

ICKLETON ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT – 13 March 2017

Welcome to the ninth Annual General Meeting of the Ickleton Allotment Association.

The most significant event of 2016 was the addition of a second water standpipe at the top of the site. This was completed in early Spring and was completely self funded. Although a number of members helped in the project, by digging trenches and clipping pipework in place etc, I would particularly like to thank Stephen who purchased all the fittings on our behalf, did all the plumbing work required and masterminded the whole exercise.

The ongoing cost of water is working out at less than £5 per month so, at the moment, we are able to absorb the cost without increasing the annual subscription. However, every little helps, so please continue to use your water butts as much as possible to minimise the cost and note, standpipes are only for filling containers and hoses may not be used.

We had around 25 members last year, which is down from our peak of about 40 soon after the allotments were established. This number has remained fairly constant over the last few years and we have struggled to increase it. Although we are attracting new members, the number arriving has been roughly equal to the number departing, so the overall membership remains fairly constant. So, unlike the NHS we are operating a no waiting list policy. If anybody feels they would like an allotment (which come in various sizes) or knows someone who might, please contact any of the committee members who will be happy to guide you with your requirements.

We again took part in the second Ickleton Open Gardens, which took place on 19th June. Unfortunately, as with the first, very few visitors made it as far as the allotments, despite a shuttle service being available. Unfortunately as you needed to be of Olympic pole vault standard to board this, it didn't help. I have written to the Open Gardens committee explaining that we do not wish to take part in any further events

As we did last year we asked our landlord Lewis Duke if he would choose the Allotment of The Year. You can see if you agree with his choice later in the meeting.

Lucasz has continued to help keep the site tidy by mowing the paths and strimming the vacant plots. However, although we are charged a preferential rate, it is still a significant oncost. To minimise this we applied for and obtained a South Cambs Community Chest Grant, which enabled us to purchase our own strimmer. For security reasons we can't leave it on site, but by arranging a number of working days throughout the year we are hoping we will have enough volunteer members to keep the vacant plots under control. We will still ask Lucasz to continue to mow the paths.

After continual problems with combination padlocks we reverted to simple key operated padlocks for the main gate and water stopcocks and so far they seem to be working satisfactorily. We did not have any major break ins last year though there was a minor incident when a couple of shed doors were opened but nothing appeared to be stolen. Our ongoing advice is to take home with you any valuable tools and shut, but do not lock, your shed to indicate it contains nothing worth stealing.

We had a lot of discussion at our regular meetings about rat control and took some actions such as getting rid of the weed dump. After inviting a couple of pest control experts to inspect the site we agreed to implement a one off poisoning exercise towards the end of the year. However, nearer the time we decided that our financial position was not sufficiently healthy to allow us to proceed and we decided to monitor the situation instead. Rat activity this autumn & winter has been what I would describe as normal for a rural allotment site (typical of the activity in 8 of our 9 years) and we have not suffered the extreme damage experienced at the end of 2015. We will continue to monitor the situation and hopefully the recent cold weather will have helped to keep the numbers down.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work over the year. To Chris, our treasurer and manure man. To Ros for taking the time to show prospective ploholders around the site and letting everyone know what was going on. To Kathleen, for liaising with The National Allotment Society (even though they were sometime reluctant to liaise with her) and Lorraine for co-ordinating the seed orders. I'd also like to thank Tim, for being our link to The Parish Council and to Terry for auditing the books.

In conclusion may I wish you all a very productive year ahead.