

BROOKFIELD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION
COMMITTEE MEETING - 21 October 2025

Present: Adrian Harrison (Chair), Dave Hawkins, Sue Bowell, Margaret Almond, Linda Bondy, Alastair Thomas (Secretary)

Agenda Item 1 - Welcome

Agenda Item 2 - Apologies from Peter Rowe, Christine Ludlow and Orla Flood

Agenda Item 3 - Ways of Working

1. We agreed that Committee Meetings would be quarterly, with all members, including co-opted members, invited. If there are significant issues which need discussion sooner than the next quarterly meeting, an Extraordinary Committee Meeting can be arranged. In the event that the Chairman or anyone else was indisposed, suitable cover arrangements can be agreed.

2. Strengthening communications with ploholders is to be a priority. This requires checking that email lists are up to date, and encouraging more ploholders to join the WhatsApp group to help with news and information. **Action - Alastair to check emails and consolidate into a single list. Sue and Alastair to be Admins on the WhatsApp group, and to remind ploholders this messaging group is not intended for gossip.**

3. The Newsletter will continue quarterly in its present format, produced by Chris. All Committee members can suggest ideas for content. **Action - Alastair to brief Chris.**

4. Following discussion, we agreed to a one year trial of a web-based 'Information Hub' for the site. There were concerns expressed that a previous website had not proved useful, and that any funds invested might be a waste of money. Adrian explained that he has experience of building and maintaining web sites for voluntary organisations, and could create a series of pages (and folders with restricted access where necessary) to inform and engage ploholders, and to store information for the Committee. The 'hub' would act as a storage point for all documents (some password protected for Committee use only). The password protection can be changed at any time, and easily passed on to future years' committees. The Information Hub would also preserve documents for future review and revision. The cost of buying and hosting a domain name for one year is £118. The Committee will review the benefits of the Information Hub before next year's AGM to inform decisions on any future investment. **Action - Adrian to take forward development of Information Hub, consulting with Committee and ploholders as necessary.**

5. Rather than use personal email addresses, the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Plot Lettings will have specific emails ie. chairman.brookfieldallotments@gmail.com for use on allotment business only. This should help ploholders and partners identify emails about allotment business, help with data protection compliance and look more professional. **Action - Adrian to set these up and give any necessary training on their use.**

6. Dave and Sue confirmed that there is no documentation of a Constitution for the Association. The Site Rules distributed with the annual rent notices have been seen as a Constitution in the past. Adrian explained that a written constitution could cover all eventualities and legal requirements, and many other Council run/leased allotments have them for this reason. It should be more than just the rules, and set out the aims of the Association and help everybody understand more about why the site is run how it is. There are examples available from which we could start working on one, with the aim of keeping the document as concise as possible. Margaret commented that a Constitution could help with eligibility requirements for any fundraising applications. We should let LBWF know we are doing this, and see if it has any implications for the documentation of our lease. **Action - Adrian to produce a first draft, consulting with others as necessary, for discussion at the next Committee meeting along with a plan for seeking views from ploholders and LBWF.**

7. We agreed that there is not enough benefit to be gained from the cost of affiliating to the National Allotment Society. This decision is based on previous experience, where we had been affiliated until February 2017.

Agenda Item 4 – Treasurers Report

8. Dave explained that there was no significant change since the report he tabled at the AGM on 11th October. Within the 2025/26 rent increases, the previous Committee had decided to ringfence 50% towards the costs associated with the dismantling, removal and refurbishment of the old trading hut site. It was agreed that this was a sensible decision, and future reports will state the amount of general funds (£3922) and the amount within the ringfence (£432).

9. At present, Dave and Katy Langley have access to details of the Association's bank accounts. Access and authorisation details need to be updated to reflect changes in the Committee. Nat West has not been very responsive to previous requests for change.

Action: Dave to amend, adding Adrian and Alastair

Agenda Item 5 - Priorities arising from AGM

10. Reduction of the Veteran Oaks by LBWF - Alastair updated on visit by Marshall Lambert, the chainsaw sculptor, to discuss use of felled wood from the two veteran oaks in the car park. Marshall is very enthusiastic to work with us, and made some suggestions about how best to use the logs (which could be quite valuable). It is too soon to estimate how much of the felled wood might be useful, so the LBWF Tree Surveyor will be told we want some but can't yet say how much. We need LBWF to let us know the likely date of work on these veteran oaks. **Action: Alastair to email LBWF with an update.**

11. Fundraising for veteran oaks and the pond - Margaret explained that having discussed with Orla and reflected on the options, a simple proposal for use of the felled wood from the veteran oaks is probably the best way forward. The deadline for the National Lottery grant scheme is 17th December, for bids between £300 and £20,000. She will be visiting Marshall Lambert's workshop at Fairlop Waters to start shaping a proposal. This could include partnership with the Highams Park Planning Group or the River Ching Action Group to widen the community benefit of any sculptures, or be linked to the 2026 Art Trail.

Any bid for grant funding would require a commitment to being accountable and could bring increased administrative effort. The Committee agreed to accept that accountability and additional work. Once we have a draft proposal, plotholders are to be consulted to seek their views before sign off by the Committee and submission to the National Lottery. LBWF will be informed about this project. **Action: Margaret to take forward, and keep us informed on progress.**

12. Work on the site. The water will be turned off and the system drained for the winter on 1st November; in doing so, we need to ensure that any brambles etc around the cisterns are cut back to reduce the risk of frogs etc getting trapped in them. The SMT work party on 2nd November will resurface the top path with wood chippings, and take the opportunity to cut back around the water cisterns. It was noted that use of wood chippings on paths between plots can lead to destruction of the grass and create a slippery surface; plotholders should be reminded in the near future. The plot inspection will also be held on the 2nd, with all plotholders reminded that they are welcome to participate. **Action: Dave, Adrian and Alastair to drain the water. Alastair to notify plotholders of the events on 1st and 2nd November, and brief Chris re messages for the Newsletter.**

13. Trading hut. A development plan will be considered at a later date.

14. The old trading hut is to be dismantled due to its poor condition. There is no urgency, and funds are already being ringfenced towards the costs. A plan of action, with a method statement and risk assessment, will need to be approved by LBWF as our landlord before any work is done. This will be considered at a later date. There is a wren's nest in the building, and we may need to take account of this in our planning process.

15. The Site Maintenance Team will need to develop a plan of action for the coming year to encompass the seasons and accommodate anything that occurs throughout the year. The timing of work parties was discussed at the AGM; these need not be monthly, and the weekday and time should be varied to make them more accessible to all plotholders.

16. Future of the pond. There was strong support at the AGM for the pond and its revival. When John Laban originally dug it out, he aimed to puddle clay the hole. Subsequently, a good quality butyl rubber liner was purchased with a National Lottery grant and installed with a suitable underlay in [2017??]. The smaller area is intended to be a bog area rather than a second pond. We need to develop a strategy for maintenance to support both biodiversity and amenity. First we must watch as water levels rise over autumn and winter, and then decide if the existing liner holds good or needs repair. The SMT will start the planning, and work closely with Linda who will be our Pond Fairy. **Action: SMT and Linda to take forward and report back in the spring.**

17. The Rules for Plotholders are to be reviewed at the next meeting. These will need to complement the draft Constitution. **Action: Alastair to put on the agenda.**

18. The next Newsletter should inform plotholders about these issues. **Action: Alastair to brief Chris.**

Agenda Item 6 - Any Other Business

19. None was raised

Agenda Item 7 - Date and venue of next meeting

20. Tuesday, 21st January 2026 at 12:30pm. 26 Cavendish Rd, London E4 9NH.

Alastair Thomas

Secretary

27 October 2025