**BRIGHTON & HOVE ALLOTMENT FEDERATION**

***Committee Meeting 19th November 2012 @ 6.30pm***

**The Haven, Pankhurst Avenue, Brighton.**

**In attendance:**

John Burns, Steve Lucas, Anne Glow, Mark Carroll, Allan Brown, Gary Johnson, Tania Johnson.

**Apologies for absence:**

Lynn Long, Simon Powell, Melanie Matthews.

**Minutes of the last meeting:**

Agreed

**Matters Arising:**

None

**Chates Farm Badgers:**

This issue was discussed at the last BHAF/ Council Liaison meeting (13th Nov. 2012) I have attached an extract from a letter/ email circulated to the Fed. Committee by Allan Brown following a site visit, in order to provide some details and context for this discussion.

“*On Saturday morning (29th October) Steve Lucas, Anne Glow and Allan Brown visited the Chates Farm allotment site to investigate further the badger problem that Steve Chapman (the Chates Farm site-rep) has brought to our attention. (Although this is not the first time this problem has been raised to both the Fed. and the Council.)*

*There is no doubt that the sett is steadily growing and causing problems for the plot-holders. The subsidiary tunnels spreading from the main set are creating collapse in several neighbouring beds and the general foraging of the badgers is making life difficult for the folk on that site.*

*Steve Lucas points out that we aren't being asked to come up with a solution as such, just whether we as the BHAF are prepared to back Steve Chapman's attempts to elicit a pro-active response from the council. I don't know whether, at this stage at any rate, the badgers constitute a serious challenge to the viability of the site, but if left to grow unchecked as it has done over the last five years, the problem will only continue to get worse.*

*Steve Chapman has certainly been struggling with this for some time now and certainly appears to have done everything in his power to get this sorted out. He is not personally advocating one line of action over another - containment or exclusion - and is as concerned about the welfare of the badgers as he is for the plot-holders he represents.*

*Certainly if the exclusion option was pursued, I think the problem could be resolved for less than the £6000 plus price tag the current council estimate stands at. But I'm certainly no expert on these matters. Containment, which would be the preferable option, would be more difficult and expensive to implement and would result in a loss of some of the available space. Other options like male urine, sonic deterrents, electric fencing etc. would probably ultimately amount to temporary exclusion anyway.*

*I would recommend that the Fed. support Steve Chapman's plea for help in pressurising the council to come up with a solution, a solution that ensures that site remains viable for growing*.”

At the liaison meeting David Cooper outlined the three options available to us – do nothing/ no cost; exclusion/ £6000; containment/ £10000. The basic question discussed at the Committee Meeting, is whether we as the FED support Steve Chapman/ Chates Farm?

Steve Lucas highlighted the fact that we aren’t being asked to pay for the solution, just come to a decision as to whether we support Chates Farm. The council’s current policy (having carried out environmental impact assessments) is to do nothing, and to continue monitor the situation, however it was implied at the Liaison Meeting that should the BHAF support either the containment or exclusion options, that the cost would come directly from the allotment budget.

Steve Lucas fears that by doing nothing, the site will become untenable and the site may be lost to developers. Mark Carroll questioned whether the site has statutory protection? Allan Brown felt that the quote for securing the site (ie. exclusion) was overly high. We discussed the ecological impact of excluding the badgers and it was agreed that if the welfare of the badgers was assured, excluding them was probably the only realistic option to ensure that the site remained viable especially as it is one of the few central urban allotments.

There was general agreement on the Fed that we support him and we will contact him to offer him our support and work with him to resolve the issue.

ACTIONS:

Ascertain whether the site has statutory protection.

Write to Steve Chapman to let him know he has the Fed’s support and that we will work with him to resolve the issue.

**BHAF Expenses:**

The Fed covers travelling expenses to meetings – 30p a mile. This may be too small as this hasn’t been updated for some years. Agreed that this should be increased to 40p a mile – proposed by Steve Lucas, seconded Tania Johnson. It has traditionally been difficult to get people to claim. Mark Carroll suggested an attendance allowance for meetings. The mileage system is probably the cheapest option for the fed. It will be up to individuals to claim – these will be made available to the membership under committee expenses.

**Site/ Allotment Associations:**

One of the Fed Objectives is to create more Site Associations and although it is currently on the Fed constitution that site reps can attend committee meetings – but this is impractical. Elected site representatives/ site delegates should ideally be able to attend committee meetings. There was discussion about the ideal size for a committee and whether this policy is practical. It was agreed to trial it and invite existing allotment associations to send a delegate and see how it works. The new constitution will need to be written around this policy. Tania Johnson suggested just having delegates invited every quarter to circumvent the problem of the committee becoming too big and unwieldy. John Burns questioned whether an active site would need to have an association in order to send a delegate. Mark Carroll suggested that in order to make this work practically, smaller sites would probably have to consolidate in order to have a delegate sit on the committee.

Despite the potential problems, namely the committee becoming too unwieldy, there was general agreement that the ‘Association Model’ was they way we’d like the Fed to move and would result in greater representation.

Allan Brown to write to existing societies to see whether they would like to send a delegate to the committee meetings. Steve Lucas pointed out that there are currently about 7 associations (all on the larger sites), so even if all of them attended the meeting it wouldn’t be too many for the effective running of the committee. We need to ensure that they all know it is a trial and at the end of the year we’ll assess the situation and come to a decision as to whether it has been working or whether to split the meetings, so not all site delegates will sit at the same time.

ACTIONS:

Allan Brown to write to the existing site associations to extend the invitation for them to send an elected delegate to attend BHAF Committee Meetings.

Current site associations – Moulscoomb, Roedale, Tenantry Down, Eastbrooke with Whitehawk and Racehill as future possibilities.

(There was some further discussion about whom site reps are representing – plot holders or the council. A site rep that is elected by an association carries different weight to one that has been appointed by the council. Associations have been tried on some sites but have failed. Mark Carroll, felt that there need to be incentives to make associations work. Also there will need to be a degree of amalgamation. This discussion arose again at the end of the meeting, so I will return to the issues raised towards the end of these minutes.)

**BHAF Committee Members – minimum attendance/ size of committee.**

Committee attendance – other committees often work on the principle that if you miss three meetings in a row, without sending in apologies or having a valid explanation, you will be given a warning and ultimately asked to resign if further meetings are missed. There was general agreement that to ensure the efficient functioning of the Fed. Committee, we should adopt a similar policy. However, with the structure of the committee in the process of being revised (i.e. elected site delegates sitting on the committee) it may take a while to arrive at a settled modus operandi.

Mark Carroll suggested that in the future there would be the main committee officers and all other committee members would be elected association delegates. There was a brief discussion about the role of Fed. President. Three missed meetings and a warning will need to be written into the constitution. MC said that we need to start drafting it and pass it around the committee for comment and then make it available to our membership for comment and feedback, so we have an approved constitution in time for the AGM, where it can be formally ratified.

**Development Fund.**

Moulscoomb and Tenantry Down have formally submitted applications to the fed for the development fund and the Weald would like wheelbarrows and notice boards. In principle we agree but would need the Weald to submit a formal application in order to make an assessment and ensure that the funds are available.

The difficulties of getting rubbish removed from the Tenantry Down site was discussed and Steve Lucas would like to make an event in spring, in which a day is chosen, everyone (working party) on site would join in and help get the rubbish removed. Emma Bateman (Tenantry Down) is happy with this plan. MC suggested a man with a van, but given the site details it may be a better option to go with a skip.

Moulscoomb would like a hedge – vote taken and passed, although two members felt that hedge planting shouldn’t be covered by this development fund . Notice boards at Moulscoomb passed unanimously. Whitehawk may be putting in an application and Roedale are also going to submit an application for a chainsaw.

MC discussed the development fund in general and how the funds are shared between sites. He highlighted the need for the fed. to be pro-active in ensuring that the less well organised sites get help with applications and receive funding from the development fund. Steve Lucas agreed that we as a fed should be helping the less developed sites get funding but it usually it takes an active individual or organized site in order to do the work. So traditionally the more organized sites are more proactive and better at getting applications in and carrying out the work. With the Fed. Committee now having more members than previous years, we are better able to ensure the fund is distributed more fairly between sites – for a number of reasons take of the fund has been poor.

Steve Lucas felt that ideas in which the dev. fund is used to bring plot holders together is money well spent. Communal hedge planting/ rubbish clearing etc.

**New Chairperson.**

No further news to report.

**Ash Die Back.**

Allan Brown to write to David Cooper for further clarification and whether we as a Fed have to advise our members over any course of action.

**AOB.**

Steve Lucas mentioned that plots under 250sqm will not be halved – David Cooper discussed this at the last liaison meeting.

Gary Johnson asked whether the fed. will be represented at Seedy Sunday? Gary Johnson & Tania Johnson are keen to represent the fed. Having handouts – leaflets/ business cards etc. were discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 9.30pm.

Allan Brown (BHAF Secretary).