

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN REGION ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
22nd of July 2017, 2pm held at Belmont Working Men's Club

Present:- Evelyn Leck, John Monkhouse, Terry Taylor, Alan Dixon, Karen Minter, John Hays, Richard Burton, Vince Scott, Alan Bell, Edwin Wheeldon, David Banks, Claire Mitchell-Hird, Emma Beattie, Neal Storey,

1. Welcome from the Chair

2. Apologies: None

3. Minutes: The minutes of the 22nd of April meeting were circulated and accepted. Moved that the minutes be accepted: Neil Storey, Seconded John Hayes, – passed.

4. Matters Arising: None

5. NRAA Presence at local shows: Claire Mitchell-Hird from the Lintz allotment site at Burnopfield gave an overview of the role of an Events Organiser. It is a voluntary position with the primary function of promoting the NRAA and NSALG at local events & fun days to increase awareness of the group and increase membership numbers.

It was confirmed at the National Management Committee (NMC) that the public liability insurance of NSALG would not cover the position of Events Organiser and such a policy may cost NRAA approximately £50 per year to attend an unlimited number of events. John Monkhouse stated if NRAA fund the position no NSALG documents should be displayed at attended events.

Evelyn Leck proposed from the chair that the decision regarding the Event's Organiser position is left until the AGM to allow time to arrange prices for leaflets and insurance etc but Claire was invited to continue to attend the quarterly meetings.

Claire Mitchell-Hird stated that most events for next year will be fully booked prior to the AGM and attendance at Seaham Carnival had already been missed. Due to work commitments she can't guarantee her attendance at the quarterly meetings but if meetings were held midweek she may be available.

Richard Burton stated it was a new position and we don't know if NRAA can afford to finance it without further investigation into potential costs.

Alan Bell stated the position should be implemented on a trial basis and reviewed at Januarys AGM.

Emma Beattie stated the group had nothing to lose by starting the position and she had known nothing about the group until contacting David about some site issues.

Alan Dixon asked if members should be elected to work with Claire or is she going to arrange and attend all events.

Evelyn Leck stated that members may want to take part and attend events and if the Event's Organiser is unable to attend meetings how will updates be provided as she is having difficulty contacting other committee members.

David Banks stated a list of events will be prepared by the NRAA and submitted to the Event's Organiser who will attend and report back.

John Monkhouse stated the NRAA should be sorted out prior to creating new positions.

Neil Storey proposed a vote to be held to establish if an Events Organiser is required. Seconded by David Banks. Passed 10 in favour, 5 against. Claire Mitchell-Hird is therefore co-opted onto the committee as Events Coordinator.

6. Visits to show, festivals etc: The NRAA organise trips to the Harrogate Flower Show which they subsidise for their members. John Hayes asked what subsidy is applied. John Monkhouse stated it is in the region of £100 per trip.

7. Topics for discussion: Vince Scott asked if there were any fool proof methods to prevent theft from sites. A conversation took place regarding solar powered CCTV cameras, installing dummy cameras, wildlife cameras on sale in Aldi and Spennymoor Town Council receiving a grant for improving site security. David Banks stated that a battery operated, 2 camera systems with a hard drive was available from Maplin's for approximately £300.

8. Courses: Suggestions have already been received for organising rodent control, bee keeping, shop keeping, self-management, forming associations and setting up community garden training courses.

David Banks is currently working with Durham County Council to create and deliver courses on forming associations and managing them on a self-managed basis. Karen Minter is to confirm if associations from other areas can pay to attend these.

Evelyn Leck stated NSALG run a course for association secretaries.

NRAA Committee Update

9. Report from the Chair: Evelyn Leck has sent a letter to Colin Smith requesting arrangements to be made to collect the NRAA laptop and mobile phone. John Monkhouse has received correspondence stating the computer will not be returned until Colin receives payment for expenses he incurred whilst in the position of secretary. A copy of the receipt for the lap-top, Colin's expenses claim and his correspondence was circulated to attendees.

The issue was raised at the NSALG management meeting in Corby and Evelyn had been advised not to reimburse any expenses submitted after the NRAA AGM.

Vince Scott stated that Colin had not been present at the AGM and thought he had been re-elected.

10. Treasurers Report: A £30 rebate is due into the account from the Harrogate Flower show which leaves a closing balance of £1368.29.

John Monkhouse stated that NSALG dictate the expenditure of the NRAA and have refused to pay the expenses of Colin Smith and David Banks. As NSALG believe that David controls the NRAA website they are refusing to release the remaining rebate.

Vince Scott confirmed that an independent charitable organisation designs the website however the pages need to be kept up to date by a member of the NRAA committee. David Banks is to send the NRAA committee members the passwords.

11. Change meeting for the appointment of Regional Rep: The nomination form for Regional Representative must be received at Corby no later than the 9th of January. As the NRAA AGM takes place after this date, it was proposed to change the date for the election of the Regional Representative to the October meeting.

All attendees agreed to this proposal.

12. Allotment Advisors Report: Within the past year David Banks has been involved with 31 allotment site issues, 7 local authorities and 10 individual members.

The email addresses of all members are currently being updated. This has increased the mailing list from 441 to 609 members but some are still to clarify and update.

Alan Dixon asked who currently held the position of secretary for the NRAA. Evelyn Leck confirmed that John Doherty volunteered for the position of minute secretary and Karen Minter was nominated as minute secretary if John was absent. The position of secretary is currently vacant. David Banks volunteered to be Secretary. A member stated that if someone was willing to take on the position, why couldn't that happen. The Chair said that this could only happen at the AGM.

Alan Bell asked if the committee was running legally without an elected secretary.

13. Any other business: During the discussion for the Event's Organiser, Richard Burton (Woodcroft allotments, Hartlepool) referred to a letter from February 2016 regarding David Banks suspension. He asked why this had not been revoked and why NRAA was being isolated from NSALG.

David Banks stated he stopped presenting himself as the Regional Representative for the NSALG on the 25th of February 2016.

Vince Scott stated that David was elected by NRAA members and the initial issue regarding NSALG membership has been resolved and now it was down to personality issues that David has not been reinstated.

Evelyn Leck stated she has attended a NSALG meeting with proof of her membership and election to the role of chair. She will continue to represent the NRAA at these meetings.

Neil Storey stated that the NRAA cannot afford to break away from NSALG but why should we promote them if they won't help us.

John Monkhouse stated that NSALG do not want their finances used to promote other organisations.

Edwin Wheeldon (South View, Newfield, Pelton Parish Allotments) raised concerns that NSALG had released details of their subscription to Pelton Parish Councillors. Two letters have been sent requesting information but no reply has been received.

Pelton Parish Council are interfering in the management of the allotment site. Harassment notices have been issued and revoked. The site is leased from Durham County Council by the Parish Council. A new association is to be established on the site and a complaints committee is to be formed.

David Banks stated the Localism Act removed the authority from County Councils to monitor Town and Parish Councils.

David Banks proposed an increase in the NRAA membership fee from 30p to £1. John Monkhouse proposed the fee to stay the same. Vince Scott seconded this. Passed - 8 in favour, 4 against and 1 abstain.

The ADI mentor has been invited to attend the NRAA quarterly meetings.

Hummersknott allotments at Darlington are holding their 100yr anniversary on the 29th of July. A flyer was circulated regarding the event.

Date of next meeting Saturday the 21st of October 2pm Belmont Social Club