

Minutes of the TGAA Committee meeting held at 11.00 on Tuesday 18th June 2019 at 23 Chalfont Road, Oxford.

Present: Tony Hollander (chairman); Neil MacLennan (deputy chairman); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Virginia Wallis (secretary and lettings secretary); Chris Beckett (shop); Jonathan Clark (website and machinery); Michael Wheale (compost).

Apologies: Roger Mumby-Croft (lettings secretary).

Matters arising

Further to the action points completed since the last committee meeting on 19th February 2019:

- VW has still yet to update the TGAA rules on the shed policy and fruit-tree planting;
- CB has yet to put up a notice with his mobile number on it so that purchasers of ground cover can have any potentially fraying edges blow- torched;
- VW to go to the next ODFAA meeting in the town hall;
- the next TGAA committee meeting will be held at 11.00 on Tuesday 17th October 2019.

Oxford City Council (OCC) allotments tenancy agreement

Before the meeting, Samantha Perkins of OCC had sent RC (who attended the last ODFAA meeting) a draft of a the new allotments tenancy agreement and a draft plan. Although VW had given Stuart Fitzsimmons details of the four trustees elected at the 2010 AGM in a letter in 2011, NMc was not listed as a trustee in the draft agreement. It was also not clear why the new agreement had a three-year term nor how it related to the new leases due to be drawn up in September 2021.

Action: VW to ask Samantha to remove Pete Jarvis as trustee and replace him with NMc (done) and seek clarification. It transpires that the draft agreement is a new lease and the reason it is set to expire on 29 September 2021 is because that's when the current leases of all the other allotment associations in the city are up for renewal. The council wants to get us back in line with all the other associations. So come September 2021, everyone will be granted new long-term leases (probably 21-year) all at the same time. It would appear that we currently don't have a lease because of the erstwhile access over Network Rail's railway lines. Now that's been taken away from us, we don't have issues with the access routes which can now be shown (in blue) on the draft plan.

Resignation of Peter Jarvis and pest control

Peter Jarvis has resigned from the committee following his stroke. Thanks were expressed for his contribution both to the committee and to pest control. Now that rat poison – and potentially rabbit boxes – is now easily accessible in the shop, it was felt that there was no need to appoint a replacement pest-control officer.

Action: CB to ask Carol Jarvis if she would like the rabbit boxes moved to the shop so that they can be distributed from there.

Access path erosion

Heavy rain has meant that the access path now has ruts in it which need to be dealt with by Network Rail.

Action: TH to get in touch with John Howson to encourage them to put pressure on Network Rail (done). John Howson has passed the path problem to Mike Scott of OCC's property department who has raised the issue with Network Rail. NMc to report the problem using the 'Fix my street' facility provided by OCC (done).

Plot inspection outcomes

Action: NMc to talk to Margi about Jim Campbell's plot so that it can be re-let (done). RM to ask Martin Carr to give up a half plot which is not being cultivated (although it is covered over). This would leave Martin with two and a half plots. The site of the former bee-friendly garden to be left to grow as a wild flower meadow and mowed in the autumn.

Tim Halliday bench and commemoration service

Action: VW to ask Carolyn Halliday if she would like details of Tim's commemoration service at New College chapel sent to all TGAA members (done). TH to let her know that the

committee is more than happy for a bench in Tim's memory to be placed near the old pond where there are newts (done).

ODFAA centenary

Publication of the history of Oxford allotment associations – to which we contributed – to mark the centenary of ODFAA – is imminent. Wendy Skinner-Smith is retiring as chairman of ODFAA.

Tree pollarding

Despite TH writing to Julian Cooper (copy Stuart Fitzsimmons) there has no progress in getting the northern trees pollarded.

Action: TH to chase Julian Cooper (done). Julian claims that TGAA is head of the list for this year's pollarding and will be doing the boundary with Burgess Field in the autumn.

Water plans update

Thanks to NMc for circulating the notes of the first Allotment Water Project Meeting held on 24th May 2019 (attached). Several options have been ruled out but there are still lots of issues to address and other options to explore. It was noted that any system of water provision should not encourage over use of water.

Action: VW to send NMc email about grants from OCC (done).

AOB

Skip policy Skips for pre-sorted rubbish are a lot cheaper than those for all sorts of rubbish but not a practical solution for the allotment site. Because of the rising cost we will only have skips twice a year with the next being in October.

Wells It was agreed that if the weather is suitable at the end of August, David Haynes would be engaged to dig new wells and/or renovate those in need of attention. **Action:** MW and TH to identify suitable candidates for renovation and possible sites for new wells.

Honda mowers It was agreed that it was not necessary to buy a third mower despite the fact that both Honda mowers had been out of action at the same time earlier in the year.

The meeting ended at 12.30

Notes of the first Allotment Water Project Meeting, 24.5.2019.

Present: Chris Beckett, Chris Goodall, Martin Carr, Mikal Mast, Neil MacLennan, Robin Nicholas.

Apologies: Joe Lee, Mike Godley.

We are a self-appointed group of Trap Grounds allotment members who have been asked to explore improving the water supply for growing plants on the allotments. The idea came out of a committee meeting after last summer's long hot & dry weather. At this year's AGM members unanimously agreed we should explore how best to provide a reliable water supply & approved raising funds to finance it. We are to report back to the members at next year's AGM with a view to carrying the work next summer.

At least 3 members of the group have hand-dug wells on their plots. 2 have hand-bored boreholes. 1 has sunk a pipe well. 3 have set up solar powered batteries & pumps to extract water. We have engineering, physics, management & fundraising skills in the group.

Considered & rejected

We have rejected using **mains water** as it would be prohibitively expensive to get piped water to the allotments & we would have to pay a recurring metered charge.

Similarly we have rejected getting **mains electricity** from the National Grid.

We have rejected wind power because of the unreliability of wind on the allotments.

We have rejected **multiple professionally drilled boreholes with hand pumps** because of the cost of drilling so many wells & the need to fetch & carry water considerable distances.

Borehole

We plan to sink just one 200mm borehole to extract water from the aquifer that lies under the allotments. The borehole will be professionally drilled 6-8 metres through the water containing gravel & sand layer into the underlying clay. We cannot know how much water that borehole will deliver & at what rate. It is possible we will have to sink 2 boreholes.

The ideal position for the borehole for ease of distributing water would be as near the centre of the allotment site as possible but it could be located anywhere on the site. Positioning it near the Port Meadow gate would be ideal for ease of installing & maintaining equipment. The 2 pond areas have advantages but it would be a pity to lose them & probably preferable to take over an allotment site, ideally when it becomes vacant. Flooding is a potential problem because of the associated electrical gear but any shed or shipping container, or at least the vulnerable equipment inside it could be raised 50cm. How do we get a heavy container to house ancillary equipment to the site of the bore hole?

Action. Everyone to consider where borehole should be located

Pumped water distribution

The most attractive water distribution system would be to have a second electric pump (12v or 24v brushless) pumping water round a ring main. This could deliver water at enough pressure to operate hoses all over the site. Water could be stored in linked recycled 1000 litre IBC containers at ground level

Action. CB & RN to consider.

Gravity Water Distribution

The gravity system Chris & I looked at has a single large 5000 litre water tank raised 4-5 metres off the ground. A 5000 litre tank would be expensive. 5000 litres of water weighing 5 tonnes needs substantial foundations. Our reclaimed Edwardian tip over sand & gravel does not make a very solid foundation. A smaller raised tank could supply small lower but still elevated peripheral tanks, with the aim of 1 small tank for every 4 plots. Botley Meadow's system runs out of water towards the end of the piping but they do not have a ring main & are using narrower diameter pipes than 32mm we are considering.

Action. MG & DL. to consider.

Ring Main Piping

CB & MG have already circulated possible ring main diagrams. It seems logical for pipes to be buried under the main pathways with branch pipes going down smaller paths. They would have to be buried 15-25cm. 32mm diameter pipes should be wide enough & much cheaper than wider pipes. The configuration of the pipes will partly depend on whether we have pumped or gravity distribution & the set up of the gravity system. Water will ideally be accessed by taps but we could use troughs with ball-cock valves. It is hoped that it will be possible to attach hosepipes to the taps to top up water butts on individual plots & to run irrigation systems.

A large part of the cost of any system will be a buried ring main. We could reduce the cost by laying, connecting & filling in the trenches ourselves.

We should also consider running pipes on the surface of plots except where they have to cross paths. This would reduce costs greatly but having pipes on the surface would be inconvenient & they would be prone to accidental damage & UV degradation. Using hosepipes for the ring main would reduce costs further.

Action. CB & MG to consider

Pollution of ground water

The allotments lie over an old Edwardian rubbish tip. Pollution of the soil with heavy metals was looked into in the 1990s. Heavy metal levels were found to be raised but not dangerously so. We were advised to wash all vegetables, especially leafy green ones & to peel root vegetables.

Ground water was not found to be contaminated. Water from a bore hole, being extracted at a deeper level is likely to be cleaner, especially as there is flow in the aquifer.

We need to check if toxins leach into the the northern boundary of the plots from the more modern tip under Burgess Field

Action. NM to research.

Amount of water needed to grow crops & equity of water distribution

Plot holders vary greatly in their use of water. Some plots are drier than others. What is the optimum amount of water needed to grow different crops? How do we ensure equity of water use? Should there be a charge for using hoses for irrigation?

Action. MC, JL & CG to research & consider

Costs

There is little point in going into detailed costs until we have decided which system we are going to use. However relative costs may determine which system we decide to adopt.

Action. CB

Fund-raising

Oxford City Council, our landlord, has in the past given grants for improving water supplies on the allotments. They have recently stopped this with the new leases coming in. We may be eligible for grants from various sources

Action. MC & MM to explore

Date of next meeting

We plan to meet again in 1 month. MM offered to send a Doodle poll.

Action. MM