

Minutes of the TGAA Committee meeting held at 10.30 am on Tuesday 14th June 2016 at 23 Chalfont Road, Oxford.

Present: Tony Hollander (chairman); Virginia Wallis (secretary and lettings secretary); Bob Crabtree (treasurer); Jonathan Clark (website and machinery); Tim Halliday (shop).

Apologies: Neil MacLennan (deputy chairman); Pete Jarvis (pest control); Michael Wheale (compost); Roger Mumby-Croft (lettings secretary).

1 Matters arising

Bee garden One of the raised beds in the bee garden has been planted up with bee-friendly perennials. Many thanks to Clare Hollander for ordering the plants and organising the planting session.

Plot inspection The site was generally in good condition and only three warning letters had to be issued.

Wells There are enough plastic barrels for two wells. As well as arranging to have these dug, JC suggested also creating bore holes with a pump system. JC to consult the Shakespeare's on the best design.

2 Widening the eastern path

TonyH reported that all the plot holders along the eastern path had agreed to the widening of the path to allow manure deliveries to take place although not all plot holders were keen on the idea. It was generally felt that widening the path wasn't strictly necessary. RC pointed out that because our site is in a nitrate-sensitive zone which leaches into the Thames, and because manure is a nitrate pollutant, we should adopt the same rules that apply to farmers in nitrate sensitive areas. These say that farmers are not allowed to spread manure between 1 August and 31 December in order to reduce nitrate pollution. It was suggested that we should ban manure deliveries between those dates and that we should consider using green manures rather than horse manure – although when plants are growing there's a lower risk of nitrate leaching. It was largely agreed that it was too late in the season to introduce a manure-delivery ban this year but that the use of manure on the allotment site should be raised at the AGM. It was also agreed that pending further expert advice on the use of manure, widening the eastern path would not go ahead.

Action RC to contact Natural England and/or the Environment Agency and write something for the autumn newsletter. RC also to attend the next O&DFAA meeting to alert other allotment sites across the city of the problem of using manure.

3 Widening the western path

As the widening of the western path would also be to facilitate manure deliveries, it was agreed to postpone any decision until we had the necessary information on manure use. It was also noted that some parts of the western path are quite boggy and so unsuitable for large tractors.

4 Progress of bridge works and implications for access

TonyH and JC had met with Network Rail (NR) to discuss the new access to the allotments which will be via a green plastic bridge on to ramps which will come on to the allotment site slightly east of the old pond. There will be two security gates one at each end of the plastic bridge. We have told NR that we want the same kind of locks on the gates that we already have and that the lock from the ex-level-crossing gate can be reused. Because there will be no room for tractor access

once the new ramps are in place, NR has agreed to pay to establish and strengthen a new path on the north side of the pond and to fund moving the fruit trees from beside plot 50 to between the ramp and the south side of the pond. NR will organise the fencing contractor but will consult with us as to the kind of fence that will be installed. At some point NR will pay us £2,000 in compensation for their taking city council land from our eastern boundary. We have agreed that NR can gain access to our site via the level crossing. We will also ask NR to add a set of steps next the ramp so that rather than going left down the ramp, plot holders can turn right down the steps. Demolition of the existing footbridge will take place on 9th and 10th of July. The new bridge will be installed between 30th July and 3rd August and our new plastic bridge will be in place by September.

Action JC to add our agreements with NR to the planning application comments so that they are made public. TonyH to get quotes for path-hardening and tree moving and to put request for steps to NR.

5 Allotment signage

The City Council Parks' Department has developed new signs for all allotment sites. It was agreed that we would take the free A3 sign and order two A2 signs with fixings. We also need to ask for a separate car park sign as it may be possible to adapt the standard allotment sign to that purpose.

Action VW to order the new signs. JC to ask Stuart Fitzsimmons about getting car park sign made at the council's expense.

6 AGM and plant sale dates

The AGM will take place on Tuesday 28th March 2017 and the St Margaret's Institute has been booked for the 13th and 14th May 2017 for the plant sale.

7 Pollarding of perimeter trees

NM had requested that pollarding of the perimeter trees was added to the agenda and volunteered to chase the council if it was felt to be appropriate. It was agreed that we should follow up the council's promise to undertake a rolling five-year programme of pollarding with thanks to NM for offering to do so.

8 AOB

Shop TimH plans to stop stocking 4m-wide ground cover but will introduce 2m-wide ground cover instead.

Mower NM has suggested buying a 1m-wide self-propelled mower.

The meeting ended at 12.10