

BRIAR ROAD ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION (BRAHA)

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 -2022

Introduction. This report covers the period from July 2021 to the end of June 2022. The BRAHA Committee has decided that due to poor attendances in previous years an Annual General Meeting will only be called this year if enough plot-holders request one.

The Committee. The current members of the Committee are: Alan Charles (Acting Chair), Tom Crosland (Hon. Treasurer), Graham Day, Helena Fogel (Minute Secretary), Alison Horwood, Dennis Leigh (Site Co-ordinator), Philippa McCabe, Ben Renton (Hon. Secretary), and Gill Ware. Alan Charles remains the Acting Chair until a permanent Chair is appointed. Gill Whitelegg, one of our two other committee members has moved away and resigned her position, and Jim Boocock has also stood down. The committee wishes to thank them both for their contributions during the year, especially Jim Boocock who has undertaken many tasks on behalf of the site over the years including hut maintenance, planting wildflowers along the River Crane boundary and running the barbeque at open events. All remaining members of the existing committee are willing and able to stay in post for a further year. BRAHA Committee Members are always available to deal with any site-related problems and queries that may arise. To contact a committee member details of their plot numbers can be found on the notice boards by the Andover Road gate and outside the hut (or a message can be left at the hut). The Committee meets once a month to review site issues and plan plot activities.

The Site. Most site plots are presently, or in the process of being, let with the exception of one which the Council wants left vacant for a few more years following the eradication of Japanese Knotweed which grew on it. Some plots remain neglected this year. The councils new Allotments Officer has inspected our site and written to those whose plots are giving her cause for concern requesting that immediate action is taken to improve them, failing which eviction notices will follow.

The Finances. As at 30 June 2022 BRAHA had a total of £4781.16 in the bank. We now have new accounts open with Metrobank to allow us greater flexibility in managing our funds compared with previously when we relied on a Building Society. A separate account now exists to allow users of the Council parking permits to pay their share of the cost of the permits direct to the bank.

Covid 19. Allotments have remained largely unaffected by the pandemic and many plotholders have been able to spend more time on site as their working patterns have changed. However some plots have suffered because their tenants have been caring or unable to visit due to Covid. The Community Hut has been re-opened and is again accessible to all site plot-holders. A First Aid kit is held in the hut so please make sure that you are familiar with the hut entry code and the way the lock works in case you need to gain access in a hurry. Speak to a committee member if you do not know the hut entry code.

Fund raising. The 2022 Twickenham May Fair did not happen this year but the Committee was able to raise funds with the return of our pre-Christmas social in 2021 and two seed, plant and tool sales in April and May this year. Attendances at all three events were high and the plant sales in 2022

were very successful. It is hoped that later this summer we can resume our fund raising summer barbeques and socials and have our usual pre-Christmas social, to which all are welcome.

Accessible Plot (Number 35) – The Raised Bed Project. Work has continued during the year on the project to construct several raised bed mini-plots for use by plot-holders who no longer feel able to manage a full sized allotment. The site has been cleared and levelled, 8 raised beds of two different heights have been constructed and filled with top soil, and a donated shed erected. The beds are ready for use and so far one plot-holder has taken up residence. The pathways still require further attention to allow them to withstand footfall but the bulk of the hard work has been completed. If funds permit a greenhouse will be purchased for the benefit of users. The committee extends its thanks to the many volunteers who gave their time to get the project off the ground, especially those who assisted in moving over 10 tonnes of topsoil from the Andover Road gate and adjacent pathway into the beds. Anyone interested in exchanging their full-sized plot for a raised bed on the accessible site should contact a committee member.

Wildlife. Our site remains home to a wide variety of wildlife – birds, amphibians, insects and mammals. Plot-holders are asked to do whatever they can to ensure that this diversity is maintained and supported. During the year camera's were set up by the Zoological Society London (ZSL) to check for the presence of hedgehogs, a number of which were subsequently identified. Further research into the presence of bat species has also continued; last time a check was made two years ago 5 different species were counted.

Volunteer Days. Normally each year the committee organises several volunteer days to ensure that the site is kept looking presentable. Most of this years efforts have concentrated on setting up the accessible plot but we shall continue with the more routine jobs like entry-path weeding and compost bin emptying as the year progresses. The more volunteers we can muster the easier the tasks become, so if you can spare an hour or two when the call comes we shall be pleased to see you.

Allotment Officer. We are pleased to see that the Council has appointed a new full-time Allotments Officer with adequate support staff. Her name is Jo Rogers. She inherited a significant backlog of work and problems and has worked hard to clear them. Plot inspections and follow up action has resumed, the waiting list is undergoing a thorough review, and each allotment site – including ours – has been visited to learn about the problems and issues each face. We look forward to a long and productive relationship with Jo.

BRAG (Borough of Richmond Allotment Group). The Association has two seats allocated on the BRAG committee. BRAG is an umbrella group of all the allotment sites in the Borough which meets to discuss issues common to each site and to liaise with the Allotments Officer. Our representatives aim to learn from the best practices from other sites and to impart our experiences of running our own for the benefit of others. For example our communal compost bin facilities has been visited by several site representatives interested in setting up their own arrangements

Summary. Coronavirus continues to have a bearing on the way the site functions but it is not so restrictive as last year as we learn to work with it. Our site is fully functional and continues to be well worked. The Associations finances are holding up well, even without the benefit of the May Fair, leaving us in a strong position to cope with any unforeseen problems which may come our way. We

welcome the many newcomers to our site, some of whom have faced quite a challenge preparing their plots for cultivation, and we look forward to seeing the remaining beds on accessible plot number 35 occupied in the near future.

BRAHA Committee, July 2022.

(ALLOTMENT~ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022 18.11.2022)