

## Newsletter

We hope this finds you all safe and well and trust you have all been enjoying your plots in these unprecedented times.

Since the lock down, we have been very proud of the fact that we have managed to keep the site open and as safe as possible for all.

We are constantly monitoring the situation and adapting the measures in place accordingly.

The site has been very busy with many plots looking as good as they ever have.

We would like to thank you all for following the guidelines. The community spirit has been wonderful and the committee would like to take this chance to thank those of you that have gone out of your way to assist fellow plot holders. Whether sharing spare plants and seeds or directly helping prepare plots.

Unfortunately the annual barbecue could not take place and the AGM has been postponed until it's safe and permissible to hold it. More on that below.

We also won't be undertaking our planned fundraising activities at the Ivinghoe Flower show this year as it has been cancelled. Sadly the numerous champion showers and growers that our site boasts won't get the chance to defend their titles this year. Hopefully next year.

We will be looking to hold alternative fund raising activities. Please continue to support them. We couldn't continue to improve the site without these valuable funds.

We would like to thank Dave for keeping the bird feeders topped up. Many species have been noted using them.

We are sure you will all agree that the wildlife areas have been a fantastic addition to the site. Thanks to all those that tend and water them. We were very pleased to have observed some newts in the shallow pond in the spring.

If you haven't seen the website recently, do have a look, there are some interesting photos and a video of the wildlife area, along with other interesting items.

There has been a surge of interest in the allotments since lock down. There are now 16 people on the waiting list. To this end if any of you do not think you will be able to work your plot in the coming season we would like to ask that you consider giving up your tenancy. By doing so does not exclude you from re applying in the future when you are in a better position to fully utilise a plot.

## FOOD BANK DONATIONS

We are well and truly into the season and harvesting is now a major activity. Hopefully you all have plentiful crops. We will be leaving a wheel barrow to collect any kind donations your spare produce to take to the food bank at Ivinghoe Church should you wish to do so. It will be located by the new bench in the carpark under the watchful eye of Barry the scarecrow. Thank you in advance.

It will be there on a Thursday for delivery to the church late that evening.

#### TRACK

As you will have noticed the initial track works have been completed, this was a mammoth task and we would like to thank all those who have contributed in any way. Be that helping out at fundraising events, donating raffle prizes, produce and cakes to sell, and particularly those that have rolled their sleeves up and got stuck in. It's been hard work, often in less than ideal conditions. We could not have done it without you.

For the record we were able to complete the task much quicker than we anticipated. By re-evaluating the specification and undertaking much of the labouring work we were able to complete this project considerably cheaper than we would have been able to had we used a specialist contractor. We were also able to attach netting to most of the perimeter fence, the benefits have been noticeable immediately. We have had no reports of deer damage or stray dogs roaming the site.

The materials for the track were paid for using funds from the Parish Councils allotment cost centre, £1480, a grant of £2000 from AVDC's micro grant scheme (which also allowed the purchase of the netting for the fence) and we received £740 of materials and digger hire when we applied to Pitstone Parish Councils grant scheme. We also used some of the funds generated by our fund raising efforts, £200. We would like to thank everyone concerned for their generosity.

If you notice a low spot or wet area, please feel free to top it up with stones off your plot.

#### AGM

We were unable to hold this in June/July as originally planned due to the pandemic. If this continues to be the case for the foreseeable future we will aim to circulate the minutes for the last AGM, the Chairman's, Treasurer's, Secretary's and Site Wardens reports along with year/period end accounts as soon as we have them available.

This will not be instead of an official AGM, that will take place as soon as it's practicable to do so.

The association's 3 elected officers Brian, Margaret and Marge will continue in their roles until the AGM when the usual election/reelection of officers will take place. 6 of the 7 current committee members will do likewise. Sarah has stepped down and we would like to thank her for undertaking this role for the past few years, particularly her efforts running the plant stalls with Geoff.

We will hopefully have a new committee member in place shortly, if anyone else would like to become involved please don't hesitate to let us know.

#### RENT INCREASE

As you will see from the renewal notification posted in the notice board, Pitstone Parish Council have increased the rents to £15.50. Pitstone Allotment Association's committee were opposed to this increase.

Principally we felt the timing of the rise during the current pandemic was inappropriate and we are aware that we already have the highest fees in the area.

As you may know the allotment association receive £6.50 of this for its operating costs, maintaining and managing the site.

The committee only became aware of this increase after we had submitted our budget plan for the portion of the rents we receive. For clarity this is detailed below.

**Typical breakdown of £481 we get:**

- *NSALG membership = £135*
  - *AGM hall hire costs = £25*
  - *Hedge cutting = £130*
  - *Insurance for association covering Public liability for volunteer working parties etc = £191.18*
- TOTAL: £481.18**

The committee met to discuss if there was a way we could off set the rise. It was agreed it would be inappropriate to use rental income or any funds we had raised. We had received a number of donations and the committee resolved to use some of this money for this purpose.

We are not planning to make this normal practice for future years and are currently looking into ways we can absorb this rise and remove the need for any future rise. We will keep you all informed.

**OTHER NEWS.**

Julie will again be running the Kings Seed Scheme. For those of you that don't know we can use this scheme as a result of being members of the NSALG. The seeds in the members catalogue are 40% cheaper than the regular catalogue. In addition the association receives a commission based on its total sales.

Given the difficulty obtaining seeds when the garden centres and Dagnall hut was closed, immediately after lock down, those of you who used the scheme to stock up on seeds were well prepared for the coming season. If you are interested in using the scheme further details will be emailed soon.

Those of you that are members of the Dagnall hut will have heard the good news that it is hoping to reopen in September. If you haven't heard of or used the hut before we would recommend joining. It's £3 per year and they stock a range of garden supplies, as well as taking potato orders.

Please continue to stay safe and keep enjoying your plots.

PAA committee