

# BALDOCK ALLOTMENT AND LEISURE GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

December 2014

Dear Member/Plot Holder

With Christmas and the New Year almost here it is again time to write to each member of our Association, and to each plot holder who is not, to give notice of our AGM on **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 7.30pm**. A copy of the Agenda is attached. Please note that the meeting is moved to **Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre** (formerly the Town Hall) in the High Street opposite "Costcutters". As usual beer, wine and soft drinks will be on sale.

Most of you will know that by now we had hoped to call an EGM during the year to approve the mandate for our Association to take on self-management of both Baldock sites. As time went on we then hoped we could bring that decision to this AGM, but sadly this is not so. Having finally agreed the Head Lease for Clothall Road site between Herts County Council and NHDC earlier this year, we awaited the first Draft of the Sub-lease between NHDC and the Association. That finally arrived at the end of July and your committee met in mid-August to discuss it. The Draft contained several points of concern not least of which was an 11-month notice period, never previously discussed with us, which of course we cannot accept. Through our Solicitor these concerns were promptly conveyed to NHDC and, whilst agreement has since been given to answer most of them (not the 11-month break period), we still await nearly four months later to see them recorded in an amended draft of the Lease. And so it goes on!

There is however some good news for those on Clothall Road site if you haven't already seen it. One of the unacceptable conditions of the Lease for that site was for us to maintain the boundary fence, already over 30 years old, in good and substantial repair and replace with similar materials when necessary at potentially considerable cost. At a meeting in September NHDC thankfully agreed to fully fund a replacement fence around the whole site using existing concrete posts. That work has just been completed to a high standard and should now last for many years **provided items and compost heaps, etc., are not placed against it so please avoid doing so**.

For self-management, our constitution has to be significantly altered and then approved by members and we will need to issue new agreements between this Association and each plot holder. Whilst much work has been done to draft both documents, we cannot complete them until we finally receive acceptable final drafts of the Leases.

More good news is that considerable work to improve the inside of the allotment shop is well under way. Quite simply it is being transformed primarily through the tremendous work being done at very little cost by Brian Homewood (North Road plot holder) to whom we are extremely grateful. On your first visit in 2015 you will be amazed, and the range of stock available is expanded too.

Thank you to all who submitted their seed orders in time to benefit from the additional 7.5% discount. In total, 970 packets of seed and 36 non seed items were ordered with considerable savings to members and the Association gained by £133. Delivery will soon be made for us to collate orders just after Christmas and then we will let you know when they are ready. Subject to demand, a further order will be submitted after the AGM where catalogues will be available.

A January delivery of potting compost, taking advantage of additional December discounts, enables us to hold our popular Compost Sunday 10am – 12 noon on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015. We have ordered 3 pallets of the sought-after "Jack's Magic" as well as other favourites. Sadly, the cost of new stock has inevitably increased but old stock will be sold at existing prices so do come early.

Seed potatoes, onion sets and shallots, and pea and bean seed should be delivered (weather permitting) in time for our usual potato weekend on Saturday and Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> February 10am – 12 noon on both days. Varieties and prices, which you will see compare very favourably with what you will find elsewhere are on the attach list. Thereafter, the shop is open every Sunday 10am to 12 noon until 1<sup>st</sup> November.

Plentiful supplies of both Ace of Herts compost and horse manure have been available on both sites (for members only) and more is delivered when it runs out provided money continues to come in – 50p for each barrow load taken. If you haven't already, please pay Martin or me or at the AGM, and thereafter at the Shop on a Sunday.

Annual subscriptions (currently £5) are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January and can be paid at the AGM or at the Shop thereafter. We encourage new members and, in fact, under the terms of leases for both sites, when self-management comes, all plot holders will have to be members. It is a requirement of the leases that each plot holder holds £5m public insurance liability cover which is already provided for members in the subscription paid. Alternative cover taken individually is likely to cost a lot more with domestic policies almost certainly not suitable. Membership brings several other benefits and the £5 is more than recouped on the savings you can make – plus you get the insurance cover included.

Overall, this has been a successful trading and gardening year but a frustrating one as far as progress towards self-management is concerned. Do come along to the AGM and support your Association working hard for your benefit. We look forward to seeing you there. In the meantime, we wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and good gardening in 2015.

Mick Camp  
Chairman