

## AVAA Annual General Meeting 2018/19 11.05.19

In attendance: Jodi Peacham, Jonnie Brockwell, Ruth Larbey, Brian Rowe, Fiona Beard, Michael, Claire, Jess Clynewood.

### Agenda:

1. Management Committee Report
2. Report from the Farm
3. Report from Wildlife Rep
4. Report from Treasurer (receive accounts)
5. Decide whether an audit needs to take place – take a resolution as necessary
6. Election of committee members
7. AOB

### Main actions in *italics*.

1. Management Committee Report

Ruth reported that the AVAA Committee had met every month, except for Jan and March, and that the Committee had organized a successful produce Show in September (where the BBC came to film proceedings), a lively Christmas Quiz in December, and a well-attended Seed Swap in April. There were also several successful volunteer days organised, at which volunteers trimmed paths and kept them clear; pollarded hazels and created dead hedges along the paths (which will be good for wildlife); and cleared out the allotment sheds.

2. Report from the Farm

The Farm has continued to oversee the site, and Jess reported that it is still a very popular site, with 187 people on the waiting list – there is a wait of just over 3 years.

Over the last year the Farm has worked with field reps to make sure the site is better cultivated and better used, and currently the number of unused plots has been reduced to 4 plots. Jess reported that assigning plots is still ongoing, so they expect to have fewer than 4 plots vacant very soon. This year the Farm collected 100% of the allotment rent.

Jess gave an update on the Farm lease situation. There has been a very long run of negotiations with Bristol City Council, in which the Farm has been aiming to increase the amount of rent retained (i.e. increase to two thirds of the total rent) to allow the Farm to be much more responsive with maintenance.

However, in the end the Farm has decided to end the negotiations, since Bristol City Council would require shifting the liability for the retaining wall that runs along Ashley Hill. The Farm would need to take on full responsibility for the retaining wall, along with the huge financial

risk of having to maintain the wall; for this reason, the Farm have decided to stick with retaining one third of the rent and sending two thirds to the Council.

Jess reported that the one third of rent retained by the Farm just covers the administration of the site, and a very small repair budget of approx. £400.

In the past year, the Farm has spent £20 on the gate to the lower field, and would like to try and make the gate made more accessible.

Q: Jodi asked if it would be worth *raising the difficult situation with funding for maintenance with the city's allotment forum*. Jodi noted that we fall in a gap between parks and green space, and that Jodi has raised similar issues at another allotment forum, so the Bristol City Council Allotments team are to some extent aware.

A: Jess and others agreed.

Q: Jonnie noted that Maggie had been looking into insurance for the allotment events, and that there might be some benefit to get in touch with Bishop Road allotments who do lots of events to find out how they manage this. If BCC insurance could provide some cover for the site, given their receipt of two thirds of the rent, that would be a better situation.

A: *Jodi is going to keep following up on the insurance*, and noted that with Parks insurance there is a training course to become a 'competent person', which may have relevance to our insurance issue. *Jess has emailed the Farm's insurers to find out what their terms are, and the Committee will pick this up via email*. The Farm are currently referring almost all maintenance to Bristol City Council.

Q: Fiona asked do we know how much money BCC is paying towards maintenance of the allotment site?

A: Jess noted: nothing of recent note. Jodi noted that she understood from the Allotments forum meeting that updating the water systems for whole sites was BCC's idea of what maintenance funds should be used for. For example, last year, they paid to install non-return valve in the taps.

Jess noted that Propagation Place didn't trade last summer, and that benches were let out to allotment holders, organised through Jodi, which 'kept alive' the use of the site. Jess thanked all the volunteers for their work on Propagation Place.

The Farm has been successful in their funding bid to Power to Change for 2 years of funding, so the Propagation Place is back up and running. Jess wanted to remind AVAA members that they are entitled to a 25% reduced price on any Propagation Place seedlings.

Q: Johnnie asked: are allotment holders coming?

A: Jess: Yes. And noted that there was a lot of AVAA interest in using polytunnel benches. Jess noted that, the Farm would be willing to support an AVAA application in looking for funding for another poly tunnel.

Q: Fiona noted that Maggie has stepped down as Field Rep for Field 4. There is a question over whether George has decided to take on Field 4 Rep duties. Fiona asked that if anyone would like to volunteer as Field Rep for Field 4 then they should get in touch.

A: Committee to check with George about Field Repping. Jess noted that people can get in touch via the WhatsApp group or at [director@swcityfarm.co.uk](mailto:director@swcityfarm.co.uk)

Jess gave a big thank you from the Farm to the Field Reps and AVAA –for huge amounts of hard work over the year. Jodi thanked the Farm for their support and work, and noted that it was nice to have the Propagation Place back up and running.

Q: Jodi asked which are the Propagation Place plants currently for sale? Brian asked what's the best way for people to buy plants?

A: Jess noted that they don't have capacity to operate as a in-person shop at the moment as it is run by volunteers (although they are looking to get an extra 4 hours per week), but that people can either place an order online or fill out an order form. Placing orders online helps with the Farm's systems.

Q: Jonnie noted that it would be good to *get a box installed on the outside of the polytunnel, with order forms and a post box, so AVAA members can order seedlings even when volunteers are not there* (volunteers are usually there Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday).

A: Jess agreed.

Q: Jodi asked whether the polytunnel will also be open for sales at AVAA's second Saturday of the month events?

A: Jess replied yes.

### 3. Wildlife Report

Jodi read from the Wildlife Report submitted by Wildlife Rep Maggie, copied below.

#### **Wildlife Report 2019**

The long hot summer will definitely have had an impact on the wildlife on our site, but we do not have the data to say exactly what.

From Maggie's observations:

**The Winners:** Butterflies; Dragonflies; Lizards

**The Losers:** Slugs – who either couldn't breed or whose eggs dried up (far fewer noted on Maggie's plot this year); those Caterpillars whose food plants were desiccated (especially those relying on grasses – e.g. Ringlets, Meadow Browns etc.). And possibly the Badgers, who depend on earthworms and slugs for a good part of their diet.

## Autumn Pond Project

We have had 3 students on site undertaking a major restoration of the large overgrown Pond on Field 4, which was suffering from an imbalance of silt and anaerobic bacteria (i.e. smelly and without enough oxygen.)

### Before



### After – nearly there....



## Plastic

Good progress has been made on keeping plastic to a minimum on site, but there is still too much fraying plastic sheeting, and plastic that is now fragmenting. Please **REMOVE any plastic on your plot when you see it start to decay, and please think twice before bringing plastic items onto your plot – can you use cardboard or other materials instead?**

## Bonfires

A pile of wood and decaying weeds is good for wildlife, a smoky bonfire less so, and not good for humans at all! The innovation this year has been dead hedging when cutting back along paths and plot edges. These gently decay, provide useful habitat for beetles etc. and avoid a bonfire.

(N.B. we could identify other places suitable for dead hedging on the site)



Instead of burning, try either drowning or drying out bind-weed, couch grass etc. Another idea is to identify a suitable place Green Waste Dump (s) on each Field where plot holders can take material not suitable for their compost bins.

#### 4. Report from Treasurer (members receive accounts)

Brian reported back on the year's financial statements, and noted that we started the year with £573, which we haven't spent, and also gathered £623 from AVAA membership fees.

The paperwork has all been submitted to update the signatories of the accounts to current Committee members.

There is also a £2000 grant from the Tesco Groundworks charity, which the Committee is planning to spend in the coming year to renovate the AVAA sheds and make them into a communal space. So far, there have been small outgoings to Jonnie for the materials used to knock through one of the walls of the sheds, to open it up and make it into a more usable space – although Jonnie donated his time for free. The Committee have agreed what to spend the rest on, for example, installing a window for natural light, improving the very dodgy electrics and installing more power sockets and lights.

The AVAA accounts still include a £930 grant from the Men's Sheds charity, and Brian has established via email with them that we are still able to use this money to set up a small workshop in the shed area, so work to set this up will go ahead in the next year.

The members voted unanimously to accept the accounts

*Q: Jonnie noted that Café Connect used to run a Repair Café and suggested that AVAA Committee might get in touch with the people who organised it to see if they'd like to use the AVAA sheds as a venue to continue this work.*

Brian reported that all events that AVAA runs are cost neutral, as the resources are covered by donations from AVAA members and Committee members, and that we therefore have some funds from membership that should be spent for the welfare, betterment and cooperation of the allotment site. Brian noted that one idea for this was to spend some money on the doors and exterior lighting.

*Q: Jonnie asked whether we should pay for the use of the Connexions Centre, as we currently don't.*

*Q: Jess noted that one idea was to maintain the exterior space of the sheds as a social space rather than a car park, so it would be possible to add some elements (e.g. planters) to make it more obvious that it is a social space. Jess noted that there may be more break ins, the more inviting the space becomes – and that there has been a recent spate of break ins, including at Boiling Wells, so an exterior sensor light (on sheds and on Propagation Place) may be a sensible purchase.*

*A: Jonnie agreed to scope out sensor lights with the electrician.*

*Q: Ruth asked: is there anything else that is a priority to spend membership fees on?*

A: Fiona noted that people can climb the wall quite easily at end of field 6, and that there have been recent break ins to sheds. She proposed that fencing could be built up to help discourage people from entering the field. Jonnie proposed that, similarly to a section on Ashley Hill, *we could add upright steel poles with steel cable between so climbing plants can grow over them to act as fencing*. Fiona and all agreed this would be a valid use of members fees given tight budgets elsewhere.

Jess noted that the *Farm can also pull together the list of issues that have been highlighted via them, and share with AVAA Committee*, so both sides can work out the top priorities for spending both the AVAA membership fees and the £400 maintenance fund that the Farm holds.

Fiona suggested that the Field Reps can also consider the list of priorities against what they have heard from members on their fields.

#### 5. Audit

The members voted unanimously to pass the following resolution:

"In accordance with section 84 of the Co-operative and Community Societies Act, the Committee proposes that in view of the association's small turnover and modest financial commitments the requirement to audit the 2017-2018 accounts of the association be disapplied."

#### 6. Election of Committee members

The current Management Committee members were highlighted, and it was made clear that this was an opportunity for anyone to stand to become a Committee member.

All Committee members present (Ruth Larbey, Jodi Pecham, Jonnie Brockwell, Brian Rowe) stood down. All voted in favour of re-electing the current Committee Members.

It was noted that, officially, it is a separate duty to nominate roles within the Committee, and that there is also the opportunity for AVAA Members to come along to Committee meetings throughout the year, to find out how the Committee works and if they'd like to join.

#### 7. AOB

Q: Jodi asked: do we want to advertise Committee Meetings a bit more?

A: Brian noted that the routine events were becoming more easy to organize, and suggested that at the next committee meeting we might advertise a particular, future committee meeting for AVAA members to have the opportunity to feed in about what we spend members fees on.

It was decided that we could *share about the Committee meetings in the newsletters; that we should share about the need for a new Field Rep via the newsletter and facebook, and that we should share the map of the site at the same time.*

Q: Jess asked if it would be better to have people as field reps who do not have an allotment in that field.

A: Jonnie suggested that it is better to know who your field rep is – and noted that he gets notes pinned on his shed because people know where to find him. Fiona noted there were pros and cons.

Q: Jodi noted that AVAA and the Farm are now part of Bristol's Get Growing Garden Trail, and feature in their programme. She asked Jess if AVAA can coincide an activity with the Farm's guided walk.

A: Jess asked Jodi to talk to Allie or Esme about this.  
*It was decided to share this news in the newsletter.*

Q: Fiona proposed having a free excess produce table somewhere on the site – so people can share or swap produce.

A: Others supported this action. Jess noted that in the new Farm shop they will be selling farm's excess produce, so if AVAA members would like to donate their excess produce, it would be gratefully received.

Q: Jodi asked: is the Farm produce stall run via donations?

A: Jess answered that they were working on a donations basis at the moment and are working out the final structure. Jess noted that she thinks allotmenters should be able to place their excess produce on the shop Kiosk, and that *she will confirm and share in the AVAA newsletter in due course.*

It was noted that on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb society are coming for a visit to the site, and that volunteers would be appreciated to show them around the site.

//End of meeting//

