

## **RGS Committee Distance Reports**

### **By Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Reports from:** Helen Finch (HF), Jackie Savage (JS), Patrick Crawford (PC), Carol Martinez (CM), Elaine Barnwell (EB), Gill Tamsett (GT), Catherine Mausell-Bower (CMB), Vivien Fowler (VF), Alison Linton (AL), Charles Gillbe (CG), Liz Smart (ES)

**1. Sign off the record** (attached) of the distance meeting held on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

**2. Feedback from committee members from previous distance report: (HF)**

Thank you all for your feedback. It is useful to ask for opinions from the committee in response to reports in these documents. Items requiring feedback from the committee will be listed at the end of these documents.

i) **Zoom Meeting:** 7 were fine with having a Zoom meeting but 8 were either against or ambivalent largely because with many people it is harder to have a productive decision making session. Best to keep it in mind if the right occasion arose. Probably good for smaller meetings of sub-committees but now we can meet outside in small groups anyway so Zoom somewhat redundant.

ii) **Committee post AGM Oct 2020:** I have received 2 resignations post AGM from the committee: Liz Smart and Elaine Barnwell. Liz has served on the committee for a very long time in various roles in particular as Treasurer with all its demands. Elaine has always said she would just do one year as Treasurer to set up the RGS with an accountancy package which she has done along with a lot of other input generally. Both of them will be missed!

We have not found a replacement Treasurer - is anyone willing and able to take on this role or might you know a plot holder who might take it on? Elaine would give a comprehensive handover.

**Action: All**

The other gap these 2 resignations will leave is representation from site 2. I would welcome any names put forward.

**Action: All**

iii) **Project 5: Social shed on site 2 outer area surface:** The favourite surface was paving which had 10 votes, Gravel 5 votes, Easy grass 1, decking 1, woodchip 1. We now have some costings from Graham Scott who used to be a landscaper. The paving is likely to be about 3 times more expensive than gravel largely because Graham is willing to give his time to lay gravel but not to do paving. We are getting another estimate from Patrick Savage who did an excellent paving job on site 3 however he is very busy now so may not be able to do the work. Does anyone know a reliable, reasonable suitable person to do this work?

**Action: All**

iv) **Plant sale: should we have one?** Overwhelmingly the answer was no.

**2. Chair's report: (HF)**

i) RGS President: not had any suggestions of a suitable person to take on this position. Should we ask Fleur Anderson? It is likely to be in our interests to involve her and she seems an approachable, convivial person.

**Action: All**

ii) Publication Policy/ Paper: As a substitute for the summer show, we requested pictures for the Bulletin of our produce with family members. Jean brought up the point that we should not publish photos of children under 12 on the internet. We should have something in writing that gives guidance regarding what and how we publish particularly on the internet but also within the RGS community. A sub-committee has been formed with Jean Crawford, JS, CM and HF.

**3. Projects:** Please see the attached Project Summary tracking estimated costs against actual cost so far.

**Project 1: Communal shed site 3 (JS)** The "Sonia Sawyer Cabin" will be named in her memory as she worked hard to preserve these allotments in the early 70's when they were under threat and also left £8K in her will to RGS for a project.

We have now installed guttering and a large water butt. We will be putting a chain across the side access to the veranda which will stop people entering from that side but is easily movable if needed. We have bought the paint and next week Vivien, Sylvia Willcox and Sue MacDonald will start the work. Then we will fit a work surface across the rear of the cabin and have a sink/tap installed. People have started to leave items for use in the cabin. We would rather they didn't do that as a) we need the space to work and b) we are not intending to store cups and things in the cabin – it will be more "bring your own".

Greg has started to level the ground outside and build 3 raised beds from pallets. The ground will be covered in weed suppressant membrane and a sloping path paved for access from main path. Then the rest gravelled over. Thanks to Ali and Robert for sourcing some large free paving stones.

**Project 2: Power on site 3:** PC confirmed that he has provided a Report on his findings and recommendations on the use of off grid power on Site 3 to the Chair.

**HF:** The document prepared by PC was sent out to the committee on 13/06/20 along with a comparison of on-grid and off-grid for comments. The comments received by email have been assembled and attached with this document. In these comments, Jean Crawford raised another option, that of a hybrid solution; connecting to the National grid but having some solar capture feeding into the grid. Her arguments are very interesting and clearly presented. A number of committee members agreed with her recommendation of a hybrid system. The comments from committee members were almost entirely in favour of site 3 being connected to the National grid now, but to consider adding solar in the near future. Therefore, the plan is to accept UK Power's quote and to appoint electricians to complete the job of providing power where needed. **Action HF**

**EB** has explored the possibility of a cheaper quote for grid connection but this is very unlikely to be forthcoming.

**Project 5: Social area on site 2 (CM)** We have a quote from Graham for paving slabs and Patrick Savage will send us one. Elaine has sourced 31 second hand slabs.

The area will have a raised flower bed to give a physical barrier to the area with the plot that will be let adjacent to it.

**4. Water on site 3:** PC has continued to chase Wandsworth Council as to when the renewal of the water supply on Site 3 will be undertaken. The problem, he is told, is that the Council are awaiting a revised estimate from Thames Water. Therefore, PC offered to liaise with Thames Water on behalf of the Council to try and progress matters. He has received no reply to this offer. Earlier this week, Wandsworth promised an update by Friday but, to date, this has not been forthcoming. PC will continue to chase Wandsworth Council.

**5. Lease renewal (PC)** Given the situation with the renewal of the Water Supply on Site 3, PC continues to report that there is no further progress with the lease renewal. Nonetheless, as previously reported, once he has received an update on the renewal of the water supply, he will write to Cllr. Steffi Sutters to try and progress matters.

**7. i) Treasurer's report:** (EB) See *attached* PDF for the current listing of all accounts. This shows a breakdown by category, income, expense etc.

**Bank Accounts** - Current account balance as of 5<sup>th</sup> July = £33,909.78 with additional £10k in a fixed term account earning 1.05% interest, due to mature on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021.

**Special Projects** – total spent to date on the projects is **£10,678.87** – gazebos, store door, soakaway and approx. £7,076.92 for Sonia Sawyer tea cabin so far.

**Water bill** – the first DD payment of £6 has been taken. In the mean time a bill was received with an *estimated* reading, even though the actual reading had been sent it – just ignoring that bill, as confirmed the DD has been set up. Castlewater systems are from the Dark Ages.

**Maintenance** – If base calculation on the actual annual rent collected this year, after the 80% of rent collection is paid to Enable, RGS will have approx. **£3360 for maintenance**. As of 5th July, RGS has spent **£3,841.40** of which £1645 has been work on/clearing plots. Now gone over the of the remainder (the 20%) by £481.40

**Gate/Store Locks** – Have photos from another Enable allotment, where they have a mechanical key pad. Their door is very much a standard door with a frame. They have given the details of the locksmith who installed it and will follow up in the next month or so.

**Church Hall for Autumn show** – cancelled the Autumn show booking at the Church hall.

**AGM** – cancelled the cricket club booking for AGM.

**8. i) Trading Secretary's Report:** (GT) There are still shortages of products at our suppliers but hopefully this will not be such an issue given that we are past the very busy period.

In discussion with JS, we have agreed not to purchase bulbs this year.

These have mainly been sold at the Autumn Show which is not happening this year. Also, we buy in bulk and then sort them into small bags by hand.

**ii) Click and Collect (JS)** We have offered this click and collect service on site 3 for 6 weeks to date. It has been very popular generating nearly £1K in sales. Of course it was most popular early on in lockdown when people were unable to access garden centres and were in need of composts etc. The last couple of weeks have seen about £80 in sales but this week (5 July) there were none.

Greg, Gill and I will discuss how much longer we should offer this and would appreciate any input from the committee.

**9. Allotment Secretaries' reports:**

i) Site secretaries' meeting (AL)

ii) **SITE 2:** (C MB)

**Lettings:** none

**PROBLEMS found at the inspection:**

Minor problems were found on 7 Plots so plot holders will be contacted.

More serious problems on 4 plots:

Stage 1 letter written to 2 plot holders.

Four plot holders will be contacted regarding bindweed.

**Plot 41E** – the plot holder needs to be identified. Not on the membership database

iii) **SITE 3:**

**outer area 50-100** (VF)

**Lettings:** One letting in early July

**Plot Inspections:** Plot inspections carried out 25 June 2020. Generally, most plots were in an excellent state. Emails sent to 7 plot holders – mostly regarding bindweed, weeds and planting up to neighbours' fences. Only one response received to date. Reinspection in approx. 2 weeks time.

**Neighbours:** The fence to the main entrance path has been patched up by the Council but remains in a poor condition. Access given to 145 Huntingfield Road resident for landscape works. Permission given by 150 DHR resident to install trellis on the fence behind the tea hut.

**Other matters:** Wood chip and manure deliveries have recommence

**Inner area 101-127** (AL)

**Lettings:** There have been no lettings in July.

**Plot Inspections:** VF and I completed the Plot Inspections on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July. We were very pleased by the high standard of the majority of plots. Several plot holders have been unable to tend their plots owing to Covid19. They have been in touch and we hope that as lockdown lifts they will be able to return their plots to cultivation.

While doing the inspections we noted that the majority of paths were in reasonable order. The new number signs made everything so much easier.

**10. Bulletin Editor's report** (CM) Deadline for next Bulletin 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

JS: congrats to Carol on lovely June bulletin. Had several people mention it.

**11. Show Chair's report** (CM) Autumn Show: As there will not be a show at the church in September and there will not be a committee meeting in August, we need some ideas for a substitute. The photos were well received - do we do the same again or try for a small show on site 2 with reduced entry categories. Maybe leave the show tables up all day for people to come and have a look.

Ideas for Autumn Show substitute - **ALL**

**JS:** Let's plan to have a display of a limited number of fruit and veg and flowers under the gazebos on site 2? Rather like we were intending in June. With judges and prizes. Then queue control as people go round and have a look. Timed entry? But no food and drink and no hanging around.

**HF:** By then we should have the social area paved and joined to the path on the south side of the store so we would have a lot more space for any queue management.

**12. Site Manager's report** (CG) nothing reported

**13. PR:** (JS) Nothing to report

**14. Events and Diary dates:**

- Gardeners' Question time (CG) : nothing reported
- Research feedback re lead on allotments (ES) Setting up a Poster presentation
- AGM 15/10/20. Our booking with the Cricket Club has been canceled as it would not be possible to distance effectively so not a suitable venue for the AGM. Might be possible to have a meeting in the large hall at the Church as chairs could be well spaced out. Speakers could have microphone. No food or drink. Otherwise all business could be done in writing.
- Alternative event to Guy Fawkes bonfire night

**15. AOB** - All

***Probationary period for new plot holders (JS)*** a suggestion by JS: In RGS Allotments Letting Agreement and Rules (2.2) which all new tenants sign it states:

Renewal of allotment tenancy, if at all, is contingent on:

- Payment of rent.
- the plot being in a reasonable state of cultivation and the rules as expressed in Section 3 being observed.
- the Tenant not having received a caution for any sort of anti-social behaviour

I suggest that we add the following with regard to NEW TENANTS

"If the tenant is in breach of any of the above 3 rules within a year of the initial tenancy agreement being signed, the "Procedure for dealing with breach of allotment rules" is not valid. The tenant is given ONE WARNING to rectify the problem. If it is not rectified to the satisfaction of the Site Secretary and the Site Manager the tenant will be given 2 weeks' notice to quit, remove their property and return the site key."

**HF:** Before adopting any such change the RGS would need to gain the approval of Enable. I suggest it should be discussed at the site secretaries' meeting planned for 16<sup>th</sup> July.

**Date of the next Committee meeting Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020** Distance reports  
(NB no August meeting)