

Marlow Allotments Association (MAA) Meeting: 21 January 2025

Attendance: John Stilliard (Chair), Sylvia Miller (Secretary), Pete Cooper, Shaun Kennedy, Denise Bagge.

Apologies/absence: Maren Talbot (Treasurer), Fred Tillier, Harry Ferris.

1. Matters arising from last meeting and AGM

In response to a request at the AGM, Sylvia Miller (SM) undertook to put maps of the location of plots on the noticeboards of both allotment sites. SM also said that she would ask Marlow Town Council (MTC) to remind tenants of their obligation to mow the paths around their plots and keep them safe for walking.

2. Treasurer's Report and membership

Maren Talbot (MT) provided an excellent summary of the current state of the MAA for consideration at the meeting. This showed that there are currently 51 members. The committee discussed the rise in the rate of National Allotment Society membership from £3 to £3.50 in March 2025 which would mean that the Association would now only have £1.50 from each member to spend on priorities such as insurance, the website etc. It was agreed that the MAA would therefore recommend to members an increase in the membership fee from £5 to £6 at the Autumn AGM. It was suggested that the National Society should be invited to provide a speaker for the AGM meeting to put the case for continuing membership in the face of threats to allotment sites.

3. Waiting lists, vacant and neglected plots

It was noted that movement on the waiting list is understandably slow in the winter months. There are currently 3 vacancies at FP and 8 at HH. SM said that she would seek to put an article about allotments in the next edition of the Marlovian. In respect of neglected plots, SM would include a slot in the next newsletter about the importance of making an early start for the year ahead. Action: SM to provide Denise Bagge (DB) with posters to put up on the alleyway alongside FP to advertise plots.

4. Overhanging and neglected trees and shrubs

Following the assessment in September 2024 about the work needed at both sites, DB undertook to speak to MTC about their progress in getting estimates and appointing tree surgeons to tackle the more difficult tasks. MTC had done some clearance, for example, in the corner of FP. Action: DB.

5. Matters for next Allotment Working Party meeting with the Town Council

Items identified for discussion included:

- action to address concern about thefts at both sites and need for new CCTV signs on the gates;
- state of pathways and identifying someone to cut grass on the main thoroughfares;
- playground area at Foxes Piece;
- road access to HH (red line or hatching on road to stop blockages) and
- new fencing for the top of HH to keep out deer. Action: SM to liaise with MTC.

6. Competitions

The committee discussed ideas for making the competitions more relevant and fun for tenants. This included suggestions for a range of competitions over the summer months to be judged by the Mayor and other members of the MTC, for example:

July – Best Flowers

August – Photograph of a strange vegetable

September – Best pumpkin, squash, courgette or marrow

Best Newcomer

Action: SM to seek views from tenants and arrange for them to vote on the options. Votes need to be in by mid-April to make this possible for the year ahead.

7. Plot numbering

SM reported that the MTC proposed to get on with plot numbering over the course of the year. The MTC would be leading but might ask for volunteers in due course.

8. Wildlife habitats

SM and John Stilliard (JS) explained that an area of land at HH that was formerly a difficult plot because of the presence of large trees (Hawthorn and Walnut) had been identified for development as a wildlife area. There was also an update on the relocation of slow worms which was now expected to happen in the spring subject to planning permission. Action: SM and JS

9. Events

Plant and tool stands would be arranged again this year – they were particularly useful for newcomers and an important source of income for the MAA especially with the rise in the National Society membership. The first one at FP would be towards the end of May, the HH event in mid to late June. Members should be encouraged to plant extra seeds now to generate spare plants.

Talks for this year were expected to include: advising and demonstrating pruning of fruit trees (early spring on both sites) and growing dahlias (late summer Foxes Piece). SM would seek views from members about the offer of a talk on “How to avoid fraud on-line” and whether anyone else would like to provide a talk (to be held at Age Concern). Action: SM and JS.

10. Website

The committee agreed that updating the website was important. SM would liaise with Shaun Kennedy (SK) about getting this underway. Action: SM and SK

11. Newsletter

Items for the next newsletter included:

- seeking views about the new approach to competitions;
- getting started on plots after the winter months;
- planting extra seeds to generate plants for the plant sales in May and June;
- and future talks. Action: SM.

12. AOB

The date of the next AGM had been set for 30 October 2025.