



The National Allotment Society

South West Branch

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 2nd October 2024 at 19:00 using the Zoom video conferencing facility.

Attendees: Lynda Clarke (Chair), Christina Ballard (South Petherton), Neil Birrell, Allan Cavill (Taunton), Peter Clarke, Clare Eggle (Chard), Tyler Harris (NAS Legal Adviser), Kim Hayden (Plymouth), Mark Joynes (Dep Regional Rep), Marcus Knight (Treasurer), Duncan Manning (Bampton), Elizabeth Payne (Williton), Gemma Walker (Dawlish), Jacky Wilkinson (Bath).

1. Welcome

Lynda welcomed all to the meeting at 19:05, having waited to see if there were any latecomers. She noted that, in the absence of a Secretary, Peter would be taking the minutes.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from David Recardo (Plymouth), Ed Alexander (BCP) and Cynthia Hensen (Exeter).

3. Minutes of the AGM meeting held on 4th October 2023

The minutes, having been previously circulated, were approved unanimously, proposed by Mark Joynes and seconded by Marcus Knight.

4. Matters arising from the minutes.

Lynda noted that there were no actions arising from the minutes and this was agreed.

5. Annual report.

The report was presented jointly by Mark and Lynda and is attached as an appendix. Comment was made about the presentation at the NAS AGM of the Jim Tandy Award to Alan Cavill for his many years of service to NAS and, in particular, to the South West Branch. Duncan expressed the thanks of his society for Alan's support over the years since he helped set it up. Lynda noted that she and Mark would be attending the Annual Development Meeting of the NAS in Corby the following week (9th/10th October).

6. Financial report.

Marcus commented on the report, previously circulated, and noted that this only covered part of the financial which now runs from January to December in line with Head Office. He identified that the Region has a balance of around £4,100 following expenses so far this year totalling nearly £1,000 for Regional Rep expenses, costs for using Zoom, donations for speakers at our winter talks and travel for shows etc. He noted that Head Office had not provided any grant this year given the balance that we hold.

The report was accepted by all present.

7. Election of Officers and Committee for 2024-2025.

Lynda reported on the nominations as follows:

a) Chairman – There was only one nomination from Bournemouth East Allotment Society who had re-nominated Lynda Clarke. This was seconded by Mark Joynes and she was elected by all present.

b) Secretary – Lynda reported that Peter Clarke, having taken on the temporary role of Minute BSecretary last year, was prepared to now stand as Secretary. He had been nominated by Bournemouth East Allotment Society, seconded by Mark Joynes and he was elected unanimously.

c) Treasurer –Lynda stated that Marcus Knight had been nominated by his society and was prepared to continue in the role. She seconded his nomination and he was elected unanimously.

d) Committee members –Lynda reported that Jackie Wilkinson, as an individual member, had put herself forward and her nomination was seconded by Lynda Clarke. This was agreed by all present. It was also agreed to co-opt Neil Birrell to continue as a committee member.

Lynda noted that the previous AGM had nominated Mark Joynes as Regional Rep for election at the NAS AGM in June 2024. Subsequently Mark had decided, due to personal circumstances, to step down from this role that involved attendance at Management Board Meetings in Corby. Instead he had taken the role of Deputy Regional Rep, carrying out many of the tasks allotted to Regional Reps, but it meant that the SW did not have a voice when decisions were taken by the management committee. The SW committee had accepted Mark's decision and would continue in to look for a suitable person to propose as Regional Rep. Mark noted that Regions can have more than one Deputy Regional Rep if required.

e) Regional Representative. There was no-one willing to stand at present, but the committee has the power to co-opt if someone suitable comes forward.

f) Committee Meeting Dates - Lynda reported that committee meetings are usually held quarterly on Monday evenings via Zoom and that she would negotiate the dates for next year's committee meetings and distribute them soon. Winter talks usually move around the weekdays, other than Fridays, depending on the speaker.

8. Members Items.

There were none.

9. Talk by Tyler Harris, Legal Adviser at NAS Head Office. Lynda welcomed Tyler who introduced himself with some background, talked about his role and answered questions from the meeting which was recorded and would be circulated to all SW members with the 2024 AGM minutes and the Annual Report.

Lynda thanked Tyler for his contributions, noting that the timing of the meeting was outside of his normal work hours.

The meeting was closed at 20:35.

Appendix follows

ANNUAL REPORT

October 2023 – September 2024

1. Membership

Currently on membership database for South West region				
Total	Individual	Affiliate	Assocs/Socs	Others
5245	1874	2213	180	1185
Joined over past year				
65	42	244	9	13 LA; 1 landowner
Did not renew membership				
45	31	183	8	2 LA; 4 landowners

2. Communication

Meeting in person will always be a challenge in our region which covers such a vast area with few major roads. We appreciate meeting our members in their home area, but as a practical measure and to allow maximum participation, we have continued to meet online via Zoom, both for committee meetings and for our winter talks. During last autumn/winter we heard from Helen Gillingham, Chair of The Sustainable Food Sub-Group, Transition Town Wellington, Dorothea Orme with Tess Wilmot the second time on Permaculture and Making Your Allotment Work for You and Mitch Perkins from Dorset Wildlife Trust. We received excellent feedback for all these speakers so, if you have never joined us for one of these talks, we would urge you to try one. We are always happy to receive suggestions of other speakers and topics.

3. Attending shows in the region

We have been pleased to have an NAS stand at the Devon County and Mid Devon Shows and are grateful to our Deputy Regional Rep for organising, setting up and attending the shows full time himself, booking volunteers and making them feel very welcome. This takes considerable time and physical effort. Ideally, we would like to attend an appropriate show in each of the counties in our region but would need teams at the local level to work with us to identify a show and organise attendance. Dorset County Show is one that we have identified for 2025, usually held early September.

4. Summary of Deputy Representative's work

- Gave advice and support for 7 new associations or those looking to become incorporated.

- Gave specific advice to over two dozen associations and town and parish councils, and three individuals, initially through emails with follow up phone calls, video-conferencing and, when necessary, visits and liaising with Head Office.

This has included:

- a) the interpretation of tenancy agreements and 'rules' in the mediation of disputes within Associations,
 - b) introducing changes to outdated tenancy agreements,
 - c) adopting fair and clear warning procedures,
 - d) guidelines for GDPR, H&S and making reasonable adjustments for disabled access,
 - e) advice on minimising risk of theft from allotment sites,
 - f) dealing with rampant horsetail on allotments and the benefits and problems of composting toilets on allotment sites.
- Sent welcome emails to new members and responded to their replies. (In future a "Farewell and Feedback" template email would be helpful for those who do not renew their membership).
 - Arranged and participated in a networking day for associations and acted as a conduit to enable associations to contact each other to share information.
There has been quite a bit of interest in setting up 'community plots' for social prescribing schemes this year.
 - Attended a workshop in Bristol in the spring on rain-water harvesting and conservation techniques for efficient use of water in gardening.
 - Wrote articles for "Allotment & Leisure Gardener", the NAS magazine.
 - Took part in the Judging of a 'best allotment' competition.

One of the key roles of a Regional Rep is to be part of the NAS Management Committee. Though Mark had been nominated by the SW Branch as the SW Regional Rep, in the year he was in the acting role, he came to find the time commitment too great and withdrew his nomination prior to this year's National AGM. However, he has continued to support SW members in his role as Deputy Rep, including responding to referrals from Head Office and feels that he has found a comfortable level of commitment to NAS.

5. Farewell to Allan Cavill

This year Allan Cavill, the bedrock of NAS in the South West for over two decades, finally retired from his role as Mentor. He was instrumental in helping to re-establish the SW branch of NAS in 2020 and has been a great support to the Branch and to Mark personally as he took on the role of Regional Rep. In recognition of his long, knowledgeable, committed, remarkable service and as a symbol of our gratitude, the committee put Allan forward to receive the Jim Tandy Memorial Award, which can only be given to one person each year. This highest of accolades was presented at the NAS AGM in June.

6. Looking to the future

If the SW region of the national society is to thrive and offer maximum support to our members, we certainly need to recruit to the committee and find a Regional Representative able to travel to Corby for the Management Committee meetings. The ideal would be to have all counties represented by at least one committee member. Some local areas have strong federations or other networks of associations/societies, but it is our vision to create such networks of allotment communities for mutual support throughout the south-west.

Mark Joynes
Deputy Regional Representative

Lynda Clarke
Chair

September 2024