

Allotment report – 5th May 2024

a. Plot allocation update

All plots have now been allocated and are being managed.
We have no one on the waiting list.

b. Plot condition

After the dreadful winter months, with the unusually high amount of rain, many plot holders have struggled to get on their plots to start preparing for the spring planting season. This has meant many plots are behind where they would normally be at this time of year.

However, now that the persistent rain appears to have abated, people are returning to their plots and working hard to catch up. At the moment we do not have any plots where we believe attention is required.

c. 2024 / 2025 Budget Planning

The Project Plan for the Allotment Advisory Group has been approved by the Council and work is now underway to deliver on these plans. An update is below.

General Maintenance & Repairs

- Pest Control Contractor
Recent reports from the Pest Controller suggests that the rat population on the Silverstreet side has improved but there remains a lot of activity on the field side. We continue to monitor the bait boxes and replenish the bait as and when required. We have also imposed a temporary suspension on allowing livestock to be housed on the allotments. This is being reviewed monthly with the expectation that we can release the suspension soon.
- General Maintenance & Repairs.
We have asked the Council Handymen to inspect the Plot Marker posts and replace any where they have rotted and fallen over. The expectation was that this would require the purchase of new posts, however, one of the plot holders has donated 50 posts which significantly reduced the expected costs. Wooden posts are £10 each and we anticipate we would have required at least 25 new posts.
- Skip / Waste Disposal budget.
As we didn't need a skip last year (2023) we will be ordering one for this October to allow the plot holders to remove any rubbish that appears to be accumulating.
- National Allotment Association membership.
Our annual membership has been renewed.

Ongoing Projects

- Weed membrane to cover vacated plots to prevent weeds.
Now that all the plots are occupied, we feel we have enough weed membrane and therefore have no intention to buy any more this year.
- Prize money for the "Best Kept Allotment".
The Best Kept Allotment competition will be awarded in October.
- Support for clearing plots so we don't have to rely on volunteers to clear vacated plots.
Now that all the plots are occupied, we will not require support from the handymen to clear any redundant plots.
- Improving the A1 boundary by planting Pyracantha shrubs (or similar)
This is now planned for later in the year. We will probably need to plant the shrubs in the autumn as it may be too late to plant them now as they need to be planted early to late autumn.
- A small budget for the continuation of the Community plot.
We have spent the allocated budget for the Community plot, which is now well stocked for growth in the summer.

Future projects

- Polytunnel for growing seeds by plot holders who don't have access to a green house. Space for the Polytunnel has been identified and a potential Polytunnel has been identified. We now need to purchase the proposed tunnel and call together a team of volunteers to make ready the space identified and erect the tunnel.
- Eco toilet to improve health and hygiene facilities at the Allotments for plot holders. This project has been cancelled as we cannot find a composting toilet that doesn't require emptying, and we cannot find anyone willing to take on that responsibility.
- Front fence replacement as it needs repair / replacement. – NOW COMPLETED
- Installing a defibrillator in the allotment car park
It was agreed that there are enough defibrillators in the village to meet the needs of the residents. We will be producing a map showing where they are and will display this in the Allotment Notice Board.

d. Additional funding for the Allotments

We have been informed that the Allotment Group has been awarded an additional £2000 to its budget for 2024. We are now considering projects where we could obtain maximum benefit.

One idea we are working on is to make the allotments more accessible to disabled people by installing some raised beds which are wheelchair accessible. We will continue to explore further.

e. Engagement with NHS Health & Wellbeing

Through the community plot, we are looking to engage with Health and Wellbeing at Buckden Surgery, to see if we can offer access to the patients of Buckden Surgery who might benefit from access to open spaces and social engagement, in line with their concept of social prescribing. We have identified three Social Prescribers with whom we are trying to set up an introductory meeting to show them what we can offer.