

## Gransdens Allotments Chairman's Report – AGM 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Gransdens allotments are now in their 17th year and the benefits of the wider site now offer so much more than the typical village allotment environment. These additional facilities including Wildflower Meadow, Wildlife Pond and 85 tree Heritage Orchard are now fully established and provide significant enhancement to our allotment experience. Of course, the valued support of many allotment holders in helping develop and maintain these areas has been crucial to their success. Our well attended work parties have called on members to help with a wide range of tasks including tree planting, pond fencing repair, orchard pruning (now quite a task as the trees increase in size!), tidying of vacant plot areas, installation of new site signage and the introduction of increased capacity for rainwater storage.

Regarding finances our end of year balance was a little lower than in earlier years due to the one-off purchase of permanent site safety signage and the cost of disposal of an accumulation of used vehicle tyres. (These are now no longer permitted at the allotments). In addition to a moderate rent increase we intend to hold a Saturday market stall event and sell produce to help raise funds.

We currently have 28 plotholders, including several enthusiastic new members.. There are 2.5 vacant plots available and we have started a recruitment campaign, using for the first time, social media, along with the usual promotions in Roundabout magazine and a wide display of newly designed posters.

Unfortunately we experienced a break-in during early July. I'm pleased to report nothing was stolen and minimal damage was caused. However, a helpful reminder to maintain and invest in site security.

During October we held a further Apple Day and BBQ event. Set amongst the orchard trees we were blessed with excellent weather. A great time was enjoyed by many chopping, squeezing and bottling. For the first time we used exclusively our own orchard grown apples and each variety was juiced separately to enable the fascinating comparison of the many different varieties.

Weatherwise 2023 was the wettest year on record. Here in Gransden we saw 32" of rainfall, that's some 8" higher than average. We are acutely aware of the urgent need to try and adapt to our fast changing climate Throughout this extreme weather I'm pleased to report that the land drainage system continued to cope efficiently. Summer and Autumn cropping was more bountiful this year due to the regular rains.

The newly installed beehives have had a highly successful year finishing with two strong colonies. This is a tribute to our dedicated Apiary team. We are planning to add a third hive during 2024.

We continue to carefully maintain the site and are very grateful to Mike Capps for his assistance in managing the wildflower meadow and also to Des Merrill for kindly bring his tractor and gang mower to maintain the large grass areas.

We are so very fortunate to have such a dedicated Committee and many members and supporters who help ensure our allotments community continues to thrive.

Andy Pearce. April 2024