

BOURNEMOUTH EAST ALLOTMENT SOCIETY LIMITED

Minutes of the Special General Meeting held on 24^h April 2024 at 12.15pm

Those Present: Lynda Clarke (LC) Chair Susannah Atif (SA) Communications Manager Peter Clarke (PC) Shop Manager	Louisa Lyndsey-Clarke (LL-C) Site Manager David Taylor (DT) – Secretary Geraldine Pitcher (GP) John Pitcher (JP) Andrew Dawson (Asst Site Manager)	Simon Kavanagh (SK) Plus 35 Members – details are on the attached Attendance Record
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1. Welcome

1.1 LC welcomed everyone to the meeting that commenced at 12.15pm.

2. Apologies

2.1 Apologies had been received from Mr Hilary Sullivan, Mrs Clare McCarty-Brooker, Ms Dolma Dhame, Mrs J Odey, Mrs A Simpson, Mrs Brenda Rushworth, Mr Richard Allen and Mr Miles Landless.

3. SGM

3.1 The Chair explained the reason why the SGM had been called. The proposed resolution to change the Byelaws with respect to Ponds and Bog Gardens had previously been discussed at the AGM in December 2023, but it was felt that insufficient information had been gathered and distributed to the Membership. A survey of the Members covering a range of topics had been conducted and it was felt that there was sufficient information now available to conduct a meaningful discussion on this matter.

3.2 The Chair stated that several other suggestions from the survey, such as a change in shop opening hours, had been acted upon and the popularity of the new, additional opening hours would be monitored over the coming months. She warned that the committee reserved the right to withdraw any opening times that regularly yielded no customers, promising that at least 2 weeks' notice would be given. The Chair also made reference to the planned visit to Deans Court Gardens, Wimborne and the possibility of a quiz and a local trail, all the result of Members' feedback to the survey.

3.3 The Chair invited LLC (Site Manager) to outline the benefits of allowing small ponds and bog gardens on allotment sites. LLC responded detailing the benefits to wildlife in general by encouraging biodiversity and in particular for pollinators which would greatly benefit the allotment site. She also noted that, in our privileged position we should be seen to set the correct example.

3.4 The chair invited those in the audience in favour of the proposition to offer their comments. There were several contributions covering the advantages to the allotments encouraging a wide range of wildlife from frogs & toads to hedgehogs and insects including pollinators. There was a discussion relating to the design of ponds and the importance of having sufficient depth to encourage a wider range of wildlife. A very shallow pond would heat-up and cool-down too rapidly reducing the beneficial effects to the inhabitants and users of the pond. There was a question regarding new tenants onto a plot where there is an established pond. The contributor asking if the new Tenant would be 'instructed' NOT to remove the pond and thereby destroy the habitat of the creatures living therein. A counter argument was that new Tenants should be permitted to remove the pond should they so desire. The Chair responded that, should the vote go in favour of ponds being permitted, the committee would need to return to the question of how this would be managed and, if necessary, consider any further addition to either the Byelaws or the guidance on the application form.

3.5 The Chair further commented that a local school had a 'dipping pond' and this was 'fabulous', creating a marvellous habitat for a wide range of creatures and a fascinating place for children to visit.

3.6 Ms Joanne Smithers offered to give a talk on ponds and the benefits of them to our members at a later date.

3.7 The Chair invited those in the audience against the proposition to offer their comments. The matter of safety, particular for children was discussed. It was highlighted that this was the most important reason why this amendment to the Byelaws was being proposed, so that the size, depth, position, construction and covering of ponds could be controlled. A means of escape for animals and a cover of some sort would be a prerequisite before permission to create a pond would be granted. The matter of mosquitos

was raised and discussed. It is understood that some people (especially ladies) are particularly susceptible to mosquito bites, although it was pointed out that static water, even in our standing tanks already attracted them. Mosquitos are already present and are an important part of the food chain. One contributor reminded those present that the purpose of the allotment site was to grow fruit and vegetables, not specifically to encourage biodiversity, adding that natural environments such as rivers, marshes and Hengistbury Head already existed close by. There was a concern that poorly maintained ponds could become a 'stagnant mess' and that our current procedures for 'warning' offenders and implementing corrective actions was very drawn-out. The Chair stated that this particular issue, should it occur, would be regarded as a 'hazard', and could therefore be dealt with as such in a much more urgent manner.

3.7 The matter of child safety was raised again, and members were reminded that children are to be restricted to the member's own plot and pathways and were not to be allowed to wander around the site unsupervised. The importance of parental responsibility was underlined. Our water tanks present similar or greater dangers as they are much deeper than the ponds and it is all too common to see the lids of tanks being 'clipped' open and then left unattended. This practice is always discouraged.

3.8 It was suggested that having one large pond, maybe giving up a small allotment plot for that purpose, would be of greater benefit. This could be fenced off and properly maintained, providing a large resource for creatures to improve the biodiversity on a far greater scale. This was countered by the need to find volunteers to do the maintenance and it was pointed out that we are short of volunteers, calling on Associate Members to do some essential jobs for us such as cleaning the toilets, cutting the grass paths and helping in the shop. Such Associate Members were applauded for the tasks they undertake, despite not tenanted a plot.

4.0 The Vote

4.1 The Chair called for a vote to be taken on the proposed resolution.

Those in favour of	28 Members
Those against	16 Members
Abstentions	0 Members

The Chair declared the motion to amend the Byelaws was thereby carried. However, she stated that since there was a clear concern amongst some of the Membership and that the vote, whilst undeniably in favour of the resolution was far from unanimous, the committee would keep a careful eye on developments. She invited all members to do likewise and to report any concerns to the Chair, the Secretary or to the Site Manager, assuring them that all concerns would be addressed.

5.0 There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for attending and taking part in the discussion. The meeting was closed at 12.50pm.

SignedCHAIR Date.....