

AVAA Annual General Meeting 14th September 2020

Attending: Brian, Jonny, Maggie, Jodi, Kat, Sarah, Rachel, Chikin, Maura, Liz, Dave, Ian, Chris, Ruth, Ian.

AGM Minutes

1. A round of introductions.
2. Maggie presented the Wildlife Report 2020 – also attached to these minutes in the appendix. Essential habitat is being provided and protected on the site. Plastic pollution is still an issue on the site. Living on site, there are rats, voles, mice, badgers and bats; newts, (smooth and palmate), frogs, and slow-worms, (though few toads); around 16 butterfly species, many dragonflies and damsel flies, Shield Bugs, Rose Chafers, Hoverflies, Grasshoppers and Crickets, and of course many bee and bumble bee species.

Comments: about roe deer, land lizards and lesser spotted woodpeckers nearby.

Question: are new allotmenters receiving the wildlife sheet? Answer: yes, I think so.

3. Brian presented the balance sheet and accounts. Since the AGM this year is taking place in September, there were a year and a half's worth of statements to present. We got a double amount of membership fees, since there was a skipped payment for these in the previous year. Some key things that have been purchased this year were:
 - a) Electrical installation for the sheds (paid half/half with the Propagation Place)
 - b) Materials to upgrade the sheds (Jonny donated his labour for free)
 - c) Greenhouse base and blocks – for the allotment site next door (these may be bought back from the Committee if the plot is released next year).
 - d) Jodi arranged a skip.
 - e) Food supplies for volunteer days.
 - f) Committee plot

We have now spent most of the amount of grant funding received from Tesco Groundworks grant on sheds upgrade. However, we still don't have access to the HSBC bank account (in this bank account is the money for the Men's Sheds grant, which we don't have access to yet). Brian has sent off a form to HSBC, to obtain access, but has not had any reply yet.

Question: What are the sheds going to be used for?

Answer: intended as an allotment community space – could be used for running events or workshops, or as a dry space for the Produce Show etc. We are intending

to enable the sheds to be used as workshop space with workbenches, for e.g., for bird-box making sessions. There are also ideas around a repair café, and we could lease them out to the Farm if they want to have a making and working group. There is also a precedent of having a shop where bulk supplies can be bought – this was attempted before but fizzled out – but by creating the infrastructure and reducing the barriers it may again become possible.

Question: Where are the sheds?

Answer: Opposite the polytunnel in the bottom yard.

4. Attendees voted in favour of having no Auditor for the accounts this year. There has been less cause to spend money this year than on previous years because of lockdown (we have voted not to have an Auditor for all previous years after the Farm took over management of the site).
5. Attendees considered the election of the Management Committee members.
 - Brian is standing down as treasurer this year and presented an overview of the role.
 - Jodi stood down and stood for re-election as Chair. Unanimous re-election by members present.
 - Jonny stood down and stood for re-election to the Management Committee. Unanimous re-election.
 - Ruth stood down and stood for re-election as Secretary. Unanimous re-election.
 - Rachel stood forward for the position of treasurer. Unanimous election to the role of treasurer. Welcome Rachel!
6. Expected application of profits going forward. Discussion of putting a window in the AVAA sheds to let light in, and also installing a simple kitchen space. Whether or not the Committee continues to manage and pay for the Committee Plot over the next year will be discussed at the next AGM in May.
7. AOB
 - a) Security issues.

Q: There seem to have been a couple of messages about veg being stolen on Facebook. Does this tend to be a problem on the site?

A: Because of a few report last year, there was some work done on it at the beginning of the year. For example, all lock codes were changed (because it seemed there were many people who had the site code, who did not necessarily have allotments on the site).

A few members commented that they had not had anything pinched; or others had experience of having one small apple tree stolen in over

30 years of allotmenting on the site. One member had experience of her pumpkins being stolen last year.

Comment that last summer seemed much worse, especially on the tip field at the bottom of the site. It seems mostly about people closing the gate. Comment that it is a good idea not to keep anything of value in your shed, and don't lock the sheds as it could encourage people to break the lock.

Q: Are Propagation Place volunteers aware of how important it is to close the gates?

A: Yes, they are given lots of information and are very security conscious (as they actually have a lot to lose). They also tend to use the smaller gate leading from the Farm.

Q; Keypads can be difficult with poor eyesight, and gates can be stiff for people with arthritic hands.

A: Jonny actually upgraded the lock on the main gates to help with this, so now it is less stiff – and welded an angle bracket to help with gate opening.

Q: Any security improvements or upgrades to the gates especially leading up to field 4 and 5?

A: There are plans to redevelop the area around the gate to Field 4 and 5 in the next few months – and security upgrades will happen at the same time.

Comment: The Farm has been doing a great job getting the whole site let out – as this means there is more community surveillance of the site, and more likely plot holders will be there to keep an eye on things.

b) Practical events.

Some people are too busy to attend the social events, and would prefer Committee activities that are oriented around something practical.

Suggestion that the sheds could be used for of the shed for tool sharpening – seen as a really good idea.

Comment that it would be good to have a demonstration of how to do it, with the tools available for people to do it themselves – or otherwise have someone to come down and do it for allotmenters for a small fee.

c) Audit of fruit trees.

There is an audit of fruit trees ongoing – the Committee is planning to map these to manage disease and help with harvests. Comment that

fruit tree pruning workshops would be useful, and we could ask Tim Foster to come and share some information.

8. Next AGM meeting. Agreed that we would aim to have the next AGM in May 2021 as per the usual yearly timing.
9. End of meeting.

Appendix: Wildlife Report 2020.

Ashley Vale Allotments Association AGM 2020

Wild Life Report 2020

Whilst other open spaces breathed easy, at least at the start of the great Lockdown, AVAA saw a huge increase in activity, with 100% lettings, and more plot holders spending more time on their plots than ever before. That's been a huge increase in growing, but has that been a benefit for our Wildlife?

On the whole, I think YES! Most AVAA growers are pretty aware and most are keen on organic growing. And at a time when the decline in Insect numbers and Insect species is causing real concern globally, I like to think that we are doing our bit to provide a safe and diverse urban environment. The Farm has continued to issue the Wildlife Info Sheet to newcomers, and if the number of new ponds is anything to go by, it appears that people are pretty keen to safeguard the wild things we share our plots with.

(And, of course, not all Plots have been worked as some plot holders were shielding, therefore there are still some valuable wild areas on the site).

We have not had any major projects this year, in part because COVID stopped the usual UWE student placements, however:

Keeping the existing hedges trimmed has encouraged them to thicken up, providing excellent cover for songbird nests, including coal tits, and continuing to leave Field boundaries *uncultivated* also provides essential habitat.

I have continued to post photos on Fb to help plot-holders identify beneficial insects, and to draw attention to the range of invertebrates on site.

We continue to encourage building dead hedges from material that might otherwise be burnt, (and increase air pollution), and we would like all Plot Holders to think seriously about reducing the amount of plastic pollution in the soil – a growing problem as plastic sheeting, old flower pots, etc breakdown, and disintegrate. Please keep a bag at your side as you work, and collect up and REMOVE all those little bits of plastic that make their way here via compost, leaf mould etc.

We are taking part in a National Mammal Survey over the Autumn.

Matt Brierley, from Butterfly Conservation is making a short film about the Butterfly Transect that crosses the site, which should be available in 2021.

There was a good number of Small Tortoiseshell caterpillar hatchings on Field 6, but alas little sign that they survived to adulthood – (this is a species under serious decline nationally due to parasitic flies).

There are signs of ash dieback on the woods along the railway, but this is still in check. Roe Deer have been spotted on both Narrowways, and Lynmouth Rd Allotments, so it's only a matter of time before we have evidence of their presence at AVAA.

The Ravens nested again at the Climbing Centre, and could be seen, and heard, regularly overhead, although I for one have not noticed the Sparrow Hawks this year, nor for that matter seen foxes very often.

Otherwise it is possible to regularly see: rats, voles, mice, badgers and bats; newts, (smooth and palmate), frogs, and slow-worms, (though few toads); around 16 butterfly species, many dragonflies and damsel flies, Shield Bugs, Rose Chafers, Hoverflies, Grasshoppers and Crickets, and of course many bee and bumble bee species. There are many many other living things on site, and all reports are welcome!

Maggie Moss – AVAA Wildlife Rep