

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN REGION ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION
21st October 2017, 2pm held at Belmont Working Men's Club

Present: Evelyn Leck (chair), John Monkhouse (treasurer), Phil Gomersall (national president), Tony Heeson (NSALG chair), Liz Bunting (national chief executive), Vince Scott, Neil Storey, David Banks (Allotments' Advisor), John Doherty, Derek Lindsay, Charlie Fennelly, Doreen Wright, John Hayes, Jeanette Scott, Ron Suckling, N. Jenev? (Rossmere, Hartlepool), Peter Allan, T. Taylor, V P Aby? (Hurworth), Elaine and Bob Russell, Neil Simpson, Glen March, Alan Bell, Wilf Richards, Jasmine Hixson, Nicola Duckworth, Dave Jarman, Allan Jones, Steve Goldsin?, Gordon Langley, Frank Ramshaw, Terry Duffy, Karen Minter, Glen Kelly, Alan Dixon, Eddie Wheeldon, Derek Lyndsay, Mike Brannigan, Claire Mitchell-Hird.

1. Welcome from the Chair

A welcome was extended to all present especially to the President and Chair of the NSALG and to Liz Bunting.

2. Apologies no apologies have been received

3. Minutes The minutes of the 22nd July meeting were circulated and were accepted.

Moved that the minutes be accepted; Proposed Neil Storey: Seconded, John Hayes – passed.

4. Matters Arising There were no matters arising

5 Guest Speakers

Tony Heeson, Chair of NSALG, gave a short address and questions were invited.

The on going dispute with NAS dominated the discussion.

The main issues may be summed up as below.

David Banks is not acceptable as Regional Representative on the national management committee because of the well-documented difficulties with Tunstall Allotments. Whatever the rights or wrongs, the NAS do not wish to risk taking a Regional Representative where there are such difficulties. Mr Heeson stated categorically that David Banks does not represent the NAS in the Northern Region. The NAS resent any implied affiliation or implied position in the NAS which may be contained in NRAA communications. The NAS hope that we will regularize the situation at our next AGM as they don't want the region to suffer.

Regarding the rebates of members' subscriptions the Northern Region needs to be affiliated in order to qualify for them. Admitting members to NRAA who aren't affiliated can imply that non-members are receiving benefits that they are not entitled to. Attendees who come more than once or twice must be expected to join.

Regarding the constitution of the NRAA; it must be changed to demonstrate affiliation to the NAS, if the NRAA wishes to operate as a regional branch of NAS. The meeting was pleased to hear that Head Office is working on a recommended constitution for affiliated regional groups. Draft copies of the constitution were available.

The problem of knowing exactly who is or is not affiliated has been on going for some considerable time. Sites may affiliate but we don't always know exactly who on the site is included in this. Head office is working on this.

Break during which the (free) raffle took place

6 Presentation by Wilf Richards on Abundant Earth

Abundant Earth is a Workers' Cooperative running a smallholding and market garden at Brown Park near Durham City. Organic growing and sustainability feature largely in their work.

They run a vegetable box scheme in the Durham City area as well as running courses including permaculture, Organic Gardening and a variety of crafts.

7 Looking ahead to the AGM in January

Nominations for NSALG Regional Representative

Proposed that Evelyn Leck be nominated John Hayes, Seconded Neil Storey.

Committee Positions for next year.

The chair appealed for members who have the interest, ability and skills to present themselves for election on the regional committee.

Evelyn would like a speaker at the AGM and asked those present for any ideas.

8 Members' Forum

Charlie Fennelly (Northfield, South Shields) informed the meeting that they have taken on the Alzheimer Society group.

Hummersknott (Darlington) celebrated 100 years as an association in the summer and had a fantastic weekend during which £2,700 was taken of which £1,500 was donated to local charities.

Tunstall Allotments have received a 25 year lease from Sunderland City Council.

Regional Mentor, Mike Brannigan introduced himself to the meeting and invited members to take any queries to him and stated that he intends to be present at future meetings. Mike has good provenance in the regional allotment world.

In response to a question regarding encouragement of allotment sites among the many new housing developments, Liz Bunting stated that the NAS is doing this among Local Authorities and Garden Villages and is especially active on a development near Corby.

Tommy's Field, Morpeth. The local authority wishes to place a new roundabout at a junction adjacent to the site which will intrude and take several gardens away. Their secretary, Doreen Wright, stated that the situation is on going. Liz Bunting stated that the NAS is assisting.

Mike Brannigan who attended a meeting at Peterlee received a complaint from a site where the complainant stated that David Banks had intervened on a tenant's behalf in a dispute between the association and the tenant without notifying the association.

Mike also enquired whether there exists a 'Complaints Procedure' within the NAS. Mr Heeson confirmed that one exists.

9 Treasurer's Report John Monkhouse reported a bank balance of £1222.29. The only outgoing has been delegates' expenses to the regional meeting.

10 Any Other Business There was no other business.

11 Date of Next Meeting Saturday 27th January 2018 2pm Belmont Social Club. This will include the AGM

The meeting closed at 4pm.