

Allotment report – 31st January 2025

a. Plot allocation update

When I joined the allotments, four years ago, there were at least 5 plots which were so overgrown with brambles and weeds as to be unusable. I'm proud to say that ALL areas available as allotment plots are now cleared and available for use. We now have 42 full plots and 6 half plots at the allotments which are all allocated.

However, we still have seven plots where the 2025 rent payment is yet to be received. Chaser emails have been sent. The invoices were sent out in November 2024 and payment was expected by end December. We may find some of the plot holders who haven't paid may have decided to give up their plots and have yet to notify us.

We have no one on the waiting list.

b. Plot condition

All plots are now in the dormant stage but appear to be in good order apart from two. As Chair I am reassured that the reasons for this are reasonable and work on them will commence soon

c. 2024 / 2025 Budget Planning

An update is below.

General Maintenance & Repairs

- Pest Control Contractor – Monthly monitoring and bait replenishment continues. From the last report, dated December 2024. High levels of rat activity have been seen across the site with all bait boxes needing to be replenished, however, this is not unusual for the winter months as the rats seek food and shelter closer to homes.
- General Maintenance & Repairs. - The handymen have been working with us to clear the remaining overgrown plots, all of which are now available for use.
- Water Supply - The water supply to the allotments has been turned off during the winter to prevent burst pipes. The supply will be turned back on in April
- Skip / Waste Disposal budget. - The skip was provided in October and a full load of general rubbish was taken off the allotments for disposal. We will assess the condition of the plots in September 2025 and decide if another skip is required in October 2025 materials.

Ongoing Projects

- *Improving the A1 boundary* - We are working with the Buckden Tree Warden (Ray Magness) to develop a natural hedgerow along the A1 end of the allotments. This is achieved by packing down branches and brambles in between wooden stakes and then allowing nature to take over. This is free of cost, creates an impenetrable barrier and provides shelter for wildlife. The hedgerow will need to be maintained and will require pruning annually but this will be undertaken by the allotment volunteer group or the handymen.
- *Buckden Orchard* – At the A1 end of the allotments there is an area that is not big enough for a plot so, working with the Buckden Tree Warden, we are developing an orchard. The orchard will have apple trees, plum trees and pear trees within it. The produce from the orchard will be made available to all the plot holders and donated to Diamond Hampers.
- *Free soil improver*. – We are looking to obtain more free soil improver from the Huntingdon County Council. We have been told that the supply has gone and are waiting for the next batch to become available.

2024 Operating Plan update.

- Polytunnel is now fully functional and available to all plot holders to assist in growing seeds and seedlings. The feedback from the plot holders has been mainly positive. The plan is to develop a "Grow and share" program where plot holders offer any surplus seedlings to other holders. We also intend to grow tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and chillies to be donated to Diamond Hampers.

- Eco toilet to improve health and hygiene facilities at the Allotments for plot holders has been cancelled. The Composting Toilets we have identified all require regular emptying, which is an activity that no one is willing to take on. If the Silverstreet development goes ahead and the decision is to utilise the allotment driveway at the route into the new estate, we would like to ask the developers to install a sewage pipe to the front of the allotments so we can build a toilet in the future.
- Front fence replacement is now in place. However, the Buckden Tree Warden is looking to plant a hedge along the fence. This will provide shelter and nesting space for the birds and wildlife.
- Installing a defibrillator in the allotment car park has been cancelled as it was felt there are enough defibrillators within the Buckden estate.

d. Next years budget and project plan

We are aware of the financial constraints that the Parish Council are trying to manage. Therefore, we have no plans for any major projects work during 2025.

e. Engagement with NHS Health & Wellbeing

We have had zero response from the Health and Wellbeing group at Buckden Surgery. We will engage with them if they make contact with us.

f. Engaging with Bramshed.

A contact with Bramshed has been made, however we were too late to create nesting boxes for hedgehogs, insects, bats and birds as they are already nesting. We will continue to work with them and look to produce nesting boxes for the coming autumn.