

Minutes of NRAA Committee Meeting 28th February 2015, 2pm at Carrville Working Men's Club

Present: Elizabeth Allnutt, John Doherty, Evelyn Leck, Vince Scott, Neil Storey, Tommy Wood

Apologies for absence: David Banks, Colin Smith

Agenda items:

1. Report on NAS national Management Committee meeting, 29/1/15
2. Bus trip to Harrogate Spring Flower Show
3. Agenda for quarterly general meeting 25/4/15
4. Barmoor and offer of help from Peter Lawson
5. Durham County Council allotment policy
6. Animals on allotments policy
7. What our members want from us
8. Joining Belmont Club

1. DB had attended this meeting and sent a written report to be read out. See below.
NAS AGM – the Northern regions motions had been rejected on technicalities. EA and JD will attend if possible, not feasible to take a coach to Leamington Spa for other Northern region members. They will be eligible to attend though most will not have received the papers to apply due to the poor distribution of the magazine amongst association membership.
Actions JD to request email copies to be sent to committee members. DB to bring back as many copies from Corby as possible when next attending management committee meetings.
Everyone – ensure up to date email addresses are added to signing in sheets when attending quarterly meetings.

2. Sunday 26th April was decided as the best day. Cost of trip approximately £30 per person - £20 from NRAA, £10 from members. Members pay £20 with a refundable £10 on the day. First come, first served. Closing date 31st March. No committee members present were able to attend on the day to be responsible for the trip.
Actions JD to speak to CS to arrange for suitable person to be responsible on the day.
JD to email membership with details of date and how to pay.
JD to book coach and arrange for suitable collection points on advice of bus companies
JD can cancel trip if there is insufficient interest.

3. Agenda for next quarterly general meeting 25th April 2015.
Actions JD to arrange for a speaker on Fund raising from Community Action Durham
DB to give report from Management Committee meeting
Everyone Report back on questions to parliamentary candidates (see AOB)
EL to arrange draw

4. Barmoor. DB's report advised that there had been a satisfactory conclusion to the long-running legal battle. Peter Lawson an officer from the site was happy to help NRAA in future.
Action EA to consult Constitution to see if we can coopt a further committee member and ring Peter Lawson to see if he would be willing.

5. Durham County Council allotment policy
CS was not there to report. Meetings are planned between Council staff, NRAA committee members and plot holders to discuss best way forward.

6. Animals on Allotments Policy
JD has contact details for Hartlepool resident who is knowledgeable to put this together.
Action NS and EL to contact them and take steps towards putting together a policy which would be checked by RSPCA and could also go on NAS website.

7. What do our members want from NRAA?
Updates on anything current which is relevant to allotments eg New legislation regarding repackaging of bulk pesticides in informal containers.
Rodent control course – situation still not clear but will progress shortly

Action Everyone to make a note of anything of relevance and send to JD for raising at the quarterly meeting.

8. Joining Belmont WMC. It was agreed and actioned at once that since NRAA was using the club 8 times a year for committee meetings as well as general quarterly meetings, that all committee members would be members of Belmont WMC. NRAA to pay.

AOB

It was agreed that the following question would be emailed to all prospective parliamentary candidates in committee members' constituencies. "What is your policy on allotments in this constituency?"

Action Everyone to email in their own constituency and bring responses back to quarterly meeting 25th April to report responses and encourage other members to follow suit.

The meeting closed at 3:25pm approximately

Written report from DB, by email:

Motions for the AGM

Regarding the motions for the AGM they seem to have been rejected but know one has told the region. They were rejected because a) they weren't signed by at least two officers from the region and b) not of sufficient and suitable content. Rule 14 states that the request should be signed by the Chairman or Vice Chairman and also by the Secretary. Probably I should have realised there would be clauses but I think my eye was on the Regional Representative debacle at the time

Co-opting members to the MC Despite Tony telling us in his letter that having a bigger MC would not be good, we are co-opting David Morris as Treasurer to take the place of David Rawlings who is retiring. I am not sure what region DR represents and whether or not there will be another representative for that region. The point is that there isn't any person of sufficient skill or knowledge within the current 10 Reg Reps to act as Treasurer, precisely the point John points out in his letter to Tony

Barmoor I understand Buckles (our solicitors?) have received Â£70,000 which means 75% of the total court costs have been recovered which is virtually unheard of. I hope you know what this is about!

Basically I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of items for discussion. The Five Year plan is completely unworkable as it stands, no timings are available to measure progress against therefore it is doomed to failure, already last years deadlines have not been met. I have offered to produce a project plan to show the durations, target dates but most importantly the dependencies each item has on either resource (people to do a particular task) or dependency on another task being completed first. There seems to be a lot of work for a few people. I have a copy of the minutes of the meeting but at the moment they have confidential markings so I daren't let anybody see them, we don't want me being kicked off for improper disclosure!

Regional Issues

Witton-Le-Wear Allotment Society Two members have been given notice that their tenancies will not be renewed in April because of non-cultivation. They took over two run down plots in May 2014 and have cleared the land ready for this year. I have sent them a draft letter appealing the non-renewal which has been sent to the secretary.

Two more members have been given immediate notice because they dared complain that cockerels were waking them up at 4 am, the head lease states unambiguously that only hens and rabbits are allowed. The cockerel owners had been removed from Howden-Le-Wear allotment site because they kept cockerels there previously. Again, I have drafted an appeal letter which has been sent. I always advise members to send all correspondence by to be signed for post.

I have been sent copies of the head lease, rules, letters from the landlord etc. (it is a private site) and other bits of information. We await the outcome of the appeal letters.

Rosedale and Victoria

A lady contacted me regarding flagrant abuse of the rules, changing of the rules without quorums etc. I am waiting for a full set of documents before I proceed any further.

Clara Vale and Crawcrook

Another two private sites but land owned by the same landlord. A question has arisen about the level of rents, after a quick discussion with a committee member I suggested that the 20% uplift from the average in the Gateshead area was probably due to a private landlords premium. However in the conversation it transpires they don't have a proper lease, they are not incorporated etc. etc. Again, they are sending what documents they do have at present, no action till I get these.