

RGS Committee Distance Reports **Sunday 3rd May 2020**

1. Confirm Distance Reports April 2020.

2. Chair's report: (HF)

- I. Covid-19: There have not been any reports of plot holders having the virus during the last month. The advice regarding the taps on site has been updated with advice on each standpipe how to use the taps safely. People have been good about social distancing but there have been a few instances of children running around the allotment site unsupervised.
- II. President Justine Greening: No reply to the letter JS delivered.

3. Projects:

Project 1: Communal shed site 3 (JS)

Following the clearance of Plot 68 (Bob Aveling's) we had an estimate from Charles Held to construct the baseworks. However he was unable to undertake the work as he has no workers during lockdown so we accepted a quote from Building Space (Jackie's son Patrick's business). HF discussed the quote with PC, VF and MC in detail.

HF input: The estimate was evaluated by MC who said:

'I have reviewed the quote myself and also had another independent contractor look at it, the conclusions are:

1. In terms of using a green build approach the method is in line with a minimum environmental footprint possible.
2. The costing is reasonable taking into consideration the logistics and site location .

I think it reasonable to accept this quote. Michael J. Cooper I.Eng'

The original estimate for the project only allocated £500 for the base. It is hoped there may be some savings with other parts of the project but without a good base we have no project so it was decided to go ahead.

Work is due to start next week (4th May) taking about 10 days. The base is to be constructed without the use of concrete and with regard to later provision of water (from the toilet) and for power (from the mains or solar? Yet to be decided, see PC report Project 2).

The Tuin Chappo Logcabin has now been ordered and is due week beginning 25 May. (All distancing and sanitising procedures will be observed.) Vivien has agreed to arrange the installation, with one of the company's recommended firms, (Orsorio) as soon as possible after delivery.

Project 2: Solar Power on site 3 (PC)

Following the last Committee Report, where PC's comments on the use of off grid solar power on Site 3 were extensively discussed, the use of solar power in preference to using mains electricity was questioned by some Committee members. PC requested that he be allowed to progress the matter of an off grid energy supply and report back by the Autumn. A decision by the Committee could then be made as to whether to proceed with this or the use of mains electricity for which a quotation has been received. It was agreed that this could be done but PC was asked to reduce the timescale to a few months. This he agreed, subject to his being able to obtain sufficient information during the present Covid lock down.

PC is, at present, exploring not only the use of off grid solar power on Site 3 but also the possible use of wind energy. He is also trying to learn about other allotment site's use of solar and wind power.

PC remains of the opinion that with the use of off grid solar power, the positioning of the solar panels should not be on the proposed Hut roof. The orientation and slope of the roof would hinder the efficacy of the solar panels and the weight of the solar panels will be too great. Rather, he feels that consideration should be given to positioning the solar panels on an open timber pergola which would face South and has a slope of 45 degrees. The pergola could be positioned adjacent to the Dover House Road entrance path with the current material stores, notices, etc positioned beneath. He will continue to explore this possibility.

PC hopes to be in a position to provide a report on his findings and recommendations by the middle of June.

Project 5: Social shed on site 2 (LS & CM)

Project 6: Store doors (JS)

These are now complete and the gable end above has been fixed and painted to match.

Project 10: Soakaway site 2 (JS)

Allium were unable to undertake the work in the foreseeable future due to sickness and the lockdown. It was agreed that Building Space would undertake the work which was completed on 30th April. This included the digging of the soakaway, retained soil dumped behind store, and 2 crates wrapped in weed suppressant membrane. The water butts have been moved round to the front of the store (for easier access with a barrow to the shredder cupboard) and they are linked in to the soakaway via a diverter and a new drain trap. The pipe taking the waste water from the store runs into the drain trap (for easier inspections should a blockage occur) before being carried to the soakaway.

Project 13: Gazebos for Summer Show (JS & CM)

These are in stock in the side store. As reported at last meeting.

Project 14: Communal greenhouse (HF)

No management team has been identified so this project will be given priority 3 (low) rating and will not be reported on unless there is any change. Land will not be reserved for it.

4. Water on site 3 (PC)

PC is still of the opinion that the renewal of the water supply on Site 3 remains on hold for the foreseeable future as the Covid lock down continues and new projects will not commence. Nonetheless, he will continue to liaise with Wandsworth Council.

5. Lease renewal (PC)

Given the situation with the renewal of the Water Supply on Site 3 and the present Covid outbreak, PC continues to report that there is no further progress with the lease renewal and that this, too, will be the situation for the foreseeable future.

7. Treasurer's report: (EB)

- i. See attached PDF for the current listing of all accounts - i.e. Income and Expenses since 1st October 2019.

- ii. Total annual amounts collected plot rent approx £16800, Insurance: £241, Water: £1441 Membership fees £1928 (there has been more collected since 1st October, this is just talking about the annual rent collection amounts)
- iii. 16 invoices were not paid on time - after some chasing most paid - one was given an exception to pay in June, one decided to give up and one has not be able to be contacted 40 people paid by cheque, many of which could have paid online/telephone banking **or** got someone to do the transfer for them **or** gone to the bank themselves (prior to Covid). Cheques are prone to error, cause issues loading into the machine due to poor handwriting and can easily be lost.
- iv. **Current account** has approx 40k and there is £10k in a fixed term account locked in at 105%. Had thought about putting some of the 40k in to a 32day notice account, but the interest rate is now so low it's not worth the hassle.
- v. **Payments for rest of year** - We know the rent to Enable will be approx 80% of 16,800 = 13440 approx (slightly more than last year (£12,986) due to rent increase). Thus of the £50k in bank account, around £13,440 will be outgoing in October, leaving approx £36,500. Further outgoings for rest of financial year - £19/month for electric and some amount for water (possibly another £600 tbc). The insurance for the year is already paid. Other outgoings will be related to the special projects and anything else that is purchased for the store.
- vi. **Analysis of water bill** - the way the bills are calculated are based on Average Daily Usage (ADU) between the previous **two** readings that Castlewater has on their system. That ADU is then used to calculate the next 6 month period for the bill - this means we can end up getting a large bill for a period when actually little water was used. Going to aim to 1. read the meters at more appropriate times and 2. move to Direct Debit that is spread over 10 months, which will flatten out the curve and more evenly distribute the payments over the year - hopefully!
- vii. **Church Hall for Autumn show** - written to Church admin stating that highly unlikely Autumn show will go ahead and asking when would need to give final cancellation by. They want to know by beginning of July and if they get any requests for that date in the meantime they will let us know.
- viii. **online card payments for "delivery of items"**
WAVE has the ability to create invoices, email them to customer with a link for them to pay using their credit/debit card. It notifies RGS that payment has been received and then goods can be mailed out. WAVE batches up the card payments and loads to bank in one transaction, so don't have to deal with each individual payment. The charge for this is 20p+1.4% for each transaction.
- ix. **cardless payments in store - choice between:**
 - a. iZettle - card machine is £29 plus need to have a dedicated device in store - either a smartphone or tablet *with 4G connection* - between £200-£300 for device, unless someone has a used one they don't want. iZettle charges 1.75% per transaction
 - b. SumUp card machine with in-built SIM - currently can buy the machine for £99 or one with a docking station to charge and mini printer for £129. This does not require any other device to be in the store. It will require an account to be set up to manage the bank transactions. SumUp charges 1.69% per transaction. Video of how sump works - <https://sumup.co.uk/3g-credit-card-reader/>.
I'd suggest SumUp is simplest option (b), just the basic model, without printer. No additional device needed in store and very easy to use. Still need some back office administration, but does not require another device to be in the store in order to use it.

HF: After a lot of research and discussion it has been decided to purchase the SumUp device as recommended by EB. Delay may mean we are unable to install the device in the store when we want to open it again. The great advantage of the device is that it allows contactless payments and appears to be very easy to use.

8. i) Trading Secretary's Report: (GT) We have 2 deliveries coming this week in order to be prepared if garden centres are allowed to reopen. However, we have not been able to purchase some items. Clover has been closed and has only just reopened. What stock our supplier had in stock has already been purchased by other customers, so our order has been placed in a queue.

Our supplier has been able to offer an alternative growbag by Westland for the Clover version we have had in the past. There is no Clover peat compost available at this time. This may be an opportunity to decide whether we should continue to stock peat compost. Extra New Horizon compost has been ordered but, again, not as much as we requested.

We have also replacement items for the products we usually sell loose or decant. Tomorrow will be replacing the Maxicrop tomato feed and 1 litre bottles for the Maxicrop Original. We have also ordered the loose fertilisers in 1.5 kilo boxes. However only Fish, Blood and Bone is currently available with Growmore and Bonemeal on back order.

GWT would like to take this opportunity to thank JS and GW for all their help and support given that GWT has been instructed to stay at home for 12 weeks.

ii) Online seeds (JS) Following the popularity of the Click and Collect from the store on 5 April when some 20 plot holders ordered goods, paid by direct transfer and collected from store we decided that it would be a good service to offer "seeds by post" and control any risk of contamination. About 50 members ordered seeds at a standard price of £2 per packet. £700 worth of seeds were sold between 9th and 20th April. Many thanks to Charles Gillbe who offered his account for bank transfers and Richard Huntrods (plot holder site 3) volunteered to be bike courier. So only 3 packages were posted. Richard commented that people seemed delighted to receive their seeds and we received several emails thanking us for this service. (Many thanks to VF and GW for all their work at Click and Collect.)

iii) Plant sale (JS) On Saturday 25th April we held a Plant Sale for Charity on the communal plot on site 3. Donations of seedlings came mainly from members who were growing plants for eventual sale at our summer show. 35 Members bought plants and most were sold in 20 mins. £181 was taken and will be donated to The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN). Thanks to VF, HF and Johanna Williams and, of course, to all those who donated plants!

9. Allotment Secretaries' reports:

i) Site 2 (CMB)

Lettings: None

PROBLEMS: 13 problem plots identified after informal inspection by CMB.

ii) Site 3:

outer area 50-100 (VF)

Lettings: No lettings in April

Plot Inspections: Informal plot inspections carried out, mainly to check plot holders were coping with plots during lockdown. Six emails sent out. Most have responded.

Volunteers have kindly offered to help those in need. One plot still needs clearing.

Neighbours: Letter sent to Council Estate Managers re condition of fences on main path. Letter acknowledged and response due w/c4 May 2020.

Inner area 101-127 (AL)

Lettings: 2 plot holders, have both been offered plots but unable to accept them in the current situation so have been put onto the Secondary Waiting List.

Plot 114B (2 rods) has been let

Plot 122 has been cleared (many thanks to JS for arranging this) and divided into 2.

Plot 122B (2.5 rods) has been let

Plot 122C (2 rods) has been let

Plot Inspections: These were due to take place on Tuesday 28th April. Owing to the current 'lockdown' and my personal requirement to stay at home they haven't taken place in a formal way.

Several plot holders have said that they are unable to visit their plots. One we know is a key worker and her neighbours have offered to remove the worst weeds.

HF has very kindly looked round the Inner Area and reports that the majority of plots are in a reasonable condition. Some Plots holders have been sent emails asking if all is well and saying that their plots need attention but we understand that might not be possible in the current pandemic.

10. Bulletin Editor's report (CM)

Bulletin deadline 11th May. It will be a short bulletin again. Compost article, plant sale, painted store.

June bulletin will be photos of people with their produce.

11. Show Chair's report (CM) Summer show canceled but special bulletin in its place.

Autumn show – still waiting for government guidelines. Elaine checked hall booking with church who will hold on to it for the moment.

12. Site Manager's report (CG): Nothing to report

13. PR: Gardeners' World allotment visit (JS) Gardeners' World are not visiting allotment sites during Lockdown.

14. Events and Diary dates:

- Gardeners' Question time (CG) : I have been in touch with Berni Griffiths, the vergers and meetings organiser at St Mary's and he is enthusiastic both to have GQT there and to help. The application to the BBC has been drafted.
- Research feedback re lead on allotments (ES)
- AGM 15/10/20: most likely to be cancelled
- Alternative event to Guy Fawkes bonfire night
- Sharpening event 03/05/20 (HF) cancelled

15. AOB - All

Lorna Roberts, plot 115B has put in an email 'thank you for the great work you and the other RGS members are doing to help us keep our allotments going.'

Date of the next meeting **Sunday 6th June 2020** 9am at the store or Distance reports