

Minutes of the TGAA Committee meeting held at 10.30 am on Tuesday 26th July 2016 at 23 Chalfont Road, Oxford.

Present: Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil MacLennan (deputy chairman); Virginia Wallis (secretary and lettings secretary); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Jonathan Clark (website and machinery); Pete Jarvis (pest control); Tim Halliday (shop).

Apologies: Michael Wheale (compost); Roger Mumby-Croft (lettings secretary).

1 Matters arising

Progress of bridge works and implications for access

Demolition of the existing footbridge is now scheduled to take place sometime between the 5th and 20th August 2016 when there will be half a day of no access to the allotments via the level crossing. It is hoped that the new bridge will be installed on the 16th September 2016.

Allotment signage VW has ordered the new allotment site signs from the City Council Parks' Department and has put in a request for one of them to be made into a private car park sign. JC has asked Stuart Fitzsimmons about getting a car park sign made at the council's expense but has not heard back from him.

Pollarding of perimeter trees NM has been in touch with Ben Downing at the council who has said that the pollarding work will take place at the end of August when the nesting season is legally over.

New mower It was agreed that NM's suggestion of buying a wider-than-standard self-propelled mower was a good idea but that a 1m-wide mower – as originally proposed – would be too heavy and hard to manoeuvre. It was also agreed that the new mower would be made available to TGAA members and that it would be a slightly wider replacement for the current Massport mower which is on its last legs. NM and JC agreed to investigate the options and have since bought a Honda Izy HRG 536VK for £649. This model is a self-propelled variable-speed mower with 53cm blade, grass bag and mulching system.

2 Farm-yard manure policy

RC had been in touch with the Environment Agency (EA) regarding the use of farm-yard manure (FYM) on the allotment site. The EA advice was that, although there are no closed periods for the use of FYM as there are for inorganic/chemical or bagged fertilisers, it would be wise to advise plot holders of best practice in the use of FYM. This includes spreading FYM in spring rather than autumn, changing the location of the FYM pile each year and growing green manures to reduce the likelihood of leaching by winter rains. In the light of EA advice, it was agreed that we would not introduce the previously-proposed ban on manure deliveries between 31st August and the end of December. However, we should try to control manure deliveries when the risk of paths being churned up was high.

Action RC to consult with expert-in-the-field and plot holder, Dick Mayon-White and to produce best practice guidelines for the autumn newsletter and website covering FYM, compost, inorganic fertiliser such as Growmore and green manures. RC also to raise the FYM issue with Wendy Skinner Smith, Chair of the ODFAA and to attend the ODFAA meeting at 7.00 on Tuesday 20th September 2016.

3 Widening of paths

After much discussion about the minimal gains of widening the eastern path compared with the significant disruption to plots and loss of land by plot holders, the issue of widening the eastern

path was put to the vote. The majority was in favour of the status quo and so not undertaking work to widen the path. It was also agreed that the western path would not be widened largely because the already undersized plots would have to be made substantially smaller. Members with plots by the eastern path can have manure delivered to the area by the old pond and can ask for help moving it from a committee member and the ride-on mower and trailer as can plot holders with plots on the western path

Action TonyH to email the plot holders who would have been affected by path widening to inform them of the committee's decision. (Done.)

4 Network Rail funding of pond path and tree moving

In the light of the decisions not to widen the eastern and western paths, it was agreed that widening the pond path to allow tractor access was no longer necessary and consequently nor was there a need to move the fruit trees near the old pond. Network Rail (NR) had agreed to pay for this work which was estimated to cost £350 so we need to find other work which NR could fund. This could be making good the ground after the building of the new ramp or paying for trees to screen the ramp if this was thought necessary after the ramp is in place.

5 The lock on the railway gate

The replacement padlock on the railway gate is too insubstantial and the numbers are too small.

Action JC to get in touch with Alan Durham at NR about getting a better lock.

6 AOB

Slug pellets The advice from the EA also included a warning against the use of slug pellets containing methaldehyde as it cannot be removed from water. Products such as SluXX which contains ferric phosphate rather than methaldehyde are preferable.

Action TimH to check the chemical content of the slug pellets on sale in the allotment shop.

Communal compost It was suggested that plot holders should be encouraged to add their compostable material direct to the communal compost heaps rather than leaving it in the loading bays but in the absence of MW, no final decision was agreed.

Polytunnel Peter Robinson was given the go-ahead to put a polytunnel on plot 94w.

The meeting ended at 11.55