

Kingswood Allotment Association

Chair's Report to the 2017 AGM

Usually you would expect this report to cover the last year's activities of the Chair of the Allotment Association. Hard to believe that a year ago, none of us had any idea that we'd be sitting here tonight, giving or receiving this report. Most of us probably didn't even know our allotments would be where they are today or that **we** would be allotment holders!!

But here we are – it's only been five months since the first plot holders signed their tenancy agreements and started working the site. Many people invested a considerable amount of time to get us to where we are today and we owe them our thanks. Amongst other things, the tenancy agreement that we have all signed had to be drafted and then briefed to all plot holders. The site had to be measured and all plots and paths staked out. A hedge was planted along the northern boundary of the site. While all these things virtually took many dozen manhours to complete, the real work only started there. Throughout May the site was a real hive of activity, with new raised beds, staking, fruit cages, ponds and first plants appearing virtually on a daily basis. By the end of the first digging period we'd been given, the site was transformed from an empty

field into a beautiful and bountiful 'garden' and a new heart for this community. The hot late spring weather meant that evenings at the allotment were busy - with queues forming for the water supply, plot holders wandering the site to see what others had planted and built and lots of people gathering to exchange questions and advice. Frequently non-allotment holders would also stop on their wanderings to admire the site.

As spring turned to summer, the heat abated and the access footpath from the village was closed – both, no doubt, contributing to a reduction of daily activity levels. On the 14th of July we held our first allotment site social with an opening BBQ in beautiful sunny weather, with a great turn out from members.

In August, we had a visit from two of the Ecologists who have been heavily involved with the area - Richard Lewis from Stroud Valleys Project, and Karen Colebourn, who has been advising the Parish Council on our Method Statement. Both were impressed with what we had achieved in such a short time and how we had taken the sustainability and newt protection requirements into account. Subsequently, we were also shortlisted for an Award from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England Gloucestershire, for

the outstanding contribution to the environment and our community that we have made. The awards ceremony will be taking place next week – wouldn't it be fantastic if we could win this award as a tangible sign of what we have achieved in less than six months?!

We have turned a barren field into a rich, beautiful looking allotment site. We have created wildlife habitats as good as any out there. People we considered strangers, or maybe neighbours, have become friends. We have sparked interest in our children – they water, they harvest, they observe, they play and explore. But most importantly, our plots have produced some truly amazing crops (as regular photographic evidence on our Facebook page shows) – even in this first season, with many of us still finding our feet as vegetable growers.

I hope you feel that our first ever Committee has done a great job in getting things set up. On behalf of this year's Committee, I wish to express our sincere thanks to all of you who have come together to make this a success and who have done your best to get used to the many rules we have to abide by thanks to our lovely little friends, the Great Crested Newts. We also owe our thanks to Mary Leonard, who was very heavily

involved in getting us set up and who has been a helpful liaison between ourselves and the Parish Council.