

# Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations

Founded 1919

*Centenary Year 2019*

working together for Oxford allotments

**Chair** Wendy Skinner Smith 48 Helen Road OX2 0DE wendy@wendyskinnersmith.co.uk Cripsey Meadow AA **Treasurer** John Lardner 8 Snowden Mede, Headington, OX3 7TQ, johnplardner@hotmail.com Eden Drive AA **Secretary** Nick Jackson 68 Edwin Court Binsey Lane OX20QT najackson@btinternet.com OSTNB AA **Committee Members** Roy Leach Blackbird Leys Kestrel Crescent AA Phil Baker St Clements AA.

## O&DFAA works

- to promote, support and safeguard the welfare of Allotment Associations in Oxford;
- to provide links to administrative advice and support;
- to act as an invited arbitrator where necessary on any internal allotment disputes;
- to represent Associations and offer support if necessary in any dealings with Oxford City Council and other public bodies.

**The Committee** met in full or in part more times than usual this as a result of lease, OxFAS and Centenary preparation and planning. 2018 April ALM, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, June 19<sup>th</sup>, July 9<sup>th</sup>, August 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> (with OCC), Sep 17<sup>th</sup>, Sep 25 (ALM) Oct 30, Nov 26<sup>th</sup> Dec 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> with OCC officers. January 22 (ALM) and March 12 with OCC. The committee work as follows.

- Wendy prepared the agenda, updates the web site, manages problems / complaints and liaises with councillors, planning and asset management.
- John keeps accounts, renews insurance, updates databases, communications with associations and events.
- Nick is our GDPR manager, does minutes, liaises with EA re OXFAS, The Flood Alleviation scheme and advises associations on water harvesting. He edited the 2019 AGM paperwork.
- Phil researched ODFAA's and OCC's archive for our centenary book, helped with the submission to the Awards for All National Lottery, researched printers and photographs, liaised with OCC re Grenoble Liaison Link.
- Roy has helped with attendance record and labels at ALMs.
- All have contributed to lease preparation and reports, Pennard Plant Fair and Charles Dowding talk.
- Mike Halliwell (HDAA) was elected to help with lease paperwork. He made an excellent start on the analysis of leases for which we thank him. Unfortunately, he was unable to make the committee meetings and stood down. The work reverted to the chair, helped initially by an Elder Stubbs trustee

## Oxford City Council Information

Stuart Fitzsimmons, Head of Parks [parks@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:parks@oxford.gov.uk) and Emma Taylor TAYLOR Emma <ETAYLOR@oxford.gov.uk> [Senior Surveyor, Regeneration & Major Projects](#), are our responsible officers. OCC Parks manage the reactive maintenance/grant budget and have responsibility for management of the 29 Allotment sites owned/leased by Oxford City Council and operated by Allotment Associations in partnership with the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations (ODFAA). Emma manages rents, lease and rent issues. Stuart attends ALM meetings and is the Parks allotment contact. Do remember your association must **hold a copy of your lease**. Please plan to ensure this is passed on when committee members change.

## Allotment Councillor

In June 2018 the chair contacted our then allotment councillor, Cllr Linda Smith, to learn that a new member has been assigned. Linda attended no ALM meetings in 2017 but she met with ODFAA committee last year with regard to a waste issue. Cllr Louise Upton is our new councillor. She also has responsibility for 'Healthy Oxford' which OCC describes as "creating a healthy community with greater participation in sports, cycling and use of the Council's parks and open spaces for active pursuits". She met with the chair in June for a 'where are we now' session and has attended 2

lease meetings and one ALM. In preparation for new leases ODFAA is looking for more clarity in the council's future commitment to allotments.

### **April AGM**

30 people represented 21 associations at the 2018 April AGM. The Annual Report was circulated as usual and the treasurer's report and accounts were accepted. A balance of £4,099 allows ODFAA to run events and cover the initial insurance bill before being reimbursed by the Council. Membership numbers remain similar and we proposed the same membership fee of 40p per plot holder for the 10th, and possibly final year.

### **New General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

meant that all associations needed to update their data protection. Nick Jackson agreed to be ODFAA's Data Controller. The vast amount of information and advice on GDPR seemed to make this yet another opportunity for consultants to illuminate a few and bewilder many! ODFAA used models developed by two associations, CMAA and OSTNB, to provide a GDPR model if needed.

### **Grants in September**

There were nine applications for grants in September, totalling £7,469.55. Seven totalling £3201.05. were approved by ODFAA/OCC for ratification by ALM. These were: Brasenose for solar panel lighting for an allotment shed; Cripsey Meadow for solar-powered trickle-feed for water tanks; Cutteslowe for a solar powered intruder alarm; Eden Drive for Compost and a solar panel and water pump; John Garne Way for a water harvesting shelter and St Clement's for mulching. These were ratified. ODFAA noted that over the past 10 years all 35 open allotment sites had been able to apply for grants, including non-OCC sites that did not pay rent to OCC so did not contribute to the allotment budget. ODFAA had review this and these would pay in 2019.

**Grants in March 2019** There was c. £3,500 for grants (unless something else needs the money before the end of FY). In March ODFAA and OCC met for another planning meeting. We had apologies from Cllr Louise Upton. The meeting considered the Grant applications. £3626 remained in reactive maintenance pot. 7 applications were approved by OCC/ODFAA for ratification by the ALM :Barns Court for solar security lighting; Barracks Lane, polytunnel Phase 2; Fairacres Road Trees for Bees project; John Garne Way Trading shed security & solar alarm; OSTNB for Path restoration for accessibility; St Clements & District for rainwater harvesting for; West Minchery Farm Solar security project. This totalled £2,882.74. The remaining £.800 would be used to purchase garden vouchers to contribute to the increased Allotment Competition prizes. OCC/ODFAA recommend the criteria for the next round of grants should be security, sustainability, accessibility, composting and water harvesting.

### **Site Asset Management Plans**

Associations have been reminded through the year to develop these to ensure future site costs were realistic. Site survey sheets were circulated in August for return by the September ALM and these were organised to help associations with site asset plans. Some remain to be returned.

### **Water**

Many associations reported problems with their new water service provider. A new company now managed the 'business provision' for Thames Water and sites were receiving bills with estimates for a year in advance. Headington and District Association (HDAA) treasurer investigated, and his useful action report was circulated in the ODFAA June newsletter. Advance billing was giving sites a headache about cash-flow and HDAA's investigation advised how to switch to another retailer with a more reasonable billing approach. Nick Jackson had worked with a number of associations on improving water harvesting.

## Leases

All were reminded that as 'Unincorporated Associations' they were advised to refer to 'members and fees' not 'tenants and rents'. It was the association that was the tenant. New leases are expected to run for 21 years from March 2021. Our new committee member made an excellent start on the analysis of leases, despite OCC finding them hard to access from filing. However, he could not make the committee meetings, so he stood down and the work reverted to the chair, helped initially by an Elder Stubbs trustee. Apart from associations who had not, for one reason or another renewed their lease, all the OCC site leases were almost the same word for word.

In our August Planning meeting the ODFAA committee, Parks, Corporate Affairs and Cllr Upton met and discussed lease issues as follows: the whereabouts of the 2016 Condition Survey and the OCC map of statutory land; the long-awaited confirmation of correct site areas; and confirmation that 2015 rent adjustments have resolved the rent/per hectare disparities. Long standing concerns about trustees were recognised by OCC who offered to use the term signatory and cap liability to a limit equal to the assets of the Association. OCC would also include a lease information pack with appropriate contacts. All agreed to recommend that senior elected officers should be signatories.

OCC stressed that they intended to continue with devolved allotment associations. ODFAA thought the level of devolvement and OCC responsibility needed clarification. If associations were to be fully devolved and manage all maintenance the rent should be peppercorn. If not and the OCC allotment budget continued as now, made up mostly of site rents, the income stream must be clearer. ODFAA recommended that OCC's current rent discount for flooding continued and that OCC if the income stream continue as now it should also continue to be ring fenced and guarantee reinvesting this income. ODFAA were recommending associations made Site Asset management plans a priority.

Parks suggested differential site rents but ODFAA thought past investments had run their course and that tree maintenance and ditch clearance were unfeasible for associations to manage given the complexity of trees and ditches and possible conflicts of interest between allotments and public realm. ODFAA asked about the parks tree survey and OCC responded that this was not up to date. Condition asset Survey ODFAA offered to collect more site information as the basis for a condition/asset survey but that it will be for OCC to pursue this information from associations if not forthcoming. These were circulated in August for return to be returned by The September meeting but only 15 had been returned, 15 were overdue for OCC to chase.

ODFAA note for the record that their database records information from Associations but they do not verify it. It is OCCs job to monitor their allotment provision and use.

Our new lease was the major item at the September ALM. ODFAA had previously circulated an extensive background paper, As renewal had not happened for 21 years many members were unfamiliar with the lease, history and terms. Thanks are due to Manda Joyce Of Cripsey Meadow who edited this. ODFAA met twice In November to discuss lease issues. Relationship between OCC and ODFAA should be viewed as healthy – although OCC viewed the most recent position statement from ODFAA as indicating we were further apart than expected following the meeting in September.

December 11th ODFAA committee met with Stuart Fitzsimmons Emma Taylor for a lease meeting. WSS referred to the Green Strategy relating to allotments, which is the only Council statement that exists that refers to allotments. Allotments charter now out of date. Allotment plan was due in 2017 but has not yet appeared. It was agreed that both quality & quantity of allotments are important, and that they need to be of good cultivated quality.

ODFAA thought associations should use the opportunity for lease renewal to clarify political support within Council for allotments as Oxford grows in the future

OCC believe that whether allotments sit 'under' Direct Services or elsewhere was not relevant for a lease/agreement that will last for many years when ODFAA and Associations will always be dealing with three people over allotments:

[Ian Brook remains the Head of Service responsible for allotments. With an officer responsible for leases/tenancy agreements between Association and OCC (presently Emma Taylor, someone responsible for budget and issues relating to allotments (presently Stuart Fitsimmons and a Councillor with portfolio responsibility for allotments

It was noted that there have been less contentious issues on allotments recently so not so much OCC day-to-day involvement as before, but OCC thought there was quite a lot more contact between OCC and individual Associations than ODFAA was aware of.

ODFAA noted that upon inspection the OCC allotments budget sheets often contain surprises – e.g. maintenance work on perimeter fences on one Association site when others have been asking for similar work to be undertaken for several years. OCC confirmed that this has happened when the individual leases are either unclear in terms of responsibility or explicitly state OCC responsibility. Such irregularities should not occur if the new leases are all identical. As they are more or less identical this was puzzling.

OCC and ODFAA agree that the new leases could be based on the current documents with some modifications:

Site maintenance will be the responsibility of the Associations (except for trees and ditches. OCC proposed a service charge for work to be carried out by Parks staff. Service charge will form part of overall costs charged. Rolling programme of on-site tree inspection and assessment e.g. every three years. Trees off-site would need individual assessment.

Ditches: OCC would like to have similar service-charge arrangement for maintenance, but OCC still need to crunch the figures.

Insurance provision. This needed further work. It should be possible for ODFAA associations to negotiate their own insurance if necessary. ODFAA needed to look at alternatives to current arrangement. OCC may need to look at how insurance cover can be supported within the reactive maintenance/service charge arrangements as is currently the case. ODFAA need to give some thought as to how best to take this forward.

Inserting a break clause - a provision in the 21-year lease/tenancy agreement which enables either OCC or the Association (or both) to end the lease/agreement early

Associations will need a lot of information before they take on near-complete responsibility for site maintenance: previous condition surveys were effectively just an audit that sites actually exist. Site plans needed for accurate estimate of size needed. Emma to look out results from previous rent review.

OCC commented the Green Spaces Strategy expires in 2020 so won't be updated until then. This will be discussed with Ian Brookes at forthcoming meeting.

lease. It was noted that there is key legal difference between licenses and leases.

Generally agreed that OCC management consists of taking an overview of allotment maintenance, whereas day-to-day 'management' is undertaken by the Associations. Further discussion is probably needed about the working to be used – and maybe 'Terms of Reference' of how OCC, ODFAA and Associations all work together.

It was agreed that a clear budget income stream summary would be provided to ODFAA. Not expecting any other income stream coming to allotments (e.g. capital etc.)

ODFAA would like to see any future Council statement on allotments explicit about the income stream to the Council which comprises site rents, sub-station rents (coming in at around £18K to £23K) and that this should be reinvested in allotments.

Service charge for tree (and possibly ditch) maintenance would come from the current reactive maintenance budget and a modest uplift in the income coming from the Association site rents. Tree surveys currently being undertaken on the sites should better inform the likely size of the maintenance costs. Stuart will forward existing information on the numbers of trees identified on each site. There will need to be a rolling programme of pollarding willows, but this is unlikely to be as frequent as some Associations expect. Some Associations will need to give this more thought where more frequent pollarding will be necessary. Further discussion was needed to clarify what the legal position would be under future leases if damage or injury caused by tree damage – would Associations need to consider more extensive insurance cover than at present? More work is needed on the question of ditches – where they are, where they drain etc.

Emma Taylor was working on the numbers to look at how this could be applied fairly across all sites and how the facilities could be 'leased' to Associations while leaving the responsibility remaining with OCC.

The Committee met again 2 days later with – Ian Brooke, Councillor Louise Upton and Stuart Fitzsimmons, Wendy, Roy, John, Phil.

ODFAA is concerned that allotments and their management have fallen off the political agenda in Oxford. This is not a criticism of Stuart himself, rather the council structure (and approach) he now works under. We had concerns about whether Direct Services was the right 'location' for allotment oversight and management. Head of Parks did not think his role was compromised by his job location.

We discussed health benefits of activity like allotment gardening - OCC and NHS could do more to signpost people to this benefit as part of 'social prescribing' - Cllr Upton agreed to pursue this.

The APSE report shows that only about 7% of LA's have fully devolved allotment management, which puts Oxford and its history into a very specific minority. OCC derives considerable benefit from this. However, it is very low down in the 'ratings' when it comes to budget commitment, with no dedicated Officer time and the budget is recycled rents/income. Looking at the ODFAA history, some allotments had been in a poor condition for decades. ODFAA had worked to have associations work together beneficially, with support from OCC. This support had become less accessible and ODFAA have taken on more re organization and records. has helped to turn that around. (All agreed this was the case).

The 2001 current 'lease', and it's immediate predecessor, listed things that were held to be the responsibility of the Associations, but OCC had continued to fund and, in some cases, provide these to some Associations. The lack of a clear line had not helped realistic budgeting. ODFAA thought a full condition survey was needed as the last OCC one was in 2005. ODFAA are concerned that OCC have a fully up-to-date picture of all the sites? The Green Spaces Strategy continues to say the ODFAA 'monitors' all sites, but this is not a responsibility it has ever accepted.

ODFAA are not asking for a return to an allotment officer. That money was better spent on sites, but they needed an officer and council support structure with OCC accountability as the present largely informal approach had an embedded vulnerability. Our concern originated in what we believed was a shared desire to protect and enhance the very good allotment provision in Oxford. If the council is unable to fully account for the state of its allotment 'estate', council taxpayers may be less inclined to support the continuation in the face of growing land pressures.

Parks replied that they always turn out if contacted and know that much more would be required if ODFAA not there.

ODFAA was concerned about a conflict of interest where Direct Services manage the person with current responsibility for allotments, when sites are being encouraged (if not actually required) to

use DS as a service provider. Also, that Direct Services as a separate entity doesn't produce its accounts as part of OCC's so how would they show accountability.

Ian Brooks stated that OCC was growing the use and income of Direct Services as a specific part of the council's financial strategy. The more it grows the more money comes back to support council services.

ODFAA thought Community Centres were a close analogue with allotments in their use of volunteers. There OCC retains responsibility for the buildings and Community Associations are responsible for everything else. The lease documents are much longer and more detailed of necessity. OCC provides support and guidance to volunteer management committees and ODFAA wondered if this could be extended to Allotment Association volunteers. Cllr Upton supported this proposal and asked if the present officer could be allocated some time to do this and possibly move beyond volunteer support? Sometimes Volunteer support is needed – some committees would benefit from this now and in future, and they don't really know who to turn to.

The current lease is one-sided; with no inclusion of OCC's responsibilities nor what it commits to. The emerging proposals around trees and ditches and re investment of funds must be better expressed in the new documentation. Ian Brookes stated the new lease will have to go before the Exec Board, with due process involving the Councillors as well as the OCC management.

At that time ODFAA thought associations should be in touch with 'their' respective Ward reps nearer the time.

Insurance is a further element that needs to be agreed - cover has been getting more and more expensive (albeit from an artificially low base), heading for £3-£3.5K, and renewal is problematic every year. Current lease says OCC 'provides insurance' through ODFAA membership but possibly this will be transferred to being sites' responsibility. Louise thought OCC should still finance. Emma is looking at a possible trade-off reduction in rent to compensate for insurance increases.

Restated the position with ditches – various rights-holders and responsibilities complicate the picture and this needs to be fully clarified before we can conclude what OCC can sign-up to.

With a growing population and possible increase in demand for plots if the economy takes a hit, it is important to have a political and policy commitment to no lessening of allotment provision, ideally a clear support for growth. We were concerned that this did not happen in N Oxford development. Cllr Upton said she had queried this but not got a reply.

ODFAA thought there should be an Allotment Strategy and ODFAA would be happy to submit some headline draft elements. Ian Brookes didn't disagree but stressed any 'allotment' statements should be integrated with the wider strategies on Green Spaces and integrated with the Local Plan as well.

The January ALM was chaired by Parks. Emma Taylor attended for estates as did most of the ODFAA committee 27 site reps represented 22 sites. We discussed our new 21-year Leases. There was general agreement from last time that leases needed some tweaks regarding: Insurance where there might be more autonomy for associations as what was covered; Trees where instead of straight rental uplift OCC were looking at 'service charge' that can be used to manage the on-site trees and possibly ditches. Uplift would vary between 3% and 6%. In addition, Parks will use the reactive maintenance grant to service the trees. The proposed service charge would cover all trees on site, and maybe some boundary trees but OCC need to do some further costings and they would report back in April. The priority for tree work would be based on safety conditions but Parks would look at how this might be adapted so that associations can sustain growing land. All Association leases would be the same and Associations will be responsible for everything else, e.g. fences, tracks gates, buildings etc. The meeting once again urged Associations to ensure they developed Site Asset Management Plans before they agreed leases. There was unanimous support for the proposal by those present.

ODFAA had circulated the most recent APSE report on allotments which compared local authority spending and site rents with national averages. Oxford site rents are low as one would expect

given the level of devolvement, but OCC's financial support of allotments is amongst the lowest 7%. Again, we had twenty-minutes for collecting written views on issues surrounding the renegotiation of the leases.

Lease discussions started with a query on area measurement. OCC asked for info on where there might be problems as ODFAA agreed to pass on concerns from 2007.

Court Place Farm had had a change of management and wished to join the Federation and ODFAA committee as they were keen to make a start on their reclamation. We agreed that this needed a special issue meeting, after they have joined ODFAA and the committee.

Rents per hectare was proposed at c. £208 which would be reduced for flood discount. There were still missing asset surveys – no extra ones have been returned. ODFAA asked that it be a term of the lease that these have to be completed and returned for each rent review and renewal. The last meeting agreed a process for how trees will be managed. We discussed ditches being one of 3 categories. Issue now is ditches: 3 categories i.e.: Ditches entirely within allotment boundaries – entirely Association responsibility; Ditches along boundaries with Council land – joint responsibility but OCC unlikely to be able to offer anything beyond statutory defined work (e.g. EA requirements); Ditches along boundaries with non-Council land – joint responsibility with landowner.

ODFAA are about to renew the insurance and this needs further work for the new lease period. ODFAA thought there must be a direct relationship with the insurers and Associations seeking insurance for their council-owned Association sheds (and their contents) are posing problems regarding ownership when seeking insurance. Emma Taylor agreed to discuss this with OCC's Insurance Officer along with plans for direct deals with insurers. The clause in the lease will need amending. CLLR Upton had stated that the city should still pay for this and to do so would require a reduction in rents.

Areas for further work include a possible demise clause e.g. to register the leases and to cover any future boundary issues. Exploration of the Land Registry position for leases over 7 years for unincorporated Associations and a possible break clause. All of these will be referred to OCC legal. Committee agreed that Sites/Associations that don't pay into the allotment budget must now be informed that they will no longer be covered by insurance unless they pay the insurance costs. They will be ineligible for any future OCC allotment grants unless they pay into the allotment budget. We are keen for the non-OCC sites to remain, but we are no longer willing to continue paying their insurance costs. The sites would need to pay their insurance costs and ODFAA subscription costs. Similarly, there would not be access to the Allotment Grants unless they entered into a separate lease with OCC or contributed to the allotment budget.

**Insurance** The insurance renewal process was even slower than usual as the company did not send a quote until late June! John Lardner proved tireless in contacting them and on a brighter note he reported that associations were more prompt with returns, and many were of better quality. All agreed the present insurance set up was unwieldy, inflexible and unsatisfactory and we needed to meet with OCC insurance and move this forward. Non-OCC sites will need to contribute to the budget in future in order to benefit from insurance and grants.

**Events** Suggestions for 2018 talks were: No-dig and organic pest control. ODFAA had booked a second Pennard Plants Day at West Oxford Community Centre for Jan 6th, 2019.

**Charles Dowding** gave our annual talk on "No Dig, How to extend the season". There was a full house at West Oxford Community Centre. It was expensive but he was an excellent speaker and our costs were covered by ticket prices which included drinks and nibbles. Some gardening 'myths

were bust' and all were encouraged to mulch whenever possible for an easier, more productive plot. Many commented that they had heard something new to take away and try. Attendees also complemented the seasonal vegetarian food prepared by Tom and Vladmira from The Tumbling Bay Café. In January ODFAA hosted our second ***Pennard Potato and Plants Fair*** at the West Oxford Community Centre. The shorter duration of 3 hours attracted over 450 visitors and there is a real allotment buzz about the event. ODFAA agreed to NSALG's request for an information stall.

**Centenary** Phil Baker reported progress with our centenary history with reading and research in minutes from ODFAA and OCC back to 1919. Unfortunately, we heard that our Lottery bid to fund publication and printing was unsuccessful. Our councillor suggested associations asked local ward councillors for a financial contribution from their annual grants. The hard copy might be 'illustration-light' but we could add to the electronic copies for the website. 4 affiliated associations did not contribute a written history for their site.

**Centenary Allotment Competition** Tim Treacher reported on details of the reviewed categories and prizes and members for supported having the 2019 centenary competition. The best site winner would receive the Alderman Knight Shield with £300 and runner up £100. The Challenge Trophy winner would receive £100 and runner up £50. Other categories would have a £50 winner with a 25 runner up. Highly Commended and New Allotment holder certificates will continue.

The committee pursued aims to have a with centenary prizes, given this has been a persistent part of our history! The chair suggests a re-structure, akin to one proposed by a judge some years back, which would share administration more fairly between the committee and associations. Associations would select and submit 1 entry per category in at least three of the five categories. Each category will have a winner and a runner-up, bigger prizes and the competition have a cycle of 3-5 yrs., had agreed to be judges. An Allotments Competition Sub-Committee was formed of Tim Treacher and Ian Sheppard, with Mike Kent and Tina Mould as judges and they would make recommendations to the September ALM. The chair will do photos as usual. Associations need to return trophies. A Draft of 'Centenary Publication' was available for inspection at the meeting. Photos and illustrations are to be added and we will also be developing an online version. Publication is likely to be in the autumn ready for the August 21<sup>st</sup>. The Committee would welcome ideas or support for a good title. We think every site is mentioned in the publication and there are probably some surprises in store.

Phil Baker reported that the 29th April to 5th May was earmarked for activities relating to 'gardens and allotments in the Oxford-Grenoble link celebrations which is looking for OCC funding to support link activities.

Tim Treacher recapped on competition information from last ALM. He asked for advice about whether to continue including new plot holders. The competition sub-committee wondered how to apply this if competition is only run every three years and concluded they would like to include these with certificates, as these were always well received. The draft Competition paperwork (invitation letter, details and forms) will come to the next ALM meeting with the intention to send it out to Associations afterwards. The deadline for entries will be around 24th May and judging dates in June and September will be published. Judges will Mike Kent and Tina Mould assess the site category on both visits.

**The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OxFAS)** was ongoing and ODFAA was supporting 3 sites in joint meetings with a solicitor and at times OCC, to ensure associations and sites were protected. The Environment Agency would cover all legal costs but much of the work was confidential. ODFAA reminded EA of their commitment to explore ditch and drain work north of the

channel as 40% of plots in the city were in the flood plain. The scheme may impact several allotment sites by taking longer for flood water to dissipate and drain away.

**Oxford-Grenoble link** Oxford City Council informed us that in 2019 they will celebrate its 30th anniversary. Since 1989 there have been regular exchanges between Oxford and Grenoble between educational, sporting, professional and cultural groups and in 2019, Oxford be running a host of activities under the headline of 'Let's GROW'. These will be grouped under three strands, representing different dimensions of human existence: the physical – growing plants; the intellectual – growing ideas; and the emotional – growing connections. This three-strand focus will allow a wide range of audiences, representative of Oxford's demographics. ODFAA are asked to join in and we proposed visiting the Botanic gardens and/or the Harcourt Arboretum; presenting the visitors with some 'Oxfordshire' heritage apple maidens (assuming these can travel 'cross border'); and allotment site visits.