

**BROOKFIELD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025**

11TH OCTOBER 2025

Attending: Sue Bowell (Chairman), Dave Hawkins (Treasurer), Linda Bondy (Committee member), Chris Ludlow (Committee member), Katy Langley (Committee member), Adrian and Gill Harrison (Plot 24B), Tony Grundy (Plots 22B and 34B), Stuart Bowell (Plot 39), Chris Hawkins (Plots 13 and 14A), Suzanne Wildebore and Julia Butcher (Plot 10A), Gill Roberts (Plot 33), John Roberts (Plot 1), Peter Rowe (Plot 20), Margaret Almond (Plot 34A), Norma Lyon (Plot 36A), Orla Flood (Plot 21A), Helen Sharp (Plot 44), Martin Rabenau (Plot 16), Alastair Thomas (Plot 8).

Welcome and Introductions: Sue Bowell welcomed everyone, introducing Dave Hawkins and Alastair Thomas who agreed to take the minutes because Patricia Wisefield was unwell.

1. Apologies: Patricia Wisefield (Secretary - Plot 29), Elizabeth Church (Plot 10B), Jayne Merton and Orville Rowe (Plot), Sue and Olaf Moorhouse (Plot 17?), Roy Rodgers (Plot 43), Steve Gray (Plot xx), Alex and Angeiszka xx (Plot 12), Lauren Toleikis (Trading Shed Manager - Plot xx)

2. Matters arising from Minutes of AGM 2024:

Manure deliveries have been problematic this year, with [North London Waste] lorries unwilling to enter the site due to their health and safety concerns. Other suppliers have sought payment for deliveries, but the Committee has been reluctant to make such payments. No specific plans at present, but the Committee will look at this issue again and would welcome any contact details which plotholders have for potential suppliers. Plotolders expressed a willingness to pay up to £10 for manure, with any income going into general funds.

There were concerns expressed about the general state of the site. Since then, work led by the Site Maintenance Team (SMT) has contributed to some significant improvement. When the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Allotment Officer and her manager visited the site in August they were very impressed by the overall condition of the site.

The Committee did consider the suggestion that Plotholders be surcharged 10% of their rent for late payment, or for failure to contribute to community activities, and concluded that this was not within the community spirit of our association.

The SMT had looked into the suggestion of a toolbox of spares for maintenance, and concluded that this was not essential at this time.

3. Election of Officers

In the light of some criticism over the process to select Committee and SMT members, this year was seeing an experimental approach to making it more open and democratic. This included asking all plotholders if they were willing to stand for specific Committee positions or to be a member of the SMT. In response, there was no more than one plotholder seeking any one of the six Committee positions, and three requests to be part of the SMT. An online voting form was circulated by email for those who cannot attend the AGM. There were eleven voting forms returned. These gave support to candidates standing for four of the Committee positions and three places on the SMT. All those candidates were elected unopposed.

The Chairman invited those present to put themselves forward if they wished to be considered for either of the two Committee positions which remained vacant, or to join the SMT. One existing Committee member stepped forward to take the Newsletter position, and two plotholders asked if they could share the responsibilities of the Social and Fundraising role. In addition, Orville Rowe had offered to join the SMT. All these proposals were put to the meeting and agreed.

The Chairman reported that, as the newly elected Chairman, Adrian Harrison had invited her and Linda Bondy to be Co-opted as members of the Committee. This could be helpful, as a largely new Committee could draw on their extensive knowledge and experience of the site. These proposals were put to the meeting and agreed.

The new Committee is as follows:

Chairman	Adrian Harrison
Treasurer	Dave Hawkins
Secretary	Alastair Thomas
Newsletter	Chris Ludlow
Plot lettings	Peter Rowe
Social & Fundraising	Margeret Almond & Orla Flood
Co-opted	Sue Bowell
Co-opted	Linda Bondy

The new Site Maintenance Team is as follows: Adrian Harrison; Orville Rowe; Peter Rowe; Alastair Thomas.

In preparing for next year's AGM, the Committee will reflect on this year's election process. Including considering whether it's necessary to vote where the number of candidates is equal to or less than the posts available.

Martin Rabenau moved a motion of thanks for all Committee and SMT members and to Chris Hawkins for her work in the Trading Hut, recognising the valuable contribution they have all made to the site on a purely voluntary basis. This was heartily endorsed by all.

4. Treasurer's Report (Dave Hawkins)

Dave circulated a summary of the accounts for the year ending 30 September 2025. These showed total Expenditure of £3065.83 and total Income of £4505.80, with an excess of Income over Expenditure of £1439.67. Fundraising from the Arts Trial and Barbeque had raised a total of £211.20 after expenses. Total Financial Assets were reported as £7522.37.

All rents due for 2025/26 have been paid, with just two paid late and thus appearing in next year's income. These prompt payments are an improvement on last year.

Trading hut income was down compared with last year. This does vary from year to year, and last year included significant sales of scaffold boards and netting which had been donated. There was some discussion about: whether there is sufficient awareness of opening times; whether opening times could change in the light of experience; whether we understand what ploholders want and which stock sells best; payment methods, and; the potential for orders to be placed remotely and then fulfilled by the trading hut team. These points will be explored by the Treasurer and the trading hut team to inform plans for next year.

The frequency of billing for the water we use is volatile, so the annual expenditure is variable regardless of consumption. The average for recent years is about £800, which compares with £686.95 for the past year and its exceptionally dry spring and summer.

The Committee agreed an increase in rents for 2025/26. This reflected increased costs for site rental from LBWF, water and insurance. To help plan for costs associated with the dismantling, removal and refurbishment of the old trading hut site, the Committee agreed to ringfence 50% of income from the rent increase (£414) for that purpose. This decision will be revisited by the Committee as it develops a plan for the old trading hut, which LBWF has agreed must be demolished in the next couple of years.

5. Site Maintenance Team Report (Alastair Thomas)

Alastair referred to the SMT report circulated with the agenda, and thanked everyone for their support in what had been a busy year for the new SMT. We have been learning from our experience, and are looking for some discussion on three broad questions.

Future of the pond - Most ploholders want to keep it, and were concerned about the adverse impact on biodiversity if it was lost. People visiting the site are always surprised and pleased to find it. Recent work parties have opened up access to the pond and removed debris from within it. Water levels were very low, but we can expect it to refill over the winter, and can then assess whether the liner requires replacement. The pond does have a maintenance overhead, and there will be cost implications if we need a new liner. The existing liner was paid for from a National Lottery grant in [2012??]. Margaret Almond is willing to prepare a bid for grant funding for the pond if necessary. It would be helpful to see documentation about the 2012 grant and its terms and conditions before making any major decisions.

What can we do differently so we can engage more effectively - Work parties have been very effective in improving the site, yet are probably not necessary every month. Work party participation is only one of the ways to [contribute to the site], and the SMT regrets any messages to the contrary which may have made ploholders feel pressured to do a work party. In future, it could be useful to suggest alternative tasks for ploholders who may not feel able to participate in workparties. Workparties could be scheduled for any weekend in the month, and in the summer could be held midweek, or in the evening and combined with a social.

Priorities - No specific changes to priorities were suggested.

6. Feedback from Tree Survey (Alastair Thomas)

The LBWF Tree Surveyor had visited the site twice in September to complete a survey of all trees around the site boundaries. LBWF priority is to reduce the risk of damage to people or property from trees. He identified five trees which require further attention.

The two large oaks at the entrance to the car park have been identified as 'Veteran Trees' and are some of the oldest in the borough. As they get older they are unable to sustain themselves adequately and parts start to decay with the risk they will shed limbs or fall over. These two trees will be cut back to become Monoliths, that is to

approx. 3-4 metres. This should be done by LBWF's contractors before Christmas. The reduced trees are expected to survive and regrow.

LBWF has asked if we want any chippings or small logs for biodiversity left on site after this work. We already have a regular supply of woodchips so don't need any more. Some manageable sized pieces of wood could be used for benches by the pond or by individual ploholders; we could also approach the local chainsaw sculptor to see if he has any interest.

The old oak on the other side of the river by the path will also be cut back for similar reasons. An ivy-covered oak at the back of Plot 25 which has already shed some limbs is to be reduced to a 2-3m stump. An ash tree by the river has Die Back and will be monitored.

The council will pay for all these works.

No-one knew the meaning of the blue marks put on some trees during a previous survey; this will be raised with the Tree Surveyor, along with a question about the frequency of surveys.

In discussion, the issue of trees on individual plots was raised. The size of these should be considered as part of the thrice yearly plot inspections, and drawn to the ploholder's attention as necessary.

7. Allotment rules. How they are set and distributed.

The Chairman explained that the site rules are subject to annual review, and were last reviewed in December 2023. One example where review is needed is the rule about Ploholders being required to do their share of site maintenance.

In discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would review the site rules and send an amended version to all Ploholders for review before signing them off.

8. Any Other Business

Fund raising - Margaret Almond spoke about the potential of a grant application to the National Lottery. The deadline for the current round of funding is 17th December 2025. She asked about the status of the association in the context of meeting funding eligibility criteria. Previous success in securing funding indicates that the association is probably eligible. In discussion, suggestions for funding included the pond, replacement of the old trading shed, solar panels and power for the new trading shed, a toilet, and chainsaw sculptures made from felled timber. The Committee will consider ideas, timing and eligibility for grant funding.

Wood chippings - these can easily block access for our neighbours who share the car park with us. Plottolders were asked to remember this when taking chippings, and not to simply shovel them from the side nearest the gate to the site.

[ENDS]