

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN REGION ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
25th April 2015 2014, 2pm held at Belmont Working Men's Club

Present: A. Clark, Martin Ellison (Barmoor), D. East (Blackfyld Allotment Association), B. Gretton (Briarfields, Hartlepool), Paul Bazeley, R. Stelley?, J. Hagg?, Evelyn Leck, Neil Storey (Burn Valley), Tommy Shaw (Clyde Terrace), C. Fennelly (Dyertheld?? Allotment Society), K. Minter (Durham Co Council), J. Barr? (East View, Boldon), Alan Dixon (Foundry Fields), G.W.Smith (High Handenhold), T Taylor, M Skelton (Langley Park), Colin Campbell (Marden Farm), Tom Wood (Mulberry Allotments, Felling), David Jarman (No Place), Joan Russell, Tony Williamson (Prudhoe Community Allotments), C. Hemingway (Roddymoor), W. Storey (Rossmere Allotments), J. Mulkizmo?? (Smithfield Rd), Alan Bell (South Moor Garden Association), Vince Scott, W.E. Beckett (South View Birtley), Frank Ramshaw (Thorntree Gill, Peterlee), Jeff Ridley, F. Heatherington, J.R. Wills?? (Wheatbottom, Crook), David Banks (Northern Regional Rep), Elizabeth Allnut Allotments (St Aidans Carlisle and Development Initiative (ADI) mentor), John Doherty (Secretary)

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of last meeting
- 4 .Matters arising
5. Fund raising
- Break
6. Secretary's report
7. Regional Rep's report
8. ADI mentor report
9. Durham County Council allotment plans
10. Members Forum
11. Date of next meeting
12. AOB

1. A welcome was extended to all present

2. There were apologies from (JD TO COMPLETE)

3. and 4. There was a query concerning the rebate from National Allotments Society (NAS) to the Northern region. It was confirmed that this had been paid for the present year but not for 2014.

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th January 2015 were agreed as a true and correct record. Proposed by Neil Story, Seconded by John Hayes, accepted by the meeting.

5. JD welcomed and introduced Liz Charles from Durham Community Action, who gave an interesting and informative talk on the Growing Durham project and fund raising generally. Growing Durham is a network of community food growing projects improving access to fresh food and benefitting from gardening activities. It is community led and is funded for two years by the Tudor Trust.

The following pointers were raised when looking for funding:

Look at all possible alternative avenues eg donations in kind from local businesses, other community contacts, crowd sourcing

External funding is increasingly difficult to raise, all sources oversubscribed. Competition is high.

Projects should ultimately be self-sustaining in the future

Include voluntary time as match funding in any application

Keep a good relationship with your funder – give reports on progress

When writing applications remember the 5 W's (who, what, when, where and why) and 3 H's (How will you achieve outcomes, How much will it cost, How much are you asking for)

Supply everything they ask for

Keep copies of everything

The following useful contacts were advised JD TO ASK FOR THESE FROM LIZ CHARLES??

Crowd sourcing – www.kickstarter.co.uk
Paint – communityrepaint.org.uk
www.greggsfoundation.org.uk
eshcharitabletrust.co.uk (local to Co Durham)
Grow Wild Community project Funding – native plants in communal spaces
peopleshealthtrust.org.uk – regional organisation get on their mailing list
tescoplc.com/inder.asp?pageid=7SK – Tesco Charity Trust
www.cooperative.coop/communityfund - Cooperative membership Community Fund
Esme Fairbairn project must be innovative to receive funding
www.awardsforall.org.uk- Lottery Awards For All
www.communityfoundation.org.uk

JD thanked Liz Charles and advised members that the current edition of the NAS magazine had an article on fund raising on page 20.

The raffle was drawn in the break. Prizes were kindly donated by Tommy Ward (bottle of whisky) and Evelyn Leck (box of chocolates)

6. Secretary's Report

John Doherty advised the bus trip to the Harrogate Spring Show (26/3/15) was only half full but was viable. Response had been poor – 11 replies from 452 emails. The trip had been subsidised by NRAA. Any future trips will be more expensive.

The secretary has a new business card with his contact details – see him for a copy

Email is the priority method of communication within NRAA. Please let Secretary know of all changes to contact details, but especially email.

Let JD know which issues you would like covered/need information on for future meetings eg bee keeping

The proposed rodent control course will not be happening until the HSE is satisfied about its enquiries re poisons and open space. As soon as there is clarity on this a course will be arranged. It will be cheaper for plot holders to control rodents themselves. Local authorities are beginning to charge for this service.

A member raised the issue of weed killing on allotment sites and if NRAA would be able to arrange a course for plot holders to be able to do this for themselves. Discussion around the issue advised that under new regulations, anyone buying or using weed killer for an allotment site would need a Certificate of Competence. This covered “professional” weed killers – ie those of a greater strength than normally found in garden centre type outlets and which are used in agricultural contexts. The Health and Safety Executive guidance advised that professional chemicals should not be used on allotment sites. If problems arose on allotment sites as a result of inadvisable use of these chemicals, the HSE would prosecute allotment associations. Plot holders could still purchase and use weed killers from garden centres and similar outlets for their own allotments, without needing a certificate of competence.

These regulations also covered the resale of bulk buys of weed killer and other garden products (eg Growmore) in packaging other than that which it arrived in from the manufacturer. This is now illegal and association shops will no longer be able to do this.

7. Northern Regional Representative's Report

David Banks proposed a vote of thanks for John Doherty who had previously done the regional representative's job. The members responded warmly with a round of applause.

DB had been dealing with 7 problems in the region. Two new associations had been formed – Clyde Terrace in Spennymoort and Thorntree Gill at Peterlee, both with represented at today's meeting.

He had attended meetings of the NAS Management Committee:

DB will project manage the NAS 5 year business plan. If NAS improves as an organisation benefits will filter down to the regions

NAS Rules – new proposed set to come before the NAS AGM in June. The changes are not adequate or sufficient and the Rules need radically rewriting rather than tinkering with. DB is advocating delaying their acceptance as there has been insufficient feed back from members and there are concerns with incorrect governance issues around the way they have been presented.

There is a move to streamline all the regional bodies. The NRAA Constitution has been held up as a model of excellence which could be adopted by NAS and rolled out to all regions. DB asked if the meeting was happy for this to happen. There was no dissent.

NAS are proposing that associations (and ?regional bodies?) have their own websites and/or piggyback off the NAS website. Bodies will not necessarily have to do set up websites themselves – help would be available.

Grants – allotment associations need community support to achieve grant funding – applications must be relevant to the wider community off the site as well as on it.

Members raised queries:

Was there a grievance procedure for NRAA? DB said that there wasn't but that probably needed to be one. JD would raise this with the NRAA committee.

The Rule changes - the membership at large had not been properly consulted and their views had not been fully taken into consideration. Was the Region as a whole going to raise this concern at the AGM? DB advised that the Rules should not be on the agenda for the meeting as there had been insufficient time to consider them. Proxy vote forms should be available shortly and advised members to give their proxy votes to those who would be attending. (DB/EA and possibly JD will be attending). The Agenda for the NAS AGM should be available on 1st May – see the website.

One of the new members asked if they would be eligible to vote? Membership takes 28 days to be accepted and they had not heard yet.

8. ADI Mentor Report

Castle Carrock. Meetings had been held with a parish councilor to progress a new allotment site in the village as a result of a Community Asset Transfer.

Durham County Council The mentor had attended the meeting with plot holders and County Council staff. More details from Colin/Alan.

Carlisle Local Plan. A response had been made to the consultation on the final proposed submission draft. Suggestions made earlier for a separate policy on allotments have been ignored and these, with reasons, were reiterated and a request made to speak at the Examination in Public if the planning inspector appointed wishes to take up the allotments issue. Carlisle Food City Steering Group supported the suggestions.

There was general discussion around Local Plans, the place of allotments in them re the DCLG guidance on using local plans as a guide in section 8 disposals, the statutory/temporary status of allotment sites and how to discover their designation and the use of Freedom of Information requests in getting this information.

Election

NRAA committee agreed (28/2/15) that committee members would canvass their parliamentary candidates for their views and policy on allotments. The results had not been collated but the general impression, mostly from verbal reports at the meeting, was of a patchy response and wide ignorance and misconception about allotments generally, though individual candidates from Carlisle (Conservative, Lib-Dem and Green) were supportive as far as their limited understanding allowed. Members were encouraged to canvass candidates in their own constituencies.

Members advised that the Labour party had no policy on allotments.

A member commented that the low profile of the issue of allotments in national government indicated the failure of the NAS to engage in politics. It was suggested that members should engage with their own MP's around allotments.

9. Durham County Council

Colin Smith and Alan Dixon, representing plot holders in Co Durham reported on a very positive meeting with allotment officers from Durham County Council to discuss the allotment policy which had been the cause of concern amongst plot holders. The meeting had looked in detail at all the issues in the new policy particularly the contentious ones eg chickens, containers. Legal and sensible solutions were discussed. The policies will be rewritten, will need to go to various Council departments eg legal and planning and for acceptance by Councillors. There will also be a wide consultation amongst plot holders. Karen Minter, who is an allotments officer for Durham County Council and was present at the meeting, advised that all plot holders on Durham County Council sites will be fully consulted before any decisions are made.

10. Members Forum

Kings Seeds - there was concern that quantity in packets had declined recently. It was suggested that members should contact Kings directly about this. There had always been a good response in the past – replacement packets or a test germination if batch number quoted. It was also noted that F1 hybrids were expensive to raise and six seeds in a packet was not unreasonable.

Local suppliers of polytunnels:

Northernpolytunnels and LBS were suggested. Details could be obtained from the internet.

11. Date of next meeting

Saturday 11th July, 2pm at Belmont Working Mens Club.

12. There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 4:40pm.