

## Charlestown Allotment site inspection report - 12/10/2015

Conducted by Cllrs Anne Geldard & Mick Davies

Two plot holders present on site working their plots

### General

The Common areas under the PC's control remain scruffy and needing attention.

The main entrance path was clear and dry and the overhanging vegetation had been cut back. It was noted that this path deteriorates after heavy rain and that some attention (eg spreading wood chips) would improve site access.

Although dogs are exercised along the top path, there seemed to be no evidence of dog fouling on the site. (This was not true on a subsequent visit).

The community fruit bushes on the public side of the boundary fence were in a mixed condition. Generally those towards the higher plot numbers (where there is better light) were growing particularly vigorously. Many others looked healthy although some seemed to be struggling. This could have been caused by a number of reasons ranging from drought to sawfly infestation. Fruit Bushes at the far end (by Plot 1) had disappeared, although it is unclear when this happened. The bulk of the (still existing) plants have been protected by wire cages and this seems particularly effective. Clearing the undergrowth back a little away from the top path would ease pressure on the plants (from boisterous dogs) although some of them are already looking robust enough to look after themselves!

The main perimeter fence and gate look to be in good repair although it was noted that bricks and trimmings had been put against the perimeter fences in various locations.

### The Allotment area

The overall impression is of a well-managed site being let down by a few areas requiring attention.

The condition of the sheds and greenhouses looks good but a number of greenhouses were not in active use (although, this was not thought to be unreasonable at this time of year). The water storage systems seem to function well and this is evidenced further by the excellent level of the site water bills (which have amounted to standing charges only).

There had clearly been a degree of quite recent work cutting and clearing back but a couple of paths between plots needed cutting.

The plots themselves ranged from exemplary through to clearly needing attention. The bulk of the plots were a credit to the ploholders but two plots in particular are a cause for some concern as they seem to be in need of considerable work. In fairness, these are the plots with the most significant stone, rock, brick and rubble problems and this is not the best time in the growing cycle to view sites. However, it may be that these ploholders would benefit from some additional help if they are to achieve and maintain an acceptable level during the next growing season.

One other plot had started to deteriorate but it is understood that the ploholder has been incapacitated and is only just recovering.

### The communal areas at the rear

This space had been recently strimmed and looked acceptably neat and tidy. However, there was a significant quantity of cut material against the wire fence at the back. The communal shed looked to

be in reasonable condition but there was at least one board that was rotting and needed replacement.

#### The Boundary fence with The Naze

The immediate neighbours at The Naze continue to regard the Allotment site positively and regard the allotments as good neighbours.

The old, low Naze boundary fence continues to decay although it is not causing any immediate concern. Cllr Davies has discussed this with the land owner who has no objection to the allotment group putting up a wire fence or extending the newer wooden fencing if they so desire. This could be continued at the existing height or maybe at a reduced height.

#### Draft Recommendations

The Inspecting councillors will be recommending that the Parish Council should directly approach plotholders where they feel there is cause for concern indicating that improvements will be required in time for a further inspection in spring next year.

Plot holders should ensure that no materials are stored against the fences and that all paths are cut and cleared.

Support should be sought for a working party to resolve a number of issues on the site.

- Clearing up some of the public areas
- Clearing materials from alongside the fencing
- Ensuring that paths are treated appropriately
- Sourcing and applying chips or similar to the entrance path
- Offering assistance to any plotholders in need of major clearing work
- Sourcing and replacing community planting

MJDavies

15/10/15