

Red House Farm Allotment Society



Minutes of the 88th Annual General Meeting of the Red House Farm Allotment Society held on Saturday 12 July 2025

11am, at St Johns Church Hall, Whitley Bay

1. The Chair, Michelle, made introductions and welcomed everyone to the meeting, advising of apologies of absence. She explained that this was her first AGM and that following feedback from the previous AGM, paper copies of the meeting papers had been placed in the shop and had been made available at the meeting from 10.45am, for those people who were not comfortable with viewing them on the RHFAS website. She explained that there were no motions to vote on this year and there was no guest speaker.
2. The minutes of the meeting from the 87th Annual General Meeting held on 29 June 2024 were agreed.
3. Matters arising from the minutes
 - 3.1 – Site Drainage – following the problems with flooding on the main site, Alison Stroud arranged for works for plot 13a to try and alleviate the problem.
 - 3.2 - Crisis Meetings – a number of members have come forward to volunteer for the society. The next phase is to set up volunteer groups.
 - 3.3 - Allotment Shop – The shop manager, Iain, has reviewed the workings of the shop. The data gathered will be used to develop stock orders. Due to the effort of the volunteers the shop is able to be open every weekend during the season, with the exception of August. Sales have been over £3.5K which is over three times of sales the preceding year. The shop is a great social hub and a great way to meet other members of the society. Michelle explained to the members that Iain also produces the RHFAS newsletter for which we receive great feedback. Michelle reminded members that the society has a Facebook page which is a great way to stay up to date with events.
 - 3.4 - Community Orchard –this project was initially driven by Jane Stronach with support from Phil Purcell with a great deal of planning by landscape architect Christine Purcell. Several plans were submitted, and a grant was secured. Michelle showed pictures and talked about the journey the volunteers have been on to get the orchard planted ready for the official opening later in the day. Michelle gave thanks to the volunteers who supported the project.

4. Chair's Report – Last year's theme was Year of the Slug and Michelle requested suggestions for this year's theme. Suggestions were Year of the Butterfly, Year of the Ladybird and Year of the insect. Michelle explained she joined the committee at the last AGM and this was to have an autumn show event and she became Chair when the previous chair, Pete stood down. The first event from when she took over was the Winter Social Event, which took place at the Whitley Bay Hub and she thanked the members who attended despite the poor weather that night. She said that she wanted there to be a number of community events which members can attend, and there is a plan to hold a family fun day with a scarecrow competition during the summer. She called on members who would like to be part of an events team to come forward. She thanked the members who have come forward to support the ongoing care of the community orchard. Michelle said that historically the society has had an affiliate membership of the National Allotment Society for which each member pays £3. She explained that for some time NAS have advising that RHFAS must supply members personal data to them as part of the terms of the membership. This is not something that RHFAS has done previously because we do have permission from the membership to share their data and we do not have this in our tenancy agreement. Also, we do not have guarantees from NAS on what they will do with the data in terms of keeping it secure and confidential. The committee have asked to speak to NAS to understand the requirements but NAS will not discuss this without the data being shared initially. This has left the committee in a position where we have to withdraw from supporting NAS. Some members have expressed concern because they want the benefit of legal advice. The committee's view is that individual members who want to remain with NAS can choose to share their personal data with NAS and join as an individual. A second problem with supporting NAS is that their expectation is that we update them each time a member leaves or joins the society and this is an administrative burden too great for volunteers on the committee. The committee proposed to keep the overall cost of having an allotment the same next year, by keeping the fees the same, but retaining £3 for the committee that would otherwise go on NAS fees. It was noted that fees have not gone up for some time, yet the costs of running the society had increased. The Chair invited members to attend the next committee meeting on Thursday 17 July at Whitley Bay Comrades Club. As a number of members said they would wish to attend the meeting, it was noted that the venue would need to be changed on the basis of the numbers planning on attending. The Chair outlined a number of future projects, such as getting seating for the Community Orchard, and maintenance to walls and fences. The Committee are looking to plant a hedge on the extension site as an alternative to getting a new fence. There is an intention to get solar power for the shop,

monitor the drainage on site, maintain the water supply and improve access to meters, and review signage.

5. Financial Report – The Chair explained that as a society we do not need to have our accounts formally signed off by an accountant, but we get them scrutinised outside of the committee. This year, we were unable to do this before the AGM but they have been reviewed by the committee and they are balanced. There are running costs of the society which are mainly paying for the lease, water, maintenance, insurance, IT licences and equipment and holding events, and there was additional expenditure for the orchard, EPOS system for the shop, and paying the contractors for work on plot 13b. The Chair said that there were questions about the accounts that had been received from a member that would be picked up after the AGM.
6. Election of Officers – The Chair explained that all of the committee were stepping down. The committee thanked Peter Elliott, Philip Purcell, Alison Stroud and Emma Norris who had stepped down during the year and Katy Ameli, who was standing for re-election. The committee welcomed the following members who were elected or re-elected to join the committee:

Michelle Tones – Chair

Roger Bolton – IT

Chris Forster – Membership Co-ordinator

Iain Lynn – Shop Manager

Jane Stronach - Volunteer Co-ordinator

Richard Lowery

Katie McInerney

Steve Taylor

Anna James

Keith Sizer

The Chair welcomed the new members of the committee and thanked the previous year's committee for their hard work.

7. Any other business

- 7.1. NAS - Peter Mithcell questioned the decision to withdraw from NAS without putting the decision to the members. Malcolm Wilkinson said he accepted it was an administrative burden, but he knew societies that remained members without providing personal data to NAS. One member said he would not give permission for his personal data to be

shared with NAS. The Chair said she understood that an individual membership at £25 was costing more than an affiliate membership of £3.50 however, the minimum number to people who could come together to become an affiliate group was 10, so if there were at least ten RHFAS members who did not wish to leave NAS they could form a group and benefit from the lower pricing.

7.2. Finance – Malcom Wilkinson said that the accounts were required to be approved at an AGM. He said that while he had no doubts about the amounts, he was concerned about the Finance dashboard and said it was important for members to have clarity. The newly elected Treasurer, Richard, said he would take questions by email and look into it. Malcolm said that he did not agree with the methodology used by the committee which avoided a vote on an increase in membership fees. He accepted that the constitution allows an increase of 5% without the need for a vote, however, he said that for an associate membership or a half plot membership, there was an increase of £3 by keeping the rent the same but retaining £3 that was previously used for NAS membership. It was agreed that the topics of NAS, Finances and rent would be discussed at the next committee meeting.