



Under New Management!

Dear Member/Plot Holder

As the end of another gardening year rapidly approaches we can reflect upon our successes, and no doubt some disappointments, with the crops we have grown and perhaps begin to plan for next year. Your Committee can also look back on nearly four years of hard graft, negotiating with NHDC and HCC the terms of leases for our two allotment sites. At times the way ahead seemed difficult but with persistence and tenacity, we have reached the best outcome we are likely to achieve as the fruit of our labour. Now, with the overwhelming vote in favour to adopt self-management from those present at the recent EGM we can begin to prepare the ground for the transition of responsibility to our Association with the aim to go live on 1st April 2016.

The next step comes with our AGM, now brought forward to 11th January at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall. Please accept this as your formal notice of that meeting and note the change of date and venue. The agenda for the meeting is attached. This will be a particularly important meeting for all plot holders giving the opportunity to hear more about our plans as well as the chance to question any issue you may have.

In particular, from 1st April, all existing and new plot holders will be required to sign a new Tenancy Agreement with this Association rather than with NHDC. Considerable thought has been given by the Committee to word this agreement which is probably more detailed than the one currently in use by NHDC, but which is intended to enable us to manage the sites more effectively and productively.

Perhaps the most significant issue will be that, under the terms of the leases, every plot holder, and by implication every co-worker, is required to have Public Liability Insurance to the sum of £5 million – cover previously provided by NHDC but which is already included within the membership of this Association. This means that to retain a plot on either of the Baldock sites you **MUST** be a member of this Association or allow NHDC to allocate you a plot elsewhere in the district. There is no other alternative. In future years, membership subscriptions will be included in plot rents and paid at the same time, but for 2016 we encourage payment at the AGM and thereafter at the Allotment Shop. Payment already made by 1st April will be deducted from plot rents for 2016. Associate members will continue to pay their subscriptions at the Shop.

The great benefit is that we shall retain all the plot rent monies from both sites. We have to pay NHDC nominal site rents, our water and insurance charges, maintenance costs, and the cost of our administration. With self-help and voluntary support our costs can be considerably less than those of NHDC. Hopefully in time, this can lead to cheaper plot rents but, initially, we need to invest in both sites to improve maintenance and facilities and build up a reserve fund to cover necessary repairs and replacements as they arise.

We shall be in control of all income and intend to spend it wisely seeking to get jobs done as cheaply as possible using voluntary labour whenever we can – we also have £10 million Employer Liability Insurance for every member. So it is up to us all to make the best of this great opportunity knowing that what we do and achieve is for our members' benefit. It also gives us the best chance of securing both sites for future generations.

Self-management is already working well at many allotment sites across the country, and they recommended it to others. With your help it can also work well, and to our advantage, in Baldock. Please come along to this AGM – it is very much in your interests to do so. There will be the usual bar to aid the conviviality of the evening. We look forward to seeing you there. In the meantime we wish all of you and your families a very Happy Christmas and good and exciting gardening in the year to come.

Best wishes

Mick Camp
Chairman
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