

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners

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Working together for Kingston's allotments

Congratulations Groveland Way!

Groveland Way allotment site in New Malden became voluntary managed earlier this month, yet another site to decide that independence is the way forward.

The plotholders set up their Allotment Association some time ago and last Autumn voted to become independent on April 1st of this year. The plotholders now have a tenancy contract with the Groveland Way Allotment Association rather than Quadron and this together with the 12 year site lease granted by the Council gives the Association full authority to manage the site. There will be no site rent to pay to the Council in their first year and only 50% in their second year to allow them to build up some funds for projects or improvements to their site.

The Federation is delighted that another site's voluntary management plans have finally come to fruition. Andrew Brodie, Secretary of the Groveland Way Allotment Association writes,

"On a dark winter's afternoon in December 2010 the plotholders at the Groveland Way Allotment site got together to form the Groveland Way Allotment Association. The main aim was to give one voice to any dealings with RBK and Quadron but, in the longer term, consider the possibility of becoming a Voluntary Managed site.

The spirit of community has grown over the intervening years and with help from Rob Waite at RBK and Mark Garthwaite at Quadron we have a site in good working order. So, in the spring of 2016, the long term aim was met and GWAA is now managing its own site and can target the projects planned to make the Groveland Way allotments a good place to grow."

There are now 13 voluntary managed sites in the Borough, out of the total of 22 sites, some have been independent for over 30 years and not one has given up and returned to Council/Quadron management. Of the remaining 9 sites currently under Quadron management 3 are too small (under 10 full plots) to be financially viable under the existing voluntary managed arrangements. There is no reason why the remaining 6 sites, Chessington, Knollmead, Moor Lane, Parkfields, Raeburn Avenue and Tolworth Main together with the Endway should not consider voluntary management. There are currently voluntary managed sites with anything from 17 to 150 plots.

The National Allotment Society states that forming an Allotment Association can offer protection to a site by making sure that it is fully let and not neglected. Initially it needs the enthusiasm and drive of half a dozen keen people to organise and set up an Association committee and go on from there.

Great news, and good luck to them for the future. We look forward to visiting them and seeing the improvements they already have planned for their site.

The Federation is committed to offering support and advice about setting up an Association and voluntary management and has prepared leaflets—available on request, see our website <http://www.kfag.org.uk/advice/> We can also be contacted by phone or email for a general enquiry or for detailed information.



The Federation aims to:

- Promote and encourage allotment gardening in the Borough of Kingston upon Thames.
- Provide information, support and advice to sites considering voluntary management of their Allotments.
- Build relationships within and between the allotment sites so that ideas and experience can be shared.

For general allotment enquiries and information sheets about setting up a Plot holders' Association and Voluntary Management of allotment sites please contact the Secretary:

gloriawallis@hotmail.co.uk.

Grants for Voluntary Managed Allotment Sites

The grant system will be changing from April 2016 and the old 'Neighbourhood Grant' will be replaced by the 'Your Kingston' grants' scheme for all applications of up to £750. The Council expect this to increase the overall amount of spend that goes to the voluntary and community sector.

“Your Kingston grants are intended to particularly benefit local grass roots organisations that need a small injection of funds to enable them to achieve a significant impact”.

In the past voluntary managed sites in the Borough have been eligible for 'Neighbourhood' grants for various small projects and for equipment for site maintenance, mowers, strimmers etc. and funds for these should still be available under the new grants system. Grants of up to £3,000, called 'New Initiatives' grants are also available to voluntary or community sector groups for larger one-off projects. Allotment site projects, such as toilets, may qualify for these, it is well worth enquiring.

There are full details about both types of grants on the RBK website:

https://www.kingston.gov.uk/info/200180/voluntary_and_community_sector

To find out if your site's project will qualify for a grant from the Council ring 020 8547 5000 or email grants@kingston.gov.uk

A brief history of DICKERAGE RD ALLOTMENT SITE

Dickerage Road and the surrounding area was built on farmland during the 1930s. We think that the allotment site was intended to be a sports field. It is adjacent to a council building which has an extended roof to provide a small covered area for spectators. This now gives us a welcome shelter in the rain.

We understand that the site was converted into allotments as part of the “Dig For Victory” campaign in World War Two. A communal air raid shelter was also built and that part of the site still has stony soil to this day.

The rectangular site has space for 16.5 full allotments and is bounded by a Council building and gardens on the other three sides. This gives a very peaceful setting, somewhat detached from the noisy world outside.

Management by Kingston council was very patchy through the early 2000s with people being allowed to hang on to neglected plots for years, mix ups over new lettings, invoice problems and even people with pristine plots being sent the dreaded 28-day warning letters by mistake.

In 2007, after more than 60 years of council management, allotment holders got together to form the Dickerage Road Allotment Association. The move to voluntary management was completed on 1st January 2009, with much help and encouragement from K FAG.

Voluntary management has worked well. We have been able to spend money to greatly increase security and neglected land has been re-let. Overall, the site is in a far better state now.

We inherited a waiting list of over 40 people and have let quarter allotments to all new people, with the opportunity to increase their holding after showing that they can manage their land. We currently have 35 plot holders and a small waiting list. There is a good atmosphere and the future seems bright.

