



Issue 5 Winter 2007/08



UNVEILED: Kingston's Allotment Strategy for 2008-2018

The Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners welcomes the publication of the Royal Borough of Kingston's draft Allotment Strategy 2008-2018 and the recognition that allotments provide a valuable contribution to the environmental sustainability and social inclusion in Kingston's community. The plan is out for public consultation and the Council are hoping to take some key decisions in February 2008. The increasing demand for fresh fruit and vegetables and green living has promoted renewed interest in allotments. The Council's figures state that there are 1240 plots across the borough. Currently the waiting list has approximately 250 residents wanting plots. Many of the allotment sites in the borough have suffered from a lack of investment over the years, and

Capital Investment Plan

this strategy is offering to generate a meaningful budget to ensure a sustainable future exists for Kingston allotments that meets demand.

Allotments and allotment gardening feature in no less than 10 RBK strategic documents. Their overall value to the borough is

Voluntary Management

wide and offers far reaching environmental benefits, and the opportunity for many people to engage in a healthy lifestyle all

year round. Management of allotment sites is also under review. The success of those sites that took on voluntary management in the early eighties will now be an inspiration to other sites, and the council has a commitment to: 'encourage wherever possible the voluntary devolved management arrangements of allotment sites.' The resulting reduction in council administration and management will offer the opportunity for additional money for improvements to sites. This, as well as the clear social benefits of allotment holders working together to improve their environment, is clearly a recipe that is

The Federation and Quadron

'win win' for all concerned. In 2007 two sites have formed Management Groups or Associations, and for them voluntary management is no longer a distant goal. Another key council objective is 'To create a strong and productive partnership with its stakeholders in allotments;' K FAG and Quadron. The Federation re-formed by invitation of the Council some 4 years ago, now represents the interests of allotment holders for both voluntary and council managed sites. The Federation has worked tirelessly with the council to highlight the needs of allotment holders. The Federation therefore urges all interested parties to respond to this report, and the chair starts the ball rolling with a formal response on behalf of K FAG.

K FAG Responds to the Strategy:

Draft Allotment Strategy 2008-2018

The Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners welcomes the publication of the Royal Borough of Kingston's draft Allotment Strategy 2008-2018 and the recognition that allotments provide a valuable contribution to the environmental sustainability and social inclusion in Kingston's community. In support of this document we include our own comments which we hope will prove useful in the development of the strategy.

Capital Investment Plan

For years many of the allotment sites in the borough have suffered from a severe lack of capital investment resulting in decay of the facilities and service they offer to the public. The Federation will watch with interest as to how the Council intend to generate a meaningful capital budget to deal with a sustainable future for allotments in the borough.

The Federation is keen to be involved in the progress of the Annual Implementation Plan. The capital investment plan clearly needs to be prioritised and the Federation believes that where practical the recovery of allotment land that is currently deemed un-lettable is key to reducing the current waiting list of 247 residents. The Federation has already proposed a simple category system for identifying the status of allotment land as a) let-able, b) let-able after clearance by Council or tenant and c) unlettable e.g. forested or waterlogged and available for other environmental uses. The Federation maintains that land should not be classed unlettable until all reasonable measures have been taken to ensure its recovery into allotment use. The Council's figures state that there are 1240 plots across the borough. Does this represent all the land area allocated to allotments or only

Continues on page 3

VOLUNTARY MANAGEMENT - Tea Party to celebrate 25 years of growing success



On a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon, early in September, Beverley Park Allotment Association held a special tea party. This was an anniversary celebration of 25 years of Voluntary Management.

The plot holders brought along an amazing selection of beautiful homemade cakes, the Association provided tea and soft drinks and it was a very successful and enjoyable afternoon.

Beverley Park was the first allotment site in the Borough to take the plunge and become Voluntary Managed. 25 years ago the future for allotments looked bleak. Beverley Park was typical at that time of many sites in the Borough, lots of

vacant plots, overgrown with bramble and scrub. Interest in allotment gardening was at an all time low. The site had only 16 plotheolders, battling on, determined to keep their allotment site going. At the tea party, looking around the site, the picture is transformed - a full, well kept site with 41 plotheolders, we really are bursting at the seams. Beverley Park has not only survived, it has developed and thrived, long before the current growth and popularity of allotment gardening.

12 years ago we came to a turning point. The condition of the allotment site was pretty dire so we decided to start on a programme of reclaiming overgrown plots one by one and let them. Around this time the Council were persuaded to build a separate driveway down to the allotment site, this helped enormously, previously we had only very limited vehicle access through the park. Gradually the plots were cleared and let and year by year the site improved until 7 years ago we were at last full, with a waiting list.

We planted a small orchard on an unused area to mark the millennium and an old wooden stable building next to the orchard used as a communal store, was renovated by the plot holders. The trees were under planted with wild flowers and benches have been placed around and it is now a very attractive area. We cleared scrub and rubbish from a couple of plots on the edge of the site, heavily shaded and unsuitable for cultivation, and grassed them over. There are plans to plant early Spring bulbs on this area and benches, surplus after the New Malden High Street renovations!, will add the finishing touch. Beverley Park Allotment Association is very proud of it's site, it is our efforts which have made it such a special and successful place.



Beverley Park's 25th anniversary of Voluntary Management was indeed a very special milestone, well worth celebrating Well Done All

SITE LIAISON OFFICERS (SLOs') TO MEET REGULARLY

The Annual SLO's meeting took place on a sunny Saturday morning in Surbiton. On the 3rd of November K FAG's leader Dudley, chaired a gathering of 13, and there sure were a lot of issues to discuss. To hear all the gossip you must attend the next meeting, but here are the key issues that raised the temperature in the hall.

A major point that came across at the meeting is the problem of neglected and uncultivated plots, and the negative effect they have on a site. The apparent absence of plot monitoring, failure to issue 'notices' and, vital lack of follow through. Real issues just waiting to be addressed, on several sites it seems.

On a more positive note, Joan McCann from the Addison Garden sites report that they have joined forces, and formed an Association. 25 plot holders met, agreed a constitution, elected a committee, and it's all systems go. Well done and good luck to you all.

Many thanks to Joan for organising the morning Refreshments, enjoyed by all at the end of the meeting. Please note the date for the next meeting to be circulated by Gloria soon.



SLO's AGREE TO 3 MONTHLY MEETINGS

KFAG responses to the councils proposal : (continued from page 1)

the allotment land currently identified in the draft strategy report as lettable or un-lettable?

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners: This organisation was formed by invitation of the Council and represents the interests of allotment holders for the majority of both voluntary and directly managed sites. The Federation feels that, since the Council has out sourced its service requirements for allotments to Quadron Services, the Federation has been unable to be as effective in representing the views of allotment holders to the Council. The Federation believes that a review of its role within the partnership relationship and an acknowledgement of the Federation in more than name only, would fulfil the original intentions for its existence.

Site Liaison Officers: are volunteers acting on behalf of the Council. For them to be effective and motivated, their roles and responsibilities need to be updated, clearly identified as a partnership activity, agreed with the Council and Quadron

Voluntary Management: Voluntary (self) Management of allotment sites was first introduced by the Council in 1982. Since that time they have made significant progress both in making improvements to their sites and the clear social benefits of group activities. Rent concessions are made to these sites by offsetting the financial management and administrative costs being carried out by the allotment holders rather than the Council. These rent savings are designed to support the costs of site improvements. The Federation recognises that voluntary management is not necessarily appropriate for all sites. Certain sites are too small to benefit further and large sites in the borough would probably have to be broken down into more manageable administrative areas. The Federation is also aware of the nervousness of allotment holders in taking on the responsibilities and liabilities of Voluntary Management. There is general agreement that, this should be undertaken on a stage by stage basis where sites form their own management groups or Associations to get the feel of self management before becoming independent. Allotment holders are also nervous of the potential financial consequences of entering into such an agreement where there have limited financial resources. We argue that VM leases should recognise this by omitting financial liability for hard assets and capping costs for maintenance to what can reasonably be afforded in any one year. Failure to implement this may well lead to 'bankruptcy' of the allotment site and responsibilities reverting back to the Council. In recent lease renewals the Federation has worked with the Borough Valuation Department to establish consistent and model lease and Land Registry documentation. The Federation believes that this should be applied to all VM sites. We also believe that support for a future towards Voluntary Management should be accompanied by direct leadership from the Council, actively promoting its benefits, and KFAG working directly with the Council to show that it is worthwhile.

Miscellaneous comments:

Clause 5.2.4 Although we agree that walking or cycling to and from allotments is preferable, it should also be understood that the delivery of composts, fertilisers and other garden sundries and equipment often necessitate the use of a car. The provision of car parking contributes to a successfully run site.

Clause 6.1.4 Plot discipline requires significant resources to monitor and enforce. The process requires the exchange of correspondence and may lead to the possible issue of an enforcement notice within the tenancy period. The Federation views the current system of random inspections ineffective. The Federation suggests a more structured approach as follows: Inspections of all plots should occur regularly and at least twice a year. These should be followed, where necessary, by the issue of a 4 week termination letter at the beginning of December to obviate the need to issue next years rental demand.

Clause 6.2.2 We support this clause and suggest it specifically mentions the problem of bee keeping on sites in close proximity of other plot holders. This pays due regard to the dangers of anaphylactic shock and the potential liability of the Council.

Clause 6.3.2 We understand that this clause is not supported by the allotment holders of both Addison Gardens and Addison Gardens Extension and the Federation considers that this is neither a priority issue nor appropriate for consideration in this strategy document.

Yours sincerely

DUDLEY HEWSON. Chairman. On behalf of Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners.

To view the strategy go to: www.kingston.gov.uk/green_spaces_strategy ***or*** Tel: 020 8547 5757 ***to request a hard copy.***

The Following Horticultural Societies and Allotment Associations have Joined K F A G. If you would like to find out more about their services, membership details or plots please contact our secretary for more information.

Chessington Horticultural Society

Malden and Coombe Horticultural Society

Alric Avenue Allotment Association

Elm Road Allotment. Association.

Kingston Vale Leisure Gardeners Association

Tolworth Community Gardening Club

Tolworth and District Leisure Gardeners Association

Kingston Horticultural Society

Surbiton Horticultural Society

Beverley Park Allotment Association.

Hook Leisure Gardeners Association

Tudor Allotments Association

Dickerage Rd Allotment Association

Looking for a plot on a voluntary managed site, then Kingston has 8 sites for you to choose from. Do remember several sites are now holding a waiting list. So get in touch today.

- Alric Avenue- John Streeter (020 8949 3868)
Alric Avenue & Cambridge Avenue, off Coombe Lane, New Malden.
- Beverley Park- Gloria Wallis (020 8942 9686)
Parkview next to Beverley Park, New Malden.
- Elm Rd- Doreen Wickens (020 8395 4882)
Elm Rd, off Clarence Ave in New Malden.
- Hook Leisure Gardens Assoc. Danny Chisholm (020 8399 1325) Hook Rd ,rear of Kings Edwards Recreation Ground.

Voluntary Managed Sites

- Kingston Vale- Stanley White (020 8942 5688) Off Robin Hood Way, next to Coombe Hill golf course.
- Malden Manor- Joe Gilhooly (020 8942 9671) Manor Drive North in Old Malden.
- Park Rd- Julia Cork(020 8255 7785) Park Rd, near Ham Gate. (Tudor Allotment Association)
- Wolsey Drive- Julia Cork(020 8255 7785) Wolsey Drive& Cardinal Ave, near Tiffin Girls school (Tudor Allotment Association.)

Seasonal Tip

New-comers to allotment gardening, with internet access may be interested in visiting The Observer Magazine Organic Allotment blog. Here you can follow their activities over the past season, or follow their progress over the coming season as they begin to tackle yet another neglected plot.



A great way to plan for next season over the wet winter months when you cannot get out and about Why not visit blogs.guardian.co.uk/allotment ,and steal some great ideas

KINGSTON FEDERATION of ALLOTMENT GARDENERS

Federation Mission

The Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners aims to promote allotment gardening in Kingston, and provide support and advice to plot holders. If you would like to find out more about it's activities please contact the secretary.

Gloria Wallis.
Tel.:020 8942 9686 or
e-mail: gloriawallis@hotmail.co.uk

Comments and contributions for this Newsletter are most welcome by the editor Marjie Grant. Tel: 8395 0383 or e-mail to: marjon69@sky.com

COMMITTEE and OFFICERS of the FEDERATION 2007 - 08

Chairman	Dudley Hewson	020 8549 5434
Secretary	Gloria Wallis	020 8942 9686.
Treasurer	Vacant from Dec 2007	
Addison Gardens Assoc	Joan Mc Cann	020 8549 8424
Tudor Allot Assoc	Ron Cook	020 8549 1373
Alric Ave Rep	Peter Struik	020 8642 9837
Co-opted	Marjie Grant	020 8395 0383
Kingston Vale leisure gardeners	Jim Hunt	020 7987 2639
Tolworth & District Leisure Gdns	Helen Vibart	020 8942 9947
Corresponding member	Mike Lapworth	020 8546 4423
Corresponding member	Gill Pollard	020 8715 3673

Promoting Allotment Gardening in Kingston.