

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN REGION ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
16th April 2016, 2pm held at Belmont Working Men's Club

Present: 30 attended

Welcome from the Chair

A welcome was extended to all present especially to the newcomers:

Jane Coulter, Newton Hall Allotments Association

Jeanette Cracker, Blackhall

Apologies

There were apologies from Tom Wood

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting had not reached everyone but were accepted. Proposed that they be accepted, Neil Storey, seconded John Doherty.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

Regional Rep's report

1 Don't handle cash. Cheques leave a record behind them which will quell any queries or accusations which may arise in the future. If a supplier won't take a cheque then find a different supplier.

If you must handle cash then give or make sure you receive a receipt and keep it carefully for 7 years.

2 If you have a site shop then HMRC insists you should register it as a business. You should write to them stating that you are a '*Members' Club*'. David has a standard letter which he will email to you on request.

3 Most sites have Constitutions and Rules which are out of date, in conflict with the constitution or ambiguous and should be revised. Email yours to David if you need it checking.

4 **Situation with NAS.** This is still unresolved and raised a host of comments. Among them Peter Lawson (Barmoor) stated very sensibly that we need to resolve this by having a sensible discussion with those in charge at Head Office. We need to look to the future. As a result the meeting would like to invite the Chair and two other members of the Management Committee to the next open meeting in July. A letter of invitation will be sent. Other suggestions included breaking away, which at this moment is not recommended. The NAS is the only national allotment society representing all member allotments in England and Wales and should be encouraged from within to do this job well.

The NAS AGM will be held in York on Saturday 4th June. Members are encouraged to attend. If you have not already registered your intention to attend then you are too late so you should send a proxy vote. Send your completed proxy to Colin Smith, 59, Tennyson Gardens, Dipton Co Durham. DH9 9ET to arrive on or before 28th April. Fill in both parts. The front (2016 DELEGATE AND PROXY FORM) with your details and the Form 3 Proxy Votes form nominating Colin as your Proxy, tick other and sign. Colin will then use this form to vote in accordance with the best interests of the NAS

5 **Bus trip to the Harrogate Spring Flower Show.** The 53 seat coach is booked and filled with one or two on the waiting list. The trip will start at Bedlington next Sunday calling at popular places on the route.

6 **Treasurer's Report** John Monkhouse reported that we are subsidising the trip to Harrogate by £134. This was accepted as a benefit to members.

With the balance of the account now being well below £1,000 John will be very reluctant to authorise any further payments until rebates are received.

The NRAA has £169 in its own account which it has raised itself from raffle profits.

Rebates from 2015 haven't been received yet but we have been assured that they are on the way. 40p from each affiliated member is returned to regions as a rebate to use for specified purposes in the region.

There have been the customary difficulties in changing signatories with Lloyds Bank. We are allowed up to 5 signatories with any 2 being needed to sign cheques. It was agreed that Colin Hemingway and John Doherty be elected as authorised signatories.

Beak and raffle

7 Members' Forum

Colin Hemingway, **Roddymoor**, who has stepped down from the site secretary's post, reported **difficulties in governance** with issues including the committee not publishing minutes from closed meetings, by-passing the waiting list, not producing a balance sheet at the AGM and so it goes on. David will handle this. The meeting was reminded that the site is actually owned by the NAS and that Colin Hemingway has done wonders with raising it from its previous derelict state. Liz Bunting from NAS visited the site in October 2014.

Evelyn Leck stated that **Hartlepool B. C.** has introduced a **ban on using sprinklers on allotments**. No consultation was held. John Doherty gave his usual promotional spiel on the benefits of installing ball cock controlled cattle troughs; one to every 8 gardens so no one has to cross more than two gardens to reach water. Coupled with a hosepipe ban water troughs can halve the water bill for a site as well as complying with any future requirements from Northumbrian Water to prevent suck back of polluted water. One fresh water tap should be provided for drinking and first aid. Grant funding should be available to install these.

Also, **concerning water bills** you need to watch out that the bill does not include sewerage charges unless of course your site is connected to mains drains.

Poor **germination of red onion seeds** has been a serious issue at Spennymoor and has really annoyed the show men who will have no plants to show. Kings have already exchanged the seeds but to no avail. Another member suggested buying Franchi Seeds. If you buy £100 worth they give 40% discount. Also, they are in huge packets with up to 2000 seeds inside. We are waiting to see how good germination is with Franchi. Colin Campbell has been in touch with Kings with similar issues and they do keep a sample back from each batch of seed so they can test germination, purity of strain etc. Send in the inner foil packet which has the batch number on it if you have a complaint.

Karen Minter (Durham C. C.) reported that a **plot of one of her sites is completely covered in weed suppressant fabric**. Comments concluded that the tenant is lazy. He is also in breach of minimum cultivation rules.

Brancepeth P. C. are not apparently following best practice in their management of allotments under their jurisdiction. Bob Chapman finds their attitude difficult. David will look into this.

8 **AOB** There was no other business

9 Date of Next Meeting

Saturday 16th July, 2pm at Belmont Working Mens' Club.