

## **Chair's report, Saughton Mains Allotments Association, September 13, 2020**

*prepared by Jean Carletta (Treasurer and Communications Volunteer)*

Thank you very much for complying with our coronavirus restrictions. We were delighted to stay open. Often you tell us that our site feels like a rare safe haven outside the home. Our restrictions are still the same - ploholders are expected to use gloves to handle communal touch points like the gate, and encouraged to wash their hands afterwards. We still value people sanitising where lots of people touch, even though we know the locks won't last as long that way. We regret that the Scottish Government guidance on the cleaning required for public toilets to open is beyond what we can do on-site, and so they will have to remain closed. Our only change over the months has been a slight relaxation about the use of communal tools. We encourage people to use their own tools if they have them, but allow communal tools to be used as long as hand hygiene measures are taken. The water will be staying on until November this year to make hand washing possible. We're hoping that once this crisis blows over we can have a social event, since we know you value them – it's just not the time. And if the crisis is making you struggle with your plot, do let us know – there are many people who have volunteered to help keep you going.

We now handle committee business by email, and instead of circulating meeting minutes, tell you about decisions by email and Facebook. We also encourage you to give us suggestions and have discussions on Facebook, and help people to do that via email (or even in person, outside) when they aren't Facebook users. It's important to me as the Communications volunteer to know if anyone is unhappy, since this state of affairs could continue for a while. Do tell me how you are feeling about the Association - we can try new techniques for talking if this isn't working for you.

Scrap metal collection can now restart, so you can leave items (metal only!) behind the metal shipping container. Please be very careful not to harm the fence of the adjoining plot.

The Council has decided to allow fires between 1 October and 30 April. Please remember that you aren't allowed to burn treated wood, plastics, or rubbish, or to bring materials from off-site to burn, and do try not to annoy your neighbours with the smoke. This is for disposing of diseased plants and woody prunings that can't be composted.

The Council used to mow our major paths, but were struggling to do it. This year, we've taken that over, and as a thank you, they've given us a better lawnmower. It handles the terrain much better, but we still need you to keep those paths clear of stones, hoses, and anything else that would get in the way. Ian has also been very

active in re-letting sites that have been abandoned, which is keeping the place much tidier and making it easier for new ploholders coming in.

Orders for potatoes, onions, and bulk goods like compost are due in by 11 October - you can find the forms on the chalet porch. You can pay by BACS this year, but you still have to fill out a form. This year's zoo poo is coming on 23 October – we're getting more than last year, and will have limits on the first few days to ensure everyone gets a whack. The delayed spring skip is coming on 30 October, with the usual rules about not bringing stuff in from off-site, no hazardous materials, no mattresses, no green waste, no metal, no wood that can be burned, and so on. We'll circulate a full list before it comes. There will be fewer leaves from now on as the Council will only bring us clean ones, but we're thinking of getting more woodchip.

We are currently writing small grant applications to FEDAGA for 50% match funding to set up communal composting in one of the leaf bays (thanks, Ed!) and possibly to get a set of the less common hand tools for ploholders to borrow. Current tool favourites are a mattock, for grubbing up shrubs and cutting tree roots; a post maul - better and safer for posts than a sledge hammer; a drain spade, good for tree planting, post holes and of course digging narrow trenches; and a digging bar, for very stony or hard ground. Give us your opinions, but quickly, as the applications are due by 30 September!

We are extremely fortunate to have many volunteers who work very hard on your behalf. This year, because we wanted to keep the metal shipping container access to one household, Andrew did all the mowing – all of it! - and Jan single-handedly ran the shop on top of organising the zoo poo and skip and everything else she does. Peter S. is still handling the orders, and Donald and Gill were still uncomplainingly looking after the toilets until they closed. Robert and Kate did a beautiful job fixing the barbed wire above the main gate when the thieves cut it. Witold cleaned up after someone else's bad behaviour. Ed and Kevin painted the chalet in sweltering heat. We've had work parties clear overgrowth, maintain the common fruit areas, mend the perimeter, and I can't even think what else there's been so much. Every time we've asked for a volunteer for something, you've been ready to help – thank you very much for that.