



NADCAA

Newton Abbot & District Co-Operative Allotment Association

Planning For The Future Today

After 18 months during which the world and the way we live our lives has changed and we have all come to realise the importance of our allotments in our lives, company Secretary Steve Garlick and I thought that this would be a good time to regroup and set out what we believe the association must do going forward.

Carbon Neutrality

Teignbridge District council has set targets for the whole of the district to be carbon neutral by 2025. We as an association must do our part in helping the council achieve this. The councils will look on us more favourably if we are proactive now rather than reactive later. It will mean changes to the way we garden, and no doubt there will be some who will be against this change, but change we must. A good example might be planting green manures in the autumn months as crops are removed, then cutting it down after it has flowered and covering the whole plot with membrane for the winter. These are two things that we can all do that may seem very small but are of benefit to pollinating insects as the season comes to an end, and to help trap carbon in the soil over the winter months instead of releasing it into the atmosphere.

Rainwater Harvesting

Only 9% per cent of the water used on an allotment field comes from rainwater harvesting, going forward it is essential that we investigate ways of collecting far more water during the winter months especially with climate change altering our weather patterns.

Biodiversity

We had the foresight to see what was happening to our pollinating insects back in 2010. All members were given the opportunity to create biodiversity areas on their plots and many members have done this with so much success that we have now added wildlife areas on all fields. At the recent NGS open day everyone, without exception, told us how impressed they were with what we were doing and that we must keep on doing it.

93 per cent of the habitat vital to sustain our pollinating insects has been destroyed. The Devon Wildlife Trust has told us that what we're doing is absolutely crucial if we want to carry on growing crops on the allotment fields. All members need to take this on board and do something on their plots to help create habitat for our pollinating insects.

Pesticides & Herbicides

The damage that these chemicals do to the environment is huge, 850 people die every day as result of these chemicals which are classed as poisons (source: Pan UK Ltd.). Commercially grown fruit and vegetables all contain residues from pesticides and herbicides. There is great concern about what is being called the cocktail effect, where several of these chemicals are applied to crops during the season. Research carried out by Pan UK Ltd a company that has been monitoring the effects of chemical use for over 35 years, has highlighted that (on average) 40 per cent of all commercially grown fruit and vegetables and grains still have residues in them when they are purchased. Most fruit crops have far more, as much as 99% of the crop having chemical residues when purchased. It goes without saying that the effects that these residues have on our health is of great concern. We as an association must take action now and educate members about alternatives.

Cultivation Standards Policy

A working party led by a company Secretary Steve Garlick drew up the new cultivation standards policy earlier this year, its purpose was to lay down general guidelines that all members will be expected to follow going forward. The policy was circulated to the membership and 85% of the members voted that they were in favour of the policy, this will presented to the membership to vote on at this years' AGM.

The Tenancy Agreement

Following what can only be described as abusive remarks made to several field managers, we have, rewritten the tenancy agreement. It will make it easier to terminate the membership of someone who is abusive or has failed to cultivate. With 100 people on the waiting list (many of whom are no doubt excellent gardeners) we cannot keep on sending letters to the same people about non cultivation. In addition the tenancy agreement has always been a twelve-month agreement but starting this year our proposal is that members who are not cultivating will not have their tenancy renewed.

Education

We have created our first learning centre this year. We see this as a way to enable us to pass on knowledge to old and new members alike regarding specific skills, e.g. pruning fruit trees. It has also been suggested that we use the area for workshops where we can invite people to give lessons or talks on specific crafts, basket weaving and flower arranging have been early suggestions.

Rents

The majority of the improvements over the past three years has been accomplished using grants and has not come out of members rents, however, there are many grants that we can't apply for because of "grant matching", this means that if we want to apply for a grant for £1,000 grant for example, we are asked to match that amount from our own funds. A rent increase of £3.00 per half plot would raise an extra £1,000 per annum, which we could use to grant match and as a result end up with an extra £2,000 pounds to use across all of the allotment fields where required. The last grant for £2,000 pounds went to the Coach Road and wildlife areas, so these grants are very important going forward.

New Fields

Sadly both Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey have failed to deliver allotment fields that are fit for purpose. Even though the responsibility for these fields lies with Teignbridge District Council, both the Secretary and the Chairman have written to the CEO's of both companies all to no avail. This is very disappointing and concerning when one considers the number of developments that supposedly have allotments planned into them for the future.

Plastic / Rubbish / Tyres

We realise that when just about every product that we buy for the allotment comes in a plastic container or a plastic bag but we all need to do our very best to reduce the amount of plastic that we use on the allotments. Another concern is the amount of rubbish that people continue to bring from home and dump on their allotment. Skips are not cheap and it is unacceptable behaviour, please take your rubbish home and dispose of it in your bins or take it to the recycling centre, it is not the responsibility of the association and its members to pay for the disposal of rubbish that some members cannot be bothered to dispose of themselves.

Succession

There is great concern that very few people are ever willing to volunteer to join the committee to help run the association. There is even greater concern that no younger members want to volunteer to join. It is these young people that are going to carry the allotment association forward during what can only be described as a challenging time for us all. We need them to come forward now so that we can share knowledge now.

Covid isn't going to go away, we are all going to have to learn to live with it and deal with it, climate change is here, it is happening, we need to take action now so there we are ready for the consequences. It may even change the crops that we are able to grow in this country, it is too early to say, but we will have to adapt. Insect loss however is something we can all do something about, but we all need to act now and we need to act together.

Urban horticulture is a phrase that we are hearing more and more in published reports regarding allotments. It is the new phrase for "grow your own", but it is much more than that. We are all going to be more reliant on locally grown food as we move into the second quarter of the 21st century. Rainwater harvesting, preservation of habitat, elimination of pesticides and herbicides are all of the huge concern in the reports that are currently being published. The need for allotments locally is going to increase dramatically it is incumbent on all of us to do what we can.

AGM – 18th September 2021

As you can see there will be much to discuss at the AGM this year, we need you to participate this year more than ever before, the future of the Association is dependent on it. If you feel nervous about attending the AGM and want the Chairman to vote on your behalf he will be collecting proxy votes nearer the date.

Tim Callard – Chairman & Steve Garlick – Secretary

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