

Cripley Meadow Allotment Association 2019 Annual Report (for 2020 AGM)

1. Introduction and Overview

By Manda Joyce

As I was drafting this report some of Cripley Meadow was still under water. I've been a member since 2016 and this is the first time I've faced **flooding**. Thankfully, fellow Committee members have seen it before and helped us steer safely through, with support and co-operation from members. The Site is in the flood plain and we can expect it to flood every four or five years as it has done for the last few decades at least. The Association does get a reduction in site rent in recognition, and we can only hope that climate instability doesn't make it a more frequent and severe occurrence.

As the waters recede, we can get on with our Spring tasks. My plot was crying out for manure and I shared the frustration of those who had to wait to do deliveries in cars etc, but a precautionary approach is needed as our tracks lie over shifting gravel subsoils and were never built to carry the weight of modern vehicles.

Tracks are not a new concern. For several years, the Association has had money set aside to tackle **track repairs**. Last year we finally identified contractors (Oxford City Council Direct Services) with the right skills and equipment to start sorting the worst sections. Note that these repairs do not address long-term structural deterioration. We intend to continue repairing the tracks over the coming years, but it's an expensive job - £4,182 last year - so we must cherish what we have.

With both cost and noise/air pollution in mind, at last year's AGM we canvassed members for their views on **driving and parking** on site. After some discussion, and with divergent views expressed, the Committee was tasked with gathering more data. We put out a questionnaire late last year. Our thanks to the 114 members (just over half of our membership) who responded. There is more detail under "8. Driving and Parking Update" below, but the key points are that the majority are in favour of drivers driving very slowly on site, but there is no general appetite for radical change in our existing vehicular access and parking arrangements.

Environmental sustainability has long been at the heart of our Association. There is a lot of good practice around the Site, and the Committee continues to beat the drum for composting, minimal use of weed-killers, a balance between honey bees and wild bees and other pollinators, seed swapping, re-use and recycling, solar energy, responsible waste- and water-management, and so on. Thanks to a prompt from a member, we have just decided to experiment with a small area of longer grass on the Green. We hope it will provide a little more diversity in habitat without losing the utility of the Green for picnics, games etc, and without wind-blown weed seeds unduly affecting plots. From now on, we intend to change the Rules so that **new/replacement sheds must include rainwater harvesting** arrangements.

Financial sustainability is equally essential. Cripley Meadow celebrated 125 years of allotments last year; we are in a long chain of custodians. Some members will be familiar with the story of the reclamation of Cripley Meadow allotments that began around 15 years ago. The Site had fallen into near-wilderness, was under haphazard and divided governance and plagued with vandalism. The Association had only a handful of members and was broke. There was a real risk that the land would be taken out of allotment use. Thanks to much hard work and a huge effort in bringing in external funding – over £160,000 over the last ten years (from the National Lottery, the University, the City Council and others) - we now have a secure, productive and well-managed site, and a thriving membership of around 215. Over this period, **our association has accumulated**

considerable communal assets: orchards, fencing, gates, bridges, the shop and other sheds and storage, water tanks, pipes and pumps, mowers, strimmers, shredders and hand tools, safety equipment, raised beds, picnic tables and event shelters, wheelbarrows and so on. Their total value is over £60,000. That is the good side of external funding. **The bad side of our £160,000+ of external funding is that it has masked the imbalance between our costs and our regular income.**

The challenge now is to maintain our assets without the external funding we have come to rely on. For one thing, much grant funding is limited to developing new things. For another, public and charitable finances are squeezed with no sign of let up, so more and more organisations are dipping into a smaller and smaller pool.

At last year's AGM, our treasurer explained, "we are currently re-negotiating our lease with the Council (our landowner), we are planning to create a maintenance plan so that we understand what we are going to have to spend money on maintaining, over the 21 years of the new lease, as we expect that more of the maintenance will be the responsibility of the Association (in theory it has always been, but with local government finances as tight as they are now, it is going to be implemented)." Over the last year's negotiations, it has become even clearer that we cannot look to the Council for help in maintaining our assets. At the same time, the University's Castle Mill development is coming to an end, and with it the payments we have benefited from compensation for the disturbance caused (for details, see " 6. Lease Re-negotiation Update" and " 7. Castle Mill Update" below).

In other words, **we must be sure we can sustain ourselves financially without outside help.** We shall continue to try for external funds where we can, but we must plan for a far less benign context than we'd become used to.

The rest of this introduction sets out **what the Committee proposes to do to ensure the Association's financial stability over the long term.**

To begin with a small point, we propose two **changes to key deposit arrangements.** First, to aid clarity in the accounts, we intend to show key deposits separately from other Association funds. This is because key deposits belong to members; we are only holding them in trust. The sum involved is fairly large – around £4,000 at any one time – so it is important that key deposit money doesn't get 'mixed up' with the Association's own money. Secondly, at the moment there is no limit on the time after which departing members can come back to us, return their key and ask for their deposit back. We need to close this open-ended liability, so propose to introduce in our rules **a time limit of six months from departure for the return of the key deposit.** This will make it easier for the Association to know at any one time how much needs to be set aside for key deposits. We propose leaving the key deposit itself unchanged at £25 (which about enables us to cover key cutting costs. Ours are special secure keys that are hard to copy but that makes them quite expensive to have cut).

Now to more substantive financial matters. Over the past six months, the Committee has carried out an exercise to identify everything the Association owns, with estimates of **the cost of future maintenance or replacement of all our assets.** For details of how we have gone about this, see "4. Assets and Maintenance Planning", below. From this work, we have derived a sum that we need to 'save up' each year (this 'saving up' is properly called a 'sinking fund'). **We need to build up a sinking fund** as soon as possible.

How big does the Sinking Fund need to be?

- A) if the Sinking Fund aimed to cover the depreciation of our assets *from next year on*, it would start at 0 and grow by £6,100 each year.

B) if the Sinking Fund aimed to cover the depreciation of our assets *up to next year and from then on*, it would need to start at around £18,300, and grow by £6,100 each year.

The Committee's view is that A) would leave us too exposed but B) would be overly conservative. We are therefore aiming for the middle ground.

So, where is the money to come from?

There are really only three possible sources:

1. Cutting regular expenditure (and diverting it to the Sinking Fund)
2. Our existing surplus
3. Increase in payments from current members

It is the Committee's view that we should not cut our regular expenditure in order to build the Sinking Fund. However, in the interests of transparency, we put this option before members. The two discretionary items that could be cut would be skips (£1,680 a year) and communal grass mowing and strimming (£4,000 a year). Removing the skip would mean members had to dispose of all their own rubbish themselves. For some members this is simply not practical and it would risk promoting more car journeys and dumping. It would mean more WP hours spent on clearing plots after members leave. Stopping communal grass mowing would put more onus on individual members to cut paths, headlands etc. Again it is not practical for some members to do this, and would mean members spending more time on grass management and less on growing, and seeding weeds from a neighbour's unmanaged grass could create unnecessary tensions. It would also add to the already long list of things to monitor and enforce at audits.

Moving on to our existing surplus: At the time of writing, we are forecasting a year-end closing balance of around £28,000. As mentioned above, around £4,000 of this is actually members' key deposit money that we hold in trust. So in reality are talking about £24,000. It looks like our forecast regular income for next year, will more or less match our regular outgoings. However, it is recommended that we hold a year's running costs in hand, to manage cashflow and as contingency (note that a sinking fund is not the same as a contingency fund which is for unforeseeable costs). A year's regular running costs are around £11,200. So we are left with a surplus of £12,800 (worked out as follows: £28,000 - (£4,000 + 11,200) = £12,800).

In previous years, we would have canvassed members for ideas for development work to be funded from our surplus. But it is the Committee's view that **our £12,800 surplus be used to prime the Sinking Fund**. Effectively, this is the residue of the University's £20,000 Castle Mill 'inconvenience money' making a meaningful start to funding future maintenance and replacement costs.

Assuming that members wish to retain skips and communal mowing/trimming, and that the surplus of £12,800 *is* used to prime the Sinking Fund, then we propose that from next year (2021/22) on, **the annual contribution to the Sinking Fund be considered as part of our normal annual budgeting** and be met by the membership in that year. **That means an increase in membership fees**. We have compared our fees with others around the Country and we are currently well below average, so this increase would not take us out of line with national norms. More locally, all of Oxford's allotment associations are facing the same challenges, so local allotment fees are likely to increase across the City.

The Committee last proposed an increase in membership fees at the 2015 AGM and they were put into effect after the required year's notice. The pole rate went up from £2.50 to £3.75. In 2015, there was membership support for fees continuing to increase gradually. However, in the intervening years, with such a large bank balance, the Committee did not feel justified in following this through. As explained above, there is now some catching up to do.

We propose introducing the increase in stepped fashion over two membership years. Next year, the increase would be 50% with 20% the following year. Although that sounds like a lot, it is from a relatively low base. Here are some examples of what the proposed increases would mean in practice:

| | Now | Proposed 20/21 increase | Proposed 20/21 total | Proposed 21/22 increase | Proposed 21/22 total |
|-------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 5 pole half plot | £18.75 | £9.38 | £28.13 | £5.62 | £33.75 |
| Small plot ¹ | £22.50 | £11.25 | £33.75 | £6.75 | £40.50 |
| 10 pole full plot | £37.50 | £18.75 | £56.25 | £11.25 | £67.50 |

And of course the Association will continue its existing policy of helping out in cases of financial hardship.

We are required to give a year’s notice of increase in membership fee. **Notice of these increases in membership fees is hereby given.**

Will fees need to go up again soon? Possibly; we have made no allowance for inflation, for example. We are currently in a low inflation phase of the economy but that won’t last forever. On the other hand, if it turns out we have been overly pessimistic, we’d have the choice of reducing membership fees in the future, or of spending the surplus once again on project and development work. This would be up to members to decide at a future AGM.

We also propose to **overhaul Working Party arrangements**, effective immediately after the AGM. WPs are an essential aspect of our allotment community and we could not manage our huge site without them. The time that members spend clearing and covering plots etc. is invaluable and the Association benefits more from members’ contribution of time than the money equivalent. It is one of the ways we can contain the cost of running the site. However, not everyone can manage 2 hours on a Sunday morning and for those members there is payment-in-lieu. (Note that we used to offer one Wednesday evening WP, but after two years of zero take-up, it was withdrawn). At the moment, the payment-in-lieu-of-WP, where relevant, is added to the annual invoice but is voluntary (although most do pay it). We do not consider it fair that a few members contribute neither time nor payment-in-lieu to our community and therefore intend to change the Rules to make it **compulsory to do a WP or pay in lieu**.

Working parties are two hours long, so it is anomalous that our rules refer to an annual commitment of 3 hours. We propose **reducing the WP commitment from 3 hours a year to 2, while increasing the payment-in-lieu from £5 per hour to a more realistic £10 per hour** (so that the annual amount in lieu of doing a WP would go up from 3x£5=£15 to 2x£10=£20).

You will find a general update - “5. Audit and Field Secretary Report ” - from Tia (Audit Lead and Field Secretary) below. However, one item that needs to be highlighted is the continuing high cost of reclaiming plots. Whilst some poorly-managed plots come back to us after the departure of long-standing members, there is also a repeated pattern of members who join with high hopes but major under-estimation of what is involved in managing a plot. Usually, these plots ‘go under’ in the first year. But the audit process, with its built-in delays for action plans, appeals etc., does not enable us to get the plot back quickly enough to avoid nuisance and major reclamation costs. We therefore intend to **introduce a probationary period during which membership can be terminated much more quickly than normal**. Details will be worked up after the AGM, but the

1 Small plots are charged by amount rather than pole to reflect their higher overhead of grass cutting, skip use etc.

idea will be to use the first audit after the member has joined (unless very hot on the heels) as the review point.

2. Last Year in Retrospect

By Manda Joyce

The **Annual Accounts for 2019/20** are circulated separately.

The Committee

From March 2019 to March 2020 the Committee was as follows:

- Wendy Skinner Smith, Plot 40-41 – Chair/Trustee – new member tours, writing the newsletter, managing the working party jobs list, oversight of site grass cutting and tree work, Castle Mill project liaison, lease re-negotiation. Wendy has also been Chair of Oxford's allotment umbrella group, the ODFAA, but is stepping down this year.
- Manda Joyce, Plot 72 and 70B – Vice Chair and Secretary/Trustee – committee meeting administration, new member administration, membership records including GDPR, member communication, website, Castle Mill project liaison.
- Sara Jones, Plot 71 and 70A – Treasurer (outgoing)/Trustee - finance, bills, subscriptions, key deposits.
- Jamie Forbes, Plot 63 – Treasurer (incoming) plus machine maintenance and petrol, social events.
- Emma Delap, Plot 1a - machinery records, tree and shed permissions.
- Sarah Edwards, Plot 120 – trading shop, deliveries.
- Alex Hollingsworth, Plot 81-82
- Keith Holton, Plot 131 - skip renewal, deliveries. Keith also hosts our monthly committee meetings.
- Jeremy Hyde, Plot 91 – recycling, major projects, monthly paid site work.
- Christine Melia, Plot 5a – projects and asset management and maintenance planning.
- Julia Popescu, Plot 127- co-opted to the Committee in October 2019 as Castle Mill representative.
- Tia Sedley, Plot 32 – Audit Lead and Field Secretary.
- Phyllis Starkey, Plot SF7

All committee members help with working parties and/or audits.

Rodney Smith was co-opted to the Committee to help with the orchards, Anna Benn manages the espalier pear trees and Richard Haigh does weed spraying.

Sara is stepping down as Treasurer and from the Committee this year. She has done an immaculate job of keeping track of payments and income, producing regular financial updates for the Committee, getting our accounts checked and presented for AGMs, managed the money side of joiners and leavers, issuing annual invoices, including managing the transition from paper to email. She also covered the role of membership secretary while it was vacant, helped with shop cover and regularly served on the audit team where her knowledge of plots and members was much valued. We thank Sara for 4 years of fuss-free hard work for the Association.

New committee members are always welcome. If you decide later in the year you'd like to join the Committee, it's not too late – talk to Wendy.

On Site

A new mowing team from Oxford Direct Services took on our communal grass cutting contract during 2019, as Arcadian Living left us for pastures new. We replaced the rotten 10-year-old wooden picnic tables with recycled plastic ones that are more accessible and should last a bit

longer (as long as no-one puts anything too hot on them). We have had to replace the bridges between the main site and Cripsey Island as they too have rotted. Gate parts needed to be replaced when they wore out and cylinders replaced when someone glued our locks. At the same time as track repairs were carried out, some areas of the site previously used for composting, were brought back into use as plots (the Site was getting close to full and this has increased our ability to offer plots to new members with minimal delay). And we now have a working solar pump trickle-feeding one of our big water tanks from the stream, thanks to an ODFAA/Oxford City Council grant and Rodney Smith's hard work.

Out and About

We did our bit for 2019's OxClean, clearing rubbish from the Walton Well car park and adjacent areas. We were also had our regular stall at the Jericho Street Fair in June. The unbelievably windy weather didn't stop us from making a stonking £431.50 for our funds, thanks to the generosity of those who gave cuttings, seedlings, rhubarb and cut flowers, and the stalwart gang who ferried the plants and ran the stand.

Several Cripsey Meadow plot-holders celebrated their successes at the ODFAA allotment competition awards event at West Oxford Community Centre in October. Also at WOCC, ODFAA's Pennards plant and potato day in January was well attended by CMAAers and hordes of other allotmenters from across Oxford.

Our Centenary-and-a-quarter

2019 saw the 100th anniversary of the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations and the 125th anniversary of Cripsey Meadow Allotments. Celebrations included the publication of a history book – A Growing Concern – co-authored by Wendy, a reception in the Lord Mayor's parlour and party for 70 on Wendy's plot to which all CMAA members and ODFAA committee members were invited.

Behind the Scenes

For the first time last year, we circulated invoices by email to all members (with the exception of two who do not use email). This process seemed to go fairly smoothly for members, and resulted in fewer stray invoices and less committee admin than in previous years. We also moved the website from an obsolescent platform onto Wordpress, one of the market leaders. The Friends of Cripsey Meadow Facebook page was launched in May, and now has 21 members. Twelve newsletters / all member emails went out over the last year (what a contrast between scorching July's encouragement for water harvesting, and November's advice about staying safe during the floods!). Alongside the newsletters, Castle Mill contractors Beard gave us regular reports covering the progress of their work, as well as news of badgers and foxes. In October, the Association joined the National Allotment Society so that we could access their expertise in allotment law while negotiating our new lease with Oxford City Council.

3. 2019 Shop Report

By Sarah Edwards

After the winter closure, the shop re-opened in March for regular Sunday morning sessions. We were slightly busier than last year, although wet weather and flooding meant we had to close on 3 Sundays during the Autumn. There were 91 visits to the shop, including some outside the normal times, as not everyone can make it on Sundays.

Sales were slightly higher than last year and total takings were £1,376. The Shop's net income, or profit, for the year was £288. The shop aims to make a small profit to contribute towards site costs, although its main purpose is to provide a service to members, and particularly to supply things which are difficult to obtain without a car. By buying in bulk we get good discounts.

As usual we sold second hand tools and equipment, which had been left or donated by members, as well as the usual range of new products. Members also use the shop as a place to donate spare seeds, which other members can take for free. Hazel sticks were popular again and we hope to have more available in coming years, as a greener alternative to imported bamboo. We will continue to look for ground cover options other than plastic. Members have requested that we stock potting compost and we will get some for when we re-open in March.

Thanks are due to everyone who helped, including Sara Jones, Tia Sedley and Phyllis Starkey who staffed the shop when I was away, and to those who made donations of seeds and spare change.

4. Assets and Maintenance Planning

By Christine Melia

Over the past ten years or so, as the Cripsey site has grown and developed, we have amassed a number of valuable items or assets. Some are large (sheds, fences, tracks, machinery, water storage tanks etc) and some are smaller (gardening tools, furniture, gates, locks, signage etc).

All these items together represent a significant investment for the Association and, in 2019, the Committee decided to draw up an integrated register of assets, not only to calculate the overall value of what we own, but also to help manage the maintenance and replacement of these items.

We are now able to budget for this more accurately, alongside our general site running costs. We gathered together the information on assets from various accounting records, inventories, plus a site survey, and compiled a list of over 100 separate items. This gave us an instant snapshot of the value of our combined assets which was over £60,000. By adding in purchase dates and price, plus maintenance costs, we were able for the first time to estimate future expenditure on assets. The register was refined earlier this year by adding in depreciation costs and we now have a more accurate figure for annual maintenance and replacement costs, so we can plan with confidence.

We propose to review the asset register annually, to sit alongside a site maintenance plan detailing what jobs that need to be done, by whom, and when across the year.

5. Audit and Field Secretary Report

By Tia Sedley, Audit Lead and Field Secretary

Two full audits were undertaken in May and October 2019. The October audit picked up on a significant number of plots where action had already been asked for after earlier audit but had not been carried out. The most serious cases related to a lack of maintenance and/or cultivation, weed control and well safety. Others concerns picked up in the October audit, many again not for the first time, related to plot paths, brambles growing on boundaries, lack of bamboo and other weed control, overgrown trees, glass or other rubbish on site and plots failing to have a maintained path or a plot number.

The purpose of the audit process is to ensure that we comply with allotment law and the terms of our lease with our landlord, Oxford City Council, to identify problems that might cause issues for neighbours or the site as a whole, and ask members to deal with them before they get out of hand. In the majority, though not all, of the serious cases raised by the 2019 audits members liaised effectively with the Committee about any difficulties they were experiencing and how best to bring their plot back within the rules.

In future I will conduct more regular audit field surveys which will focus month by month on specific issues - such as paths, plot numbers, structures, height of trees, wells etc. to help support the

work of the team undertaking the May and October audits. Such surveys will also inform the Committee about any serious ongoing concerns so that, in urgent cases, the plot-holder can be contacted direct and more immediate action taken.

6. Lease Re-negotiation Update

By Wendy Skinner-Smith

Negotiations for our new Tenancy Agreement with Oxford City Council (effective March 2021) continue. Oxford's allotment umbrella group, the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA) is mandated to negotiate with OCC on behalf of their members. All Oxford City allotments are members of ODFAA.

The process has thrown up many issues about the future of allotments which have required more information and research. Oxford City Council was unwilling to commit to a condition survey of each site, or to develop an allotment strategy as requested by ODFAA, as promised in the Council's own Green Spaces document, and advised in Local Government advice on allotments. In these rapidly changing political times and housing shortages, ODFAA decided that we must make the new agreement with OCC more secure. Since March 2018 ODFAA's committee has met on 8 different occasions with OCC Client Officers: a senior surveyor and the (now ex-) Head of Parks and Oxford Direct Services.

In September 2019 the Council solicitor produced a first draft Agreement based on the current model. This was followed by proposed revisions to OCC's Allotment Rules. After discussion with its members, at the end of 2019, ODFAA made initial comment on the content and implications of the draft documents. ODFAA has also explored options beyond the current model, requiring access to further information and legal guidance. This was encouraged by OCC, so that all options were understood fully, and that the most appropriate recommendation could be made to ODFAA's member Associations.

From the beginning, there has been a stated willingness by OCC and the ODFAA to find a positive way forward for the next 21 years. But continuing uncertainty and lack of clarity over key issues such as current/future budget allocations, the management of trees, ditches, council-owned buildings, asbestos rooves, insurance and the pros & cons of 'lease' or 'licence', have meant that matters are behind schedule as we go into the final year of the existing Agreement.

To pursue advice, two members of the ODFAA executive committee, myself and Phil Baker, met first with Freeth's solicitors in January 2020 (on a "mates' rates" basis organised by Cripsey Meadow). Then Manda Joyce and I (with both my Cripsey Meadow and ODFAA hats on), accompanied by Phil Baker of ODFAA, met with the National Allotment Society's Legal and Operations Manager, Liz Bunting. Both proved extremely useful and we are making progress. A report on these meetings will go to associations.

The ODFAA Committee concluded that sufficient evidence was now available to draft a recommendation to member associations on the nature and content of the new Agreement. The detail of this, and the reasoning behind it, will be contained in a paper which will go to ODFAA's April AGM. Further updates will be available to Cripsey Meadow members after that, but meantime it is already clear that there will be more financial responsibility on allotment associations for the maintenance of their assets, including large items like fences, gates, and tracks and any development. Associations have been asked to plan for this and **must** develop an asset register and maintenance plans to ensure they will have the income to will meet this expenditure.

7. Castle Mill Update

By Wendy Skinner Smith

This project has consumed vast amounts of my time and patience since 2010. The paper and electronic file mountains are huge and the number of changes en route is without precedent in my experience. Even Ken Baker (remember the Conservative Education Minister who introduced the National Curriculum) could not compete with the amount to read and fume about!

However, by the time we have our AGM, the Castle Mill project should be complete. From Cripsey Meadow we will see the containers with mature trees and a secure badger run below. We know from Eco Consult reports that that two badgers have continued to use the badger run, along with hedgehog and cats but with little recent evidence of fox or muntjac. The 'Badger Hotel' (the fenced area by our gate) is being maintained and is a necessity when we flood, as 'Badgerland' (the wooded area by our Shop) can become inaccessible. The sightlines at the Badger Hotel were problematic on the corner outside our gate; they have been improved although we await the removal of a bramble clump to complete the work and accommodate the lizards that are supposed to bask on top of the badger run. This will also improve our entrance visibility and deter graffiti and other vandalism.

The Castle Mill orchard and espaliers, gifted and planted by Oxford University, has lost just two trees and is proving a welcome use of a strip that never had much of a purpose even before the buildings. The water butts which were part of the mitigation for the erection of Castle Mill are finally filling as the drain, incorrectly installed by the previous contractor, has been replaced. The tanks limp a little, having been mended so many times due to the initial incompetent installation. But the large ones can supply us with 1380L X 3 and the smaller ones about 750L x2 - all from harvesting rainwater from Castle Mill rooves.

Our badger fence and the mammoth work to enable it (thanks Jeremy) was also paid for by the University, in consideration of the impact of badgers displaced by the building of Castle Mill. Thanks to advice from Nigel Fisher, Oxford University's badger supremo, the badger fence works - as long as we keep it clear and inspect regularly.

Contrary to some malicious rumours Cripsey Meadow was never, ever paid to be quiet about the building of Castle Mill! We complained at the right time. Pragmatically we worked on what was possible and best for our members and the sustainability of our site. We have had about 50 members who originated in Castle Mill and our age profile is falling. Our neighbours provide great security, and protection from the extensive development of the railway. Bonfires are more difficult, but that would probably have happened anyway.

We made a new legal agreement with the University at the start of the recent stage and this has been largely honoured. The water butts might remain a bit of an issue. The arrival of Paul Renton-Rose, our link person at contractors, Beard, and latterly Andrew Schedler, consultant acting for the University, have added the bonus of professional, really considerate contractors and managers who have always listened, responded and done their best within the limits imposed by the project and their masters. I have remained observant and attentive throughout, leading some people to comment that I might have determination and persistence in common with a certain animal. I have been ably assisted by Manda for these final stages which has been an enormous bonus, but I am truly ready for Roger Dudman Way to return to just being one of my routes to the allotment...now finely enhanced by 5 magnificent green walls.

8. Driving and Parking Update

By Jamie Forbes

As requested at last year's AGM, we created a survey to gather more data on members' views on parking and driving on the Site. We sent the survey out late 2019 to 209 members and received 114 responses, a response rate of 54%.

First we asked for members to estimate their trips via Car, Bicycle and Foot in both the growing season and off season. The results of their reported total and average numbers of trips per month are illustrated in the following table.

| | Drive | | Cycle | | Walk |
|---|-------|--|-------|--|-------|
| Total Trips per month Growing Season (for 114) | 334.1 | | 481 | | 37.96 |
| Average Trips per month per member Growing Season | 11.1 | | 16.0 | | 1.3 |
| | | | | | |
| Total Trips Off Season for 114 | 190.5 | | 217.3 | | 12.17 |
| Average Trips per member Off Season | 6.4 | | 7.2 | | 0.4 |

Extrapolating from the 54% who responded (and assuming non-respondents are similar), we might expect roughly double the number of trips than represented in the data. We may attempt to further confirm these reported numbers with CCTV at the gate over the coming year.

Three quarters of respondents own a car. Of these, 61 percent used their cars in the growing season. Close to half of these people used the car between once and four times per month though 14% used the car less than an average of once per month. The heavier car users tended to be people living farther away or people with mobility issues.

| Method of Travel | Response of 114 | 0-1 Trips | 1-2 Trips | 2-4 Trips | 4-10 Trips | 10-31 Trips |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Drive | 61.4% | 14.0% | 14.0% | 14.9% | 12.3% | 6.1% |
| Cycle | 64.9% | 7.0% | 4.4% | 16.7% | 23.7% | 13.2% |
| Walk | 31.6% | 19.3% | 7.9% | 4.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

We further asked about the reason for using a car to go to the allotment. Among the responses below, it is clear that almost everyone with a car uses it to transport heavy or bulky material/crop to and from the allotment.

| Reasons for using a car | Percentage of respondents |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Transport of heavy goods/equipment | 74.1% |
| Distance from home | 19.6% |
| Time limitations | 15.2% |
| Convenience | 11.6% |
| Mobility issues | 5.4% |

Summarising the questions below:

- Close to 30% of respondents indicated that the presence of cars affected their enjoyment of the allotment.
- Over a third of respondents have witnessed members driving too fast on the allotment while close to half of respondents had not.
- Three quarters of respondents agree that 5 miles per hour is a reasonable speed.
- Although there are a quarter of respondents with no opinion, 43% of respondents agree that cars put stress on the paths.
- Respondents, in general, do not believe cars on the allotment cause pollution.
- Nearly two thirds (63%) see no reason to change the allotment car access policy.

| | Strongly Agree (1) | Somewhat Agree (2) | Neither (3) | Somewhat Disagree (4) | Strongly Disagree (5) | No Opinion D/K | Total | Weighted Average |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------|------------------|
| Having cars on the site negatively affects the enjoyment of my allotment | 7.02% 8 | 22.81% 26 | 19.30% 22 | 11.40% 13 | 37.72% 43 | 1.75% 2 | 114 | 3.51 |
| I have witnessed members driving too fast on site | 13.27% 15 | 18.58% 21 | 11.50% 13 | 8.85% 10 | 34.51% 39 | 13.27% 15 | 113 | 3.38 |
| Considering the possible presence of young children on site anytime during the week, I am concerned with the speed of cars on the allotment and think 5 miles per hour (in 1st gear just over walking speed) is appropriate | 50.88% 58 | 26.32% 30 | 9.65% 11 | 3.51% 4 | 8.77% 10 | 0.88% 1 | 114 | 1.92 |
| Cars on the allotment put undue stress on the paths and end up costing considerable sums in maintenance | 17.70% 20 | 26.55% 30 | 13.27% 15 | 17.70% 20 | 10.62% 12 | 14.16% 16 | 113 | 2.73 |
| The presence of cars on the allotment causes unacceptable pollution to the air and soil | 14.91% 17 | 8.77% 10 | 21.93% 25 | 26.32% 30 | 21.05% 24 | 7.02% 8 | 114 | 3.32 |
| I am happy with the situation and see no reason to change our car access policy | 32.46% 37 | 30.70% 35 | 13.16% 15 | 11.40% 13 | 8.77% 10 | 3.51% 4 | 114 | 2.31 |

Respondents were further given a choice of four suggested options. The options were invented to represent a range that would give an indication of the opinion of the issue.

| | |
|---|-------|
| Do nothing. Everything is OK as is | 56.1% |
| Restrict parking to only a few selected spots distributed around the site | 26.2% |
| Ban all cars from the allotment and encourage drivers a £20 pass for Port Meadow car park | 12.2% |
| Allow car access only to members who attend 3 work parties or contribute £100 to the allotment operating budget | 5.6% |

After a discussion of the results within the Committee, it has been decided to continue with the existing access policy:

- to encourage fewer car trips
- to encourage members get car park permits
- to educate drivers to not drive onto the site when there is standing water or frost
- to remind drivers that the lower speeds reduce the risk of accident and injury to other site users
- to raise awareness that the lower speed also reduces wear on the tracks which is especially dramatic when there is subsurface soil moisture.

(End of Report)