

Bath & North East Somerset Allotments Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

19th November 2024, 7pm at the Museum of Bath at Work

Attendees: 39 people attended

Members (Site) - 36:

Graham Bachmann (Canal Gardens)	Erica Draisey (Bloomfield)	Charlie Love (LCE)	Nikki Ruck (Larkhall)
Tim Baines (LCW)	Michael Duckett (Claremont)	Angela Lucas (Larkhall)	Urszula Saganowska (LCW)
Andrew Baker (Monksdale)	Chris Handley (Abbey View)	Jon Lucas (Monksdale)	Hilary Sheppard (Corston View)
Jenny Bakhoff (KGR)	Maria Humphries (Monksdale)	Charles MacCall (Canal Gardens)	Carol Stone (Foxhill)
Guy Bardoe (Mendip Gardens)	Louise Jones-Robinson (Fairfield Valley)	Nadia MacCall (Canal Gardens)	Jane Strachan (Abbey View)
Diana Barlow (Combe Down)	Brenda King (LCW)	Janet Olechno (Monksdale)	Alison Temple-Smith (Larkhall)
Amanda Boston (Hampton Row)	Jim Lee (LCE)	Chris Pearce (Combe Down)	Jon Walker (Larkhall)
Jacqueline Burrows (Combe Down)	Michael Lee (St Stephens)	Jill Peel (KGR)	Ryan Walsh (Abbey View)
Chris Dawson (St Stephens)	Anne Love (LCE)	Kerry Rogers (Moorfields)	Helen Woodley (Bloomfield)

Guests - 3: Willem Ball (Roots), Kate Roberts (Roots), Edyta Jaworska (Guest speaker)

Please read in conjunction with the AGM pack which is available on the Associations website <https://banes-allotments.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/BAA-AGM-2024.pdf>.

Meeting opened and chaired by Erica Draisey, Chair and Bloomfield tenant and site representative (ED).

Erica thanked everyone for attending and noted that the AGM would be managed to allow time for the speaker. Erica referred to her Annual Review in the AGM pack and in addition noted the following key topics that the Association are involved in.

- **Combe Down.** Erica introduced Chris Pearce (Combe Down tenant and site representative, CP) who provided an update on the status of the Combe Down site.
 - The 64 plot site will close on the 31st October 2025 and the Council then have one month to put it back to a state that meets the landowner requirements. The Combe Down tenants are devastated, they do have a gripe with the Council who have taken too long before taking any action although it is noted that they are now looking for alternative sites. With support from the Allotment Association various working groups were put together, The Friends of Combe Down Allotments group was formed and the allotment site made an Asset of Community Value which if the site is put up for sale means the group will have priority to purchase and 6 months to raise the purchase monies. We are very grateful to the Association for their support and the fight goes on.
 - Erica responded that the Combe Down tenants have taken over the reins from the Association with activities now being driven by the local community. It is key to get Local Green Space designation through the Local Plan. Erica confirmed that the Local MP is involved and fully supportive.
 - Chris responded that in order to get the ACV agreed they had to involve and get support from the whole community not just the tenants; this support is also evidenced by the plus 6000 signatures on the petition. Also noted that Combe Down allotments have made it onto national television news and newspapers.
 - Jon Lucas asked if the National Trust had been spoken to re having any land available that could be used as an alternative site. Jacqueline Burrows responded that they have and they have no land available. For information the full response from the Head of NT Bath "The in-hand land we have is of high nature quality and our priority for this space is to manage the land as lowland meadow. The other land is all tied up in a long-term tenancy." "This is probably too far away, but have you thought about land at the former golf club at Entry Hill? It's a former landfill site so might not be possible, but I have been in meetings where it's been suggested that this could be overcome with raised beds etc. That said, I appreciate that this is not the same as allotments." The point re Entry Hill has been raised with the Council but Erica will follow this up again (ACTION).

- **Water My Plot Project**
 - The Association made a successful application for funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to run a three year project, Water My Plot.
 - Erica noted that there are many members who are already actively promoting regenerative growing practices and harvesting / storing rain water. This year has been very much about trialling activities to then roll out in years 2 and 3. We very much welcome ideas to include in the plans and bid for Year 2 and 3 funding. (ACTION).

- **Trading Hut and Partners**
 - Erica noted the excellent service that the Trading Hut continues to provide and thanked all involved. Erica also noted that this year the Association has continued to work with CropDrop (with the Claremont site now involved); Urban Garden (who have supported us with water butt storage); Bath City Farm and Bath Area Growers and that we are hoping next year to work with Bath in Bloom.

- **B&NES Council**

- Erica noted the recent meeting with the Council and that Allotments now come under Sustainable Economy which is headed up by Jackie Clayton. Jackie Clayton provided assurance that Allotments are on the agenda for both the B&NES Food and Green strategies but the Association reinforced that they want to be involved so the B&NES allotments are no longer seen and treated as a “Cinderella” service and like Bristol have dedicated chapters in the relevant strategies.

Erica finished by summarising the priorities for the coming year, noting that the Association is open to suggestions.

- Lobby for Local Green Space designation for all current allotment sites and any new sites identified in the Local Plan.
- Delivery of Projects.
- Communication strategy - noted that the Association has employed a third year media student to deliver a new website and social media presence for early in the new year
- Increased support from members / tenants - the Association need your support and expertise - be it practical, administrative, for a couple of hours or a couple of weeks. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss how you can support. (ACTION)

Apologies received from Jacky Wilkinson Planning Officer.

Erica handed over to Charlie Love to provide an update on the Trading Hut.

Charlie noted that the Trading Hut bank account remains healthy with funds available for projects. Charlie noted that he and Anne have now managed the Trading Hut for six years and they are planning to step down in the near future and welcome anyone who is interested in providing support - this can be for a specific task eg seed, potato ordering, to do the accounts or to support on Saturdays. (ACTION)

Erica then handed over to Maria Humphries to complete the formal AGM activities:-

1. Apologies

Received from: Gordon Cooke, Anna Rutherford, Jane James, Amanda Padamsee, Peter Fox, Ron White, Mark Oliver, Melanie Gilbert-Smith, Kate Gardner, Nigel Gardner, Geraldine Pond, Dasha Charlton, Stephanie Lockhart, Jason Barker, Andy Lenthall, Alan Hobson, Judy Hobson, Kate Bevan, Jacky Wilkinson.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 8th November 2023

2023 AGM Minutes approved

Proposer: Chris Pearce

Seconder: Jon Lucas

Carried unanimously.

3. Approval of the Accounts

3.1. Allotment Association

Maria Humphries (Secretary) provided a summary on behalf of Judith Jordan (Treasurer).

- Our core finances remain in a healthy state with over £4.5k in the bank after the transfer of £3k to support the Water My Plot project.
- Membership fee maintained at £6.50.
- Of the £18k grant and Association contribution, £15.3k remains in the bank with £5k committed to Bath City Farm.
- Accounts independently examined by Andy Strong FCA, 19th October 2024.

2024 Allotment Association accounts approved

Proposer: Graham Bachmann

Seconder: Guy Bardoe

Carried unanimously.

3.2. Trading Hut

Maria Humphries (Secretary) provided a summary on behalf of Charlie Love (Trading Hut).

- Our finances remain in a healthy state.
 - Bank Account stands at £7,450.33, somewhat higher than last year.
 - Sales, expenditures and Kings Seed purchases are all greater than the previous year.
 - At years' end Stock levels were valued at £3,387.30, somewhat higher than last year.
- Overall the Trading Hut is in very good health with growing turnover and stock varieties.
- Accounts independently examined by Andy Strong FCA, 30th October 2024.

2024 Trading Hut accounts approved

Proposer: Diana Barlow

Seconder: Louise Jones-Robinson

Carried unanimously.

4. Election of Officers and Site Representatives

Erica thanked Judith on behalf of the Association for her sterling work over a number of years.

Maria Humphries proposed for all Officers to be re-elected 'en bloc'.

OFFICERS	CANDIDATES NAMES
Chair	Erica Draisey
Secretary	Maria Humphries
Membership Secretary	VACANCY
Treasurer	VACANCY
Planning Officer	Jacky Wilkinson
Publicity & Communications Officer	VACANCY
Trading Hut (BOG representative)	Kate Mills
Trading Hut (Sales)	Anne Love
Trading Hut (Buyer)	Charlie Love

Election of Officers approved

Proposer: Jacqueline Burrows
Seconder: Jon Lucas
Carried unanimously

Erica thanked the Reps who are standing down for their dedication and support of tenants on the sites and more generally the Association. These include: Louise Jones-Robinson, Anne Love and Julia Cleveland.

Maria Humphries proposed for all Site Representatives to be re-elected 'en bloc'.

SITE	CANDIDATES NAME	SITE	CANDIDATES NAME
Abbey View	Dasha Charlton, Sara Helm	Hampton Row	Mark Oliver (New)
Avon Park	Andy Lenthall	High Common	Peter Fox
Bloomfield Road	Erica Draisey, VACANCY	King Georges Road	Jenny Bakhoff, Jillian Peel
Brookfield Park	VACANCY	Larkhall	Jon Walker (New)
Canal Gardens	Anna Carling, Graham Bachmann	Lower Common East	Jason Barker, Jim Lee
Claremont Road	Jacky Wilkinson, Michael Duckett	Lower Common West	Tim Baines
Combe Down	Chris Pearce	Lyncombe Hill Farm	Steve Marshall
Corston View	Hillary Sheppard, Ron White	Lyncombe Vale	John Myatt
Eastfield Avenue	VACANCY	Mendip Gardens	Guy Bardoe
Fairfield Park	Oliver Haill	Monksdale	Maria Humphries, Andrew Baker
Fairfield Valley	VACANCY	Moorfields	Kerry Rogers
Foxhill	VACANCY	Ring Common	VACANCY

Election of Site Representatives approved

Proposer: Anne Love
Seconder: Guy Bardoe
Carried unanimously.

5. Any other business

- **Erica Draisey / Chair - Membership fee increase.**
 - There is no plan to increase the membership fee as we have adequate funds to support current activities. Any proposed increase will come back to the members / AGM with a proposal of what the increase will be used for. (ED)
- **Erica Draisey / Chair - Name change**
 - The recent consultation result was for Bath Allotment Association but with Bath Allotment Community being a very close second. The name will therefore be changed officially to Bath Allotments Association but we will also develop a strapline to incorporate the community support aspect. (ED)
 - Helen Woodley raised if the Parishes were happy with the name - Erica responded that we do have some members from the Parishes and no major concerns had been raised.

- **Jon Walker / Larkhall - Vandalism at Larkhall Allotments (and what can we do?).** Over 20 plots were vandalised over two separate nights in mid October. Many sheds badly damaged including one smashed to pieces, using tools stolen from the sheds themselves. The suspects are a group of teenage boys who hang around the site after dark. Where do we stand as regards trespassing? Also as regards taking photographs of them as evidence, given that they are minors under 18 years old?
 - Our advice is to engage plotholders, local neighbourhood associations, Local Councillors, Community Police to make this a community issue not just an allotment issue. There have been similar issues at Bloomfield and this approach has resulted in a reduction in vandalism. (ED)
 - Post AGM update from Anne Love (LCE) - Vandalism and theft are a continuing problem on Lower Common East. In summer fruit and vegetables are stolen and in winter general hardware items, often of low value like old landscape fabric and watering cans! Last winter 20 sheds were broken into the contents strewn about but nothing taken, some of the sheds contained expensive lawn mowers and strimmers but these weren't touched. It was unclear what the purpose was.
- **Jacky Wilkinson / Claremont / Planning - Changing the council rules and guidance.** The Association need someone to lead a small working group to consult and propose updates to the council.
 - Jacky was unable to attend the AGM. We will take feedback from members where they feel there needs to be an update to the rules eg to reflect the visual impact of the move to regenerative growing. (ED) (ACTION)
- **Guy Bardoe / Mendip Gardens** - In the light of the Combe Down allotments situation and the revised housing targets can we formulate a strategy to safeguard existing Council-owned allotment sites in Bath from sale for housing development and set specific objectives such as manifesto pledges for the same? Can we get transparency from the Council on future allotment rent increases. Is it linked to any external index or to making the service cost neutral to the council.
 - Jacky was unable to attend the AGM but has provided this response. The AA has been working hard over many years to achieve a high level of protection, in planning terms, for most sites. Currently we have lodged several submissions to the New Draft Local Plan, to add protection to all sites (some were missed the first time around) and to strengthen the policies relating to allotments. However the new Governments stated aims to double the housing targets in this area have set back the progress of the New Plan, and additionally have raised new threats/ uncertainties for allotments. This is being actively pursued by the AA, but in the wider political climate it may be difficult to stop some sites being considered for development. The best way we can protect our sites is to have them fully occupied and visibly actively used, as this demonstrates their community value. This community value can then be weighed against other public benefits. A site half derelict, with unused plots is a sitting target!
 - Jacqueline Burrows raised whether it is worth making all sites ACVs to increase their protection (ACTION)
 - We will set up a working group to address these points. (ED) (ACTION)
- **Comments from post it notes** - Association to follow up (ACTION) :-
 - much stricter rules about bonfires
 - workshop requests - ponds, espaliers/ fruit trees, pruning fruit trees, pruning rose bushes
 - raised beds at KGR site - access for disabled / elderly is very poor
 - LCW - vandalism and trespassing control; compost and mulch not available

Erica then introduced our guest speaker Edyta Jaworska who gave a talk on “A walk through the kitchen garden”.