

BARNES HORTICULTURAL AND ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

AGM 2024 SATURDAY 29 June

Draft Minutes for approval at AGM 2025

ATTENDANCE

NAME	SITE	BHAS MEMBER?	NAME	SITE	BHAS MEMBER?
Richard Blackwell	Priory	Y	Richard Ward	Pav	y
Angela Davis	Pav	y	Helen Lawrence	Hert	y
Fiona Heath	Priory	Y	Janet Bostock	Hert	Y
Diane McLellan	Priory	Y	M Thomson	Tri	Y
Katie Lee	Priory	Y	Mark	Priory	y
Ronnie Bendall	Hert	Y	Terence Farrer	Priory	Y
Austin Bendall	Hert	y	John Page	Tri	y
Sheena Clark	Pav	y	XYZ (unreadable)	(Blank)	y
Brenda Lattimer	Priory	Y	Olga V Atkins	Hert (Priory?)	Y
Jennifer Jeffries	Hert	Y	Carina McLeod	Tri	y
Emily Coats	Priory	Y	S?? Izett ?	Priory	y
David Waterhouse	Priory	Y	Felice Webbe	Priory	y
JR Childs	Pav	y	Rachel Walker	Hert	Y
Alex Clarke	Palewell	Y	John Padgett	Hert	Y
H Kessler	Hert	Y	Cath Gothard	Hert	Y
Ben Gothard	Hert	Y	Annabel Fogden	Hert (Priory?)	Y
C Taylor	Hert	Y	Chris Coxhead	Palewell	y

Susan Moore	Priory	Y	Janet Lavendar	Priory	y
Tally Foster and David Foster	Palewell	Y			

Apologies: Penny Cowell, Adrienne Cleasby, Adam Windmill, Michael French.

1. Minutes of AGM 29 July 2023 (previously circulated)

Approved

2. Matters arising from the minutes

The trolley requested had been provided to Palewell.

3. Accessible Community Area Project (previously made available on the web were the bid to the Richmond Community Fund (RCF), submitted in December 2023 and the award letter from RCF of May 2024)

Chair opened with a brief **overview**. After AGM in July 23, where the key elements of the Project were set out and discussed, the Richmond Community Fund (RCF) opened in Oct 23 and closed for bids in Dec 23. Meetings and consultations were held in Oct-Nov 23. The RCF award letter (on website) was received in May 2024. The aims were those outlined at the 2023 AGM – an improved area for existing plot holders and a new option for existing plot holders struggling with their current plot (to move to cultivation of a raised bed); and enhanced community engagement (wheel chair access, 3 selected partners). Key features:

- 5 Raised wheelchair accessible beds (with an initial allocation of 2 for partners, 3 for existing allotment holders seeking to move, downsize or potentially those who prefer to start with a small area).
- Removal of rubbish and clearance to create a patio or platform area for viewing/relaxing, teaching and training at back.
- Improved safety of area at the back by introducing fencing, probably a dead hedge (in cooperation with Barnes Common Association).
- Wildlife Biodiverse showcase area
- Levelling and addition of 6 new benches on Green and patio. Majority of the time the area would be reserved solely for plot holders use

Three partners had been carefully selected based on having a close-local base, experience of organizing public visits and tried and tested arrangements for visit supervision. They are:

1. **East Sheen Primary School** would initially be allocated one raised bed for its small Special Educational needs group to enhance their learning (group of 5-10 pupils) and use the platform overlooking Beverley Brooke for curriculum delivery classes of up to one hour during term-time weekdays, only on 19 occasions across a calendar year. [Since the meeting the School have clarified that only 3 pupils from the SEN group-each with teaching support i.e. 3 teachers/supervisors- will undertake cultivation at any one time. Classes on platform will be scheduled, one hour curriculum classes. For these, teaching supervision is based on ratios: Youngest group has one person to 5 pupils, the oldest group 1 to 10 or 15 depending on subject].

2. **FisH** – a well-known Barnes-based befriending service for elderly and isolated local people, again with a well-established programme of visits and its own transport, planned 9 visits pa (around an hour each) to enjoy environment and use benches etc. Will not become directly involved in horticulture.

3. **Dose of Nature (DoN)** – a charity based in Kew supporting GPs Richmond and Kingston, including the 6 local GP surgeries. DoN activities are based on research on the positive health and well-being benefits of access to nature. They would initially be allocated one bed for their cultivation group (10 people - not all would attend at once) and as a muster point for weekly visits by their supervised walking groups (of typically 6) over the summer (only) before they head off elsewhere (Richmond Park etc). [Since the meeting DoN have provided copies of their comprehensive policies -details to follow]

A schedule of visits would be agreed with all partners and no visits would be permitted outside of this schedule. An annual **User Agreement** with each would set out BHAS requirements (including to stay within the community area, to provide proper supervision, entry and access by Hertford avenue entrance only). There would be no right to go outside of the community area nor for casual visits. An BHAS Working Party would oversee and monitor the arrangements (see below for post meeting update).

Producing the bid had involved a huge amount of work in a very short space of time, with 12 meetings on site, including 2 consultative meetings for members in Oct/Nov. It ran to 27 pages plus 11 supporting documents from, amongst others, 2 Councilors and 4 organizations. The Award was £25K – plus BHAS matched funding of £5k cash and volunteer time (a total project value of £50K). There were some special conditions, notably to submit a Safeguarding Policy (item later on agenda) and to agree arrangements with the Council Allotment Officer for the piece of path at the front of the area to be improved (by LBRuT at no cost to BHAS or the project).

The bid had been careful to float the possibility that a phase 2 might be required if the project was successful, reflecting feedback at AGM 2023, to enhance infra-structure further (mentioning a covered area and toilets) thus laying the basis for a future bid and funding.

Questions and Discussion

There were a large number of questions and contributions. The main themes were:

- **Project origins**, especially whether the Council or the proposed partners had pushed the project onto BHAS. The response was no, it was a BHAS initiative as discussed at AGM 2023 and we approached the RC Fund and the partners (although we had no control over the RC Fund timescale).
- The **design** of the proposed area, especially whether it allowed sufficient turning space for wheel chairs, and potential impact on the existing Green. The chair explained that they had consulted the Council's disability partner but that if changes were necessary to ensure comfortable wheel-chair accessibility, they would be made. To make the most of the evident Urban Planning experience, he invited a member of the audience who had raised the questions to join the WP on this aspect. The Green was an integral part of the plan and would definitely continue, including retention of all rose bushes. The three roses at the very back would be moved but not lost [Post AGM comprehensive review of design launched - details to follow]
- Weight and **numbers of visitors** to site. Mention of 'whole school visiting', associated fear of noise implied and impassioned plea that the School be allocated its own plot. The chair commented that there seemed to be a misunderstanding here as the School had not requested a plot and the proposed raised bed in the Community area near the Hertford Avenue entrance, provided a much more limited and enclosed environment (than a general plot amongst other plot holders). Also, the scale of the activity is less than implied - only the small Special needs group will cultivate the bed and with individual classes visiting to use the teaching area).
- A main proponent of these views was offered a place on the WP but turned it down. Given the strength of feeling, however, it was clear that various issues needed to be followed up and clarified after the meeting [Post AGM follow up has occurred -further details to follow]
- **Security**: general concerns about people wandering around the site to more specific concerns about access control and personal safety (mention of DoN client group). The chair responded that all partners would be required to provide comprehensive supervision, there would be no right of general or casual access, and access would only be permitted to the Community area not other

parts of the site. A member of the proposed Working party would supervise entry and exit from the main Hertford Avenue gate. He recognized however, that beyond these general points, further information and detail was required [since a User Agreement template has been developed setting out our requirements-details to follow]

- **Points in favour** of the scheme included that one of the BHAS objectives is to promote community involvement for its allotment activities, and the organizations proposed as partners were all trustworthy ones that BHAS had supported or established links with, for example through Charitable donations. There were particularly strong links with the School, through plot holders. One speaker described his experience of volunteering for Thrive in Battersea, which ran on a similar basis, and the apparent enjoyment and educational benefit that accrued, especially to special needs children.
- **Management plan:** lack of an operational plan of how things would work in practice. Was a phased approach considered/possible? It was explained that User Agreements will be required of each partner setting out our requirements (on supervision, entrance and exit and so on), with a BHAS working party to oversee operations, handle any concerns that arise etc. The project milestones (in the bid) incorporated a phased approach to implementation (which could be adapted to respond to feedback and weather conditions) with completion planned for early Summer 2025. [Post-meeting a draft management plan has been produced, including details of management arrangements and a concerns process for ploholders to register any concerns/ issues arising-details to follow].
- **General state of sites:** The Secretary explained that management and letting of plots have been slow and although this was to be discussed later under the Allotment Sec report to the AGM (see below), she commented that in essence this was due to the Council's wish to triage the waiting list. The Allotment Sec had no resource to allocate to plot letting for first 6 months of 2024 due to other commitments, which was why the current Allotment Sec. only volunteered to do this on temporary basis from Sept to Dec 23. However, now some further time has been freed up and additional kind support gained (from Susan Moore). That said, additional resources now apparently allocated at the Council would undoubtedly improve matters further. Other general issues were raised under this item and are gathered together below under AoB (where such issues were also raised).

Finally, the chair summed up that there was clearly a need for more information, communication and consultation, together with additional re-assurance on a number of issues. He would organise that with colleagues [details of planned site-based meetings to follow]

4. Safeguarding Policy: Draft (previously available on website)

After a brief introduction from the Chair, the Policy was approved (by 15 votes to 0)

5. Bio-Diversity Policy: Draft (previously available on website) to approve.

In a brief introduction, the Bio-Diversity Officer stated that this was an area in which the allotments were strong and could contribute to general concern about climate change and habitat loss, as well as the specific LBRuT strategy. As the action plan indicated, changes would be phased in giving plotholders time to adjust to the policy. The Policy was approved (by 21 votes to 0)

6. Constitution

This item was withdrawn as the 2018 amendments had substantially covered the areas of concern.

7. Reports:

Treasurer's Financial Report

The Chair gave the report (provided by the treasurer) in the absence of the treasurer. In summary, BHAS was in a healthy position and had made a small surplus in 2023-4 following a small Covid-related loss the previous year. Reserves stood at a healthy £18K. The matched contribution to the RCF project of £5k was affordable (and had leveraged a £25K investment from the RCF), as were other improvements, such as refurbishment of the shed door [Post meeting update: now completed].

Secretary's report

- As of 29 June 24, 14 plots had been re-let since Sept 23 and a further 6 are listed and expected to be relet in the next few weeks [NB: total of 20 have now been re-let as of 6 Sept 24 and currently 4 are available across the sites. Expected that a further 6 will give up at the end of the current letting period this Sept 24]
- Inspections in Spring 2 visits – 32 letters sent out (16 have given up)
- Concern was raised regarding the number of neglected plots when the waiting list is closed. A renewed request was made to all plot holders to inform a site rep as soon as they see plots not being cultivated.
- Council Officer holds waiting list - 3,500 on list. Following the recent triage exercise approximately 1,200 were removed after lack of response despite multiple contacts, or, having requested removal.

Chair's Report (written report previously circulated)

As time was running short, the chair did not intend to repeat the circulated report. Instead, he briefly reminded members that he had agreed to do up to 3 years (at AGM 2023) and was still searching for a Vice-Chair as a potential successor and deputy. No one came forward and so he asked any interested parties to get in touch afterwards.

8. Election of Committee

All those standing for re-election were re-elected unopposed.

Standing down were Helen Lawrence, the previous Allotment Secretary, Pam Islip, a longstanding Priory rep and volunteer at events, and Nadia McKenzie, a Priory rep. The chair and meeting thanked all three for their excellent service and efforts over many years.

Vacancies included the need for 2 site reps for Priory and one for Hertford. An Events volunteer was urgently for the vacant role on the Committee (to lead on established events and consider introducing new ones). There was a vacancy for a Minutes Secretary on the Committee and vacancies for the working party on the community project. There were no volunteers for these roles at the meeting, and so suggestions of people to approach were invited.

9. AoB

A range of issues for attention of the committee were raised including:

- A Tree Management query relating to trees at the back of plots 70,68 and 66 on priory. Photographs had been taken and the matter referred to the Council (who are responsible for trees) for action. [Post meeting update – trees have been trimmed following request to council officer].
- Requests relating to rubbish management, including requests for a skip for Palewell, and waste bins at Pavilion and Palewell. Possible need for future skip at Pavilion and Palewell mentioned. [Actioned since meeting and completed at Palewell site – not required at Pavilion site].
- The entrance gate to Pavilion needs repair or replacing. This had been raised with the Council, but no action had happened. [Post meeting update – this has been actioned and gate repaired but some concern re stability of remaining gate frame raised with Council].

- Sports balls had entered the site (Hertford Avenue) from the Richmond Park Academy and students had been climbing over the fence to retrieve them, which needed attention.
- A question was raised concerning the sale of products containing peat in the shed, namely Jack's Magic. The chair explained that it would be phased out at the end of the year, in line with legislation and the Biodiversity policy, when stocks are exhausted (unless it became a peat-free option which it might).
- What happened to the event for volunteers? [Since AGM an event has been organised on 30 September]
- A suggestion that 2025 might be the 100th anniversary of the formation of the society. Richmond Reference Library holds published minutes of BHAS from 1926 and a member offered to investigate the matter further to see if the real start date was 2025 as the minutes referred to an inaugural formation of the Society in 1925.

.....