

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN REGION ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
6th August 2016, 2pm held at Belmont Working Men's Club

Present Vince Scott, Chair, Colin Smith Secretary, John Monkhouse Treasurer, David Banks Regional Rep, Evelyn Leck, Neil Storey (Rossmere), Joy Cockburn (visitor), Derek Lyndsay (Hammersknott), Charlie Fennelly (Northfield A.A, S. Shields), Dave Jarman (No Place) Jane Coulter (Newton Hall, Durham), John Doherty (Individual)

Apologies Bob Hayes, Jeanette Croker, Richard Burton, Tom Wood, Joan Russell

Secretary's Report

Attendance at NAS AGM 4th June Colin, David, Vince and John M attended. There was a meeting with the Standing Orders Committee and Liz Bunting the evening before the meeting. Colin and David attended. It was good to have an opportunity to talk through the recent difficulties and the outcome was positive although the ban on David attending national meetings remains. It was pointed out that out of 182 amendments sent in only four were accepted and that we were only informed of this that evening. The Chair explained that his exceptional powers as outlined in the new rules are there only for use in emergencies, not to give him autocratic control. We were invited to send a deputy Regional Rep to national meetings. During the AGM the chair went straight to a card vote on the acceptance of the new rules without any debate. The result was that the new rules were accepted by the meeting by a large majority. David was disappointed in this breach of normal procedure as well as with the undemocratic powers given to the Chair.

Change of date of this meeting Evelyn questioned why the date was changed. The answer was that the committee hoped that some positive news would have come from Corby by now. It hasn't. Neil said that we should stick to agreed meeting dates. As a result dates for the next 4 meetings were agreed and they are to be submitted to the national's magazine for publication.

Invitation to members of National Management Committee. Evelyn asked what had been done about this which had been suggested at the last meeting. Nothing yet.

Charlie Fennelly Do we want to continue our affiliation to the NSALG? John outlined the situation at NSALG as he understands it. It is by no means perfect but it is the only organisation that is dedicated to looking after allotments. According to our constitution we do not have to affiliate to any organisation but the rebates from NSALG keep us going and enable us to support allotments and our members in the Region.

The NRAA will be putting on a stall at the Stanley Giant Vegetable Show on September 10th and 11th. Evelyn reminded Colin to get publicity leaflets out for NRAA. Colin also to get replacement pull up NSALG banner from head Office.

Treasurer's Report Rebates were paid shockingly late in May 2016. We now have £2236 in our bank account. Proposal from the chair that we accept the treasurer's report proposed Neil Storey, seconded Evelyn Leck – passed.

Regional Rep's Report

David has made a number of site visits in particular to a site where the council refused to give a copy of the lease to an allotment site despite its being 20 years since the original lease was signed. David says that if the original signatories die then there should be a covenant to change the signatures. Incorporation as a limited company offers long term security for both sites and their managers. Signatories on leases could be liable under law for claims against their society. Charlie Fennelly outlined an example of liability for gas bottles held on his site. Had there been an accident then the committee could have been held responsible!

David has also helped with re-homing goats from a site in Easington where they thought they had squatters' rights! The same site was suffering from a serious misunderstanding about ownership of the site. They thought they had a lease but in fact they own the site! David is always happy to help with lease enquiries as it is one of his strong points.

Appointment of a Deputy Regional Rep After some discussion it was agreed that Colin Smith be de-facto Deputy Regional Rep and attend the next two national management meetings in September and November. This to be reviewed at our October meeting. The

essence of feeling in our meeting was that despite feelings running high we must be prepared to compromise and try to reach an amicable settlement with Head Office.

Regional Mentor A replacement regional mentor is being sought following the resignation of Elizabeth Allnutt. This is a Head Office appointment and will not carry automatic admission to NRAA management.

Members' Forum Derek Lyndsay (Hammersknott, Darlington) has to justify to his committee continuing membership of NSALG. They don't use Kings Seeds or Shield and have a vibrant site with a waiting list. The on-going dispute with Head Office has been disheartening but his site has a desire to further the allotments movement by assisting locally in what ways it is able. He urges a swift settlement with the NSALG.

Jane Coulter (Newton Hall, Durham) asked about how sites deal with letting plot holders borrow power tools like rotovators. Charlie Fennelly has a background in H & S and was able to offer sensible advice.

- The Committee is responsible.

- Make sure users receive full instructions in operating the equipment

- Users must sign an agreement to follow instructions

- Petrol must be correctly stored

- The committee are as liable for volunteers as for paid employees

- There was an article in the last magazine

- You must have an H & S statement

Some sites charge a small fee, others don't. Some insist on putting their own fuel in to ensure it is not dirty.

This could be a useful agenda item for the next meeting with guidelines and take away sample agreements etc.

Vince Scott (Birtley, South View), has experienced an infestation of "scale insects". Any solutions? John M suggested "Provida Ultimate Bug Killer" which he has found to be the best available.

Charlie Fennelly's brassicas have experienced a serious attack by the caterpillars of the 'french' moth (Diamondback moth, *Plutella xylostella*). Apparently they are present in much larger numbers than usual this year and both farmers and growers have suffered from devastating attacks.

Dates of future meetings. October 22nd, January 28th, April 22nd and July 22nd. All at 2.00pm at Belmont social Club

There was no other business so the meeting closed.