



It's the summer edition – but nobody seems to have told the guy who organises the weather. The bad weather in April-May followed directly on the declaration of a drought. So now that the Thames Water hosepipe ban has been lifted, hopefully everything is about to change again. The main news item this time around is the proposed changes in the management of Ealing Council allotments – details below. Otherwise, there is the Ealing and Hanwell Allotment Show to look forward to and, hopefully, a long productive summer.

## Self Management

The subject was first raised by Cllr Mahfouz at a meeting last September with a group of Local Association members and site managers campaigning against allotment rent increases. It was touched upon more recently by the Council Allotment Manager in his annual report tabled at the EAP-AGM (see the Spring 2012 edition of the EAP newsletter).

For anybody who is unaware, Cllr Mahfouz indicated that the Council was considering changing the way it manages its allotments. Three possibilities were mentioned at the time:

- (a) Self-management of individual sites by Local Allotment Associations along the lines currently operating on the Pitshanger Park site.
- (b) Self-management by a charitable trust set up to take responsibility for managing all Ealing sites.
- (c) Contracting-out allotment management to a private company.

With this in mind, EAP asked Doig Simmonds, chairman of the local allotment association at Pitshanger, to give a talk at our AGM in March on their experiences of self-management. Go to the EAP website or click on [self-management](#) to access a summary.



Things then went very quiet until EAP learned recently that Council Officers were being asked to come up with a policy document on allotment management to be considered by Council Cabinet in October. This led to a group of site-based local associations (Blondin, Brentham, Framfield, Horsenden and Oldfield) setting up a Forum to look into the possible implications for the future management of their sites. The issues raised clearly affected the management of all Ealing sites and the site managers of all Ealing Council allotments were also invited to join the Forum.

At a recent meeting, the members of the Forum agreed that while some sites may be in a position to take on self-management if they wanted to – it must be emphasised no Ealing site has at this stage decided that it will do so – it was quite clear that many other sites, for a variety of reasons, were not in a position to go self managed. The Forum had little faith in the practicability of setting up a charitable trust to administer all sites and favoured some form of mixed solution in which those sites that felt they could handle self-management moved towards this while the other sites were managed directly, or indirectly, by the Council. The current plan is for the Forum to continue in its attempts to assess opinions within the Ealing allotment community while at the same time setting up formal meetings with senior Council Officers in order to determine current Council thinking and to make constructive contributions to the final outcome.

What does all this mean in practice? In the short term, Ealing allotments and their management are unlikely to see any rapid change. Negotiations of contracts, leases etc., tends to be a slow business. But as we discovered with the rent increases, formal decisions made by the Council may take a long time to work through but when they do come, they usually come with little warning. This time around, it is clearly in both our and the Council's interest, to consult closely and try to come up with a workable, amicable solution.

Hopefully, whatever the outcome Ealing Council plot holders will all be able to continue to cultivate their allotments with minimal disruption. For those of you who wish to follow developments or get involved, we suggest that you talk to your Local Associations or site managers. In the meantime, EAP will try to keep you up to date as far as possible via the newsletter and the "latest news" section on its website. The Forum co-ordinators can also be contacted via the "Contact Us" facility on the EAP website.

## **Rent Increase and Waiting Lists**

While the details of the proposed changes in allotment management are an issue for the future, the coming 40% increase in allotment rents from October is a more immediate matter. Despite the fact that notice of the increase has been posted on allotments gates since last October, its existence and significance has still not been noted by many plot holders. Everybody hopes that as few tenants as possible feel that they have been priced off their plots but there will undoubtedly be some hardship and some may feel forced to give up their plots or at least downsize. The fact that if the anti-increase campaign had not been successful, we could have been looking at much larger increases is likely to be of small comfort.



The Council's attitude is that unwelcome as all this will be, one side effect will be to shorten the long waiting lists for plots on Ealing allotments and full occupancy will be easily maintained. EAP is less certain. Agreed well-organised sites that maintain their waiting lists should have no problems. Anecdotal evidence, however, indicates that many people have been on some waiting lists for so long that they have moved away, given up the idea of getting an allotment or simply got too old to cultivate one! Managers may be well advised to check just how up to date their lists are and/or be prepared to contact neighbouring sites if they experience a shortfall of applicants.

## Around the Associations

### *Ealing and Hanwell Allotment Association*



*EHAA is pleased to announce that their Allotment Show is back after last year's hiccup. It will be held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September at The Polygon, St Mary's Church, South Ealing Road, Ealing W5 4HN - opening for members and friends at 4.00 p.m.*

*There are lots of categories from vegetables and fruit to flowers, plants, preserves, cakes and bread homemade beer and wine, and if you keep bees there's also a honey section, there's a junior section and a novice section as well (take a breath)... so why not give it a go this Diamond Jubilee year and join in with your local allotment community.*

*Start thinking about what you could exhibit. You can pick up a brochure of the rules and schedules at your trading hut, download it from the EAP website or simply [click here on brochure](#). You can't beat the joy and pride of winning a cup or medal for your efforts. It's great fun. The judging is by outside experts and the event is all organised to RHS guidelines (so no pressure then!).*

*The Allotment Show is one of the most charming and traditional events of the summer and it really gets everyone together to see what has been growing on their plots (as well as baking and jam making in the kitchen). It also gives a chance to chat with other allotmenters and pick up a few tips over tea and cakes which are served from 4.00 pm along with a raffle. Join in one and all and keep the spirit of the allotment community going with this end of summer show.*

*Elaine Hagan and Lynne Casey (show secretaries) are cheerfully organising the show for you. If you have any questions or want to send in your entry applications via email, the address is: [allotmentshow@gmail.com](mailto:allotmentshow@gmail.com)*



## **Brentham**

### **Two pieces of good news:**

**Item 1:** *Brentham held its annual plant swop day on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May. Although the weather was not particularly kind, all went off extremely well. If your site is looking for an easily organised social event, this may be one to copy. The basic requirements are a supply of hamburgers and hot dogs and a barbecue to cook them on; beer, wine and soft drinks; plastic beakers, paper plates etc. together with a supply of plants – supplied by tenants who invariably plant too many seedlings and find themselves with surplus beans, leeks, lettuces, courgettes that they can't find room for on their plots - to barter, sell for site funds etc. Add in a little sunshine – which always helps - and you have a ready-made event!*

**Item 2:** *To the great joy of plot holders, the police have identified one of the gang of thieves that has been plaguing this and other sites. Unfortunately, to their dismay, it seems that he is unlikely to be hung, drawn and quartered as most of them would wish!*

## **Framfield**

*We were too late in requesting a picture of Cecil the Framfield pig. Cecil has been rehomed with another group of kunekune pigs in Guilford. However, the picture of a cute duckling on the Framfield pond was offered instead. Knowing that herons visit the pond fairly regularly looking for a tasty snack, we wish him/her luck and a long life!*



*On a related topic, it's good to be able to announce that Framfield is the national winner of the Community Garden section of the Big Wildlife Garden - sponsored by DEFRA, the Wildlife Trust and the RHS. This is a tribute to all the hard work put in by their volunteers - especially Dennis Wilkinson the Local Association chairman who has been the inspiration behind the whole project.*

**Keep up to date by checking out “Latest News” on the EAP website and signing up for the EAP newsletter using the “Contact Us” link**