



General News

As those of you who read the last EAP newsletter are probably aware, rental increases were not the only issue that came up at the September meeting between Council Officers and representatives of Ealing allotment tenants. Cllr. Bassham Mahfouz (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Environment – and hence ultimately responsible for allotment management) and Roger Jones (Head of Parks and Leisure – of which allotment provision is a very small part) made it very clear that they were not happy with the present system of allotment management and were planning to move towards a system of self-management “in which allotment tenants had much more say in how their allotments are run”.

When pressed what this meant, they indicated that thoughts on how self-management might be implemented were still at a very early stage. Two possibilities were, however, mentioned. Firstly, that Local Associations could take on more responsibility for managing their own sites – along the lines adopted by Pitshanger. Another alternative was that a trust might be set up that took over management of all Council allotments. The nature of such a trust was not made clear. To the best of our knowledge, while the successful self-management of individual allotment sites (or groups of sites) by Local Associations (or Federations of Local Associations) is not uncommon in the London area, the only examples of “trust” management of a borough’s allotment stock as a whole have involved out-sourcing to a private company - as has happened in Hounslow and Kingston.

A move towards self-management in Ealing could well be a positive development but if anything is to be learned from the recent saga over rental increases, it is that the allotment community in Ealing should seek to be involved in constructive consultation with the Council before final decisions are taken. There are a number of well-organised Local Allotment Associations in Ealing that, if they so desired, could probably take on some degree of self-management. A major

problem, however is that the advantages and disadvantages of such a move are far from clear. With this in mind, EAP has asked Doig Simmonds, the Chairman of PACA – the Local Association at Pitshanger, to give a talk on their experiences, at our AGM meeting on March 7th.

If self-management, in whatever form, is to come to Ealing, Local Allotment Associations will have an important role in voicing tenants' opinions. The question of how this might best be achieved is an issue that urgently needs to be resolved.

Transition and Village Park

A good news story! After years of neglect, the management of Village Park allotments has been taken over by Ealing Transition. Vacant and abandoned plots have been cleared and re-let. Follow the links [management](#) to get more details, and [transformation](#) for "before" and "during" pictures of the site - "after" pictures are promised! If you have problems with the links – the full web addresses are given at the bottom of this newsletter. Interested in more details? Look out for the feature article about the Ealing Transition Community Garden and their various projects around Ealing, aimed at getting the community interested in growing its own food, to be included in the next edition of the EAP newsletter.

Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)

Looking for advice on setting up a local association, grants for a project on your site etc? Try looking at the ARI site. ARI has been around for about ten years and has a good track record in helping out and advising Local Allotment Associations. Among other things, they run a “mentor-network” consisting of a team of volunteer experts with training and experience in the management and regeneration of allotments at the local level. Grant Smith the “mentor” for the London area is full of good ideas and extremely approachable. For more details click on [ARI](#) or go to the web address given below.

EAP-AGM

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EAP will be holding its AGM at 7.30 p.m. Wednesday, March 7th in the Polygon, St Mary's Church, South Ealing Road.

Followed by

Guest speaker - Doig Simmonds

talking on

Self-management – the Pitshanger Experience

and

Gardeners' Question Time

When local allotment gardening and bee keeping experts answer your questions

Everybody welcome !! - a chance to mull over the events of 2011 and plan ahead for 2012

Around the Associations

A relatively quiet time of the year news-wise with just a few items that we have come across at least:

Pathways:



Ealing and Brentford Consolidated Charities (EBCC) responsible for Haslemere and Northfields allotments have recently changed their name to Pathways. This name change coincides with the appointment of Tracey Vize (pictured opposite) as the allotment development worker responsible for the day-to-day running of the two sites. One of her first acts was to revamp the Haslemere and Northfields newsletter (click on the newsletter link on the EAP website to view a copy). Tracey is clearly keen to introduce changes and improvements and judging by this newsletter she has made an excellent start. We are sure that everybody wishes her a warm welcome and every success.

Oldfield:

On a less happy note, we hear from the Oldfield site in Greenford of yet another mass break-in. Burglars/vandals struck on the 15th November. Twenty-five sheds and the Trading Hut were broken into with lots of equipment, tools and other items taken along with much damage to the site. It is not certain whether or not this is the work of the same gang that has been plaguing Ealing allotment sites this last year but clearly underlines the difficulty of keeping allotment sites secure and the necessity of not storing things of value on site.

Ascott and Northfields:

Following directly on from the above, there were major thefts of brass taps from the watering systems of both Ascott and Northfields during the Christmas/New Year break. In the case of the Northfields site, all but two taps were removed. This was obviously the work of “scrap metal thieves” as other metal items were also taken. There is little that can be done to counteract such thefts but it would probably be sensible if site managers and/or Local Associations could spread the word to tenants that any suspicious activity should be reported.

Around London

Ealing is not alone in facing changes in both rentals and the way that its Council handles allotment management. Up to date information tends to be fragmentary and difficult to get hold of. The situation in the inner boroughs, with very limited allotment stocks tends to remain largely unchanged – the time and trouble of instituting change simply does not seem to be worth the effort. In the outer boroughs, some have passed through a time of upheaval in the past and, particularly in those areas where the larger sites are self-managed such as Bromley and Croydon, things are now fairly peaceful. The management of others such as Hounslow and Kingston have recently been out-sourced to private companies and they are still in a process of readjustment.

Closer to the Ealing situation, Barnet, Brent and Greenwich have, or are still, facing very large rental increases and/or pressures to move over to new management schemes. In the case of Barnet, the Council backed-off from its original proposals to increase rents by between 200% and 300% earlier this year. The present situation is that Barnet is pressing for an increase in 2013 from a present £59 for a ten pole plot to a rate of £140 for Barnet residents and £280 for non-residents. The existing pensioners' concession rate is also planned to disappear. At the same time, Barnet is discussing terms for self-management of their associated sites with Local Allotment Associations with the carrot that they would be able to set their own rents but would have to take on responsibility for paying for repairs and maintenance. The situation in Brent is rather different. Following an at times acrimonious public meeting in the Town Hall, Brent imposed a 100% increase earlier this year from an original rate of £75 to £150 for a ten pole plot. The pensioners' concession was, in this case, retained. Greenwich is still involved in an ongoing battle against a proposed increase from £67 to £200 for a ten pole plot. The detailed situation in different boroughs obviously varies but there are probably lessons to be learned and problems that could be avoided. With this in mind news of any relevant developments will be posted on the EAP web site at <http://www.ealingallotmentspartnership.co.uk> as it becomes available.

Keep up to date by signing up for the EAP newsletter using the "Contact Us" link on the EAP website

Village Park links:

<http://ealingtransitioncommunitygarden.wordpress.com/2011/11/24/village-park-management/>
<http://ealingtransitioncommunitygarden.wordpress.com/>

ARI

<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/>