

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners

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Working together for Kingston's allotments

KINGSTON ROAD SITE

On the 1st of October Kingston Road joined the 11 other independent sites in the Borough (of 22 sites in total) and became voluntary managed. Kingston Road Allotment Association has leased the whole site of 43 plots from the Council for 12 years and will be managing the site for their plotholders.

Since starting its plotholders' association Kingston Road has gone from strength to strength, standards have lifted and site morale has improved considerably. It looks a busy, well cared for place – all down to the enthusiasm and determination of the committee which encouraged the plotholders to go ahead with voluntary management – a move they will not regret.

Lucy Launder, the Chairperson of KRAA said "It has been a long and sometimes difficult journey to achieve Voluntary Management and on occasions it has felt like it would never happen. Many, many thanks to KFAG and the commitment of both the committee members and Kingston Road plotholders for ensuring the motivation for VM has never died. We now look forward to a bright future ahead with many improvements to our site planned"

KRAA are now in control of their site and their finances, able to actively and efficiently manage and make their own decisions with funds to spend on site improvements as they wish.

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Heritage Tomatoes



URGENT—SITE LIAISON VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Of the 10 allotment sites which remain under Quadron Services management only 4 currently have a plotholder acting as Site Liaison Volunteer (SLV).

A site benefits enormously from having an SLV contact, the "eyes and ears" of the site, who can refer any problems or concerns to Quadron so they can be dealt with promptly. The SLV also holds a copy of the waiting list and contacts applicants to show them around when a plot becomes vacant so they are re-let quickly, before they have time to deteriorate further.

Setting up the SLV system at direct managed sites was one of the first projects undertaken by the Federation in 2004. At the time there were 15 sites direct managed, this was before Quadron Services came on the scene and took over allotments management in 2006. At the start of the scheme the situation at most of those sites was pretty dire – many vacant plots, let but un-worked plots and a lack of communication between plotholders and the management. This was before the explosion of interest in allotment gardening and fully occupied sites when waiting lists became the norm. KFAG was convinced that a

plottolders' representative at each site would solve many of the problems and approached the Council with the suggestion. Once the details were all agreed with the Council we recruited the Volunteers and the scheme began. It has been very successful; the SLVs had KFAG's support when they needed it and have done a great job. Unfortunately over the last few years Quadron has been unable to fill vacant SLV posts so some sites now have no representative.

If you are a plotholder at Churchfields, Kingshill Avenue, Knollmead, Moor Lane, Raeburn Avenue or Tolworth Main allotments and wish to know more, please ring Gloria Wallis. (see below for details)

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

Tel: 020 8942 9686

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That leaves 10 sites under direct management by Quadron Services, one of which it is hoped will become V.M. next year. Three of the remaining sites are very small, 8 or less plots and unlikely to be viable for V.M. as it stands. What of the last 6 sites? The Council and Quadron Services are committed to V.M. and the benefits to the sites are clear so perhaps it is time for the last six to at least consider starting a tenants association to represent the plotholders interests on their site.

KFAG has assisted 4 sites to voluntary management over the last 5 years; we have prepared information leaflets and sample documents for plotholders' associations and for sites considering V.M. and we are happy to advise and support any site interested in V.M. If you would like to discuss setting up a plotholders' association or V.M. for your site then you can contact Gloria Wallis. If you would like copies of our leaflets then they are available on request. You can find a list of available leaflets on the KFAG website at kfag.org.uk/advice/

Want to grow tastier tomatoes?

James Wong's next book (RHS Grow for Flavour) sets out this Kew-trained botanist and BBC science presenter's fascinating research on improving the taste of your tomatoes and other produce—its going to be a winner.. You heard it here first!

A brief history of Kingston Vale Allotment Site

Thought to have been an orchard forming part of Robin Wood Farm before designation as an allotment during WW2 (1940) as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. Pigs were kept in brick built sties as well as food grown. In 1982 site members formed the Kingston Vale Allotment Association and took on voluntary management status from Kingston Council.

Since that time the allotments have taken on a very different appearance.

Plots were re-measured and the main lawns and side paths levelled and straightened to create today's tidy site. An equipment shed was reinstated and subsequently a new site equipment shed built. A new lock and keys, exclusive to their site, were provided to improve security. A notice board and picnic tables and seats installed.

Adjoining neighbours kept horses so it wasn't long before they had a corral for manure. In 1985 site equipment was acquired with Council grant aid support and water tanks fitted with taps put in.

The old pig sties were demolished and a car park created. In 1991, they constructed loos - the first voluntary managed site in Kingston to do so.

In 1996 they changed their name to the Kingston Vale Leisure Gardeners' Association.

Since 2002 the site has been overhauled by members including a replacement shed. There has been a waiting list since 2003. The most recent big project (in 2005) saw the erection of a community hut, grant aided by Kingston Council.

"All this hard work by the members has represented a significant change in the face of the allotments, and has formed the basis of a sound and flourishing Association as seen today."

Dudley Hewson, Past Chairman (1982-2014) KVLGA.



What can you tell us about the history of **your** site? We would like to document the history of all the sites in the Borough—would you like to take part?

Please contact Gloria Wallis.