matter back to the Council and request site toilet provision. NMCC will bring this matter up with IW when she meets with him at the end of February.

SMcK enquired if communal refuse bins were getting emptied at other sites as Inverleith had been missed for two weeks.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th March 2022 at 7pm using internet conferencing.

Please note-

All further meetings in person are cancelled until further notice due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Please also note the SSCC is closed. Future meetings will be held by internet conferencing using Zoom until such time that Covid 19 restrictions allow indoor meetings.