

Kingston Federation of Allotment Gardeners

News Sheet No 6

March 2011

kfag.org.uk

Working together for Kingston's allotments

ALLOTMENT NETWORK WIDENS

The Federation will now be able to directly contact many plotholders at Quadron managed sites.

The Council and Quadron agreed that plotholders' email addresses could be passed on to KFAG and a request for this was included with the rent invoices sent out recently. Information about local events, site news and the KFAG news sheets can now be sent directly to people on sites where there is no allotments association.

In the past we have relied on the SLVs, and we are very grateful for their help, to pass on information for us. We hope they will continue to do this for plotholders who do not use email by putting up copies of KFAG news sheets and bulletins etc at their sites.

THE KINGSTON FEDERATION OF ALLOTMENT GARDENERS

For those of you new to us who may be wondering, "What is the Federation? What do they do?"

The Federation aims to:

- **Promote and encourage allotment gardening in the Borough.**
- **Build relationships within and between sites so that ideas and experience can be shared.**
- **Provide information, support and advice to sites considering an Allotment Association.**
- **Provide information, support and advice to sites considering Voluntary Management.**

The Federation was set up formally in July 2003; its members are from other voluntary organisations, each has a KFAG representative. It currently represents 11 voluntary managed sites (managed by 9 Associations), 4 horticultural societies and 2 Associations at Quadron managed sites.

Some representatives have plots on Quadron managed sites, they are either co-opted members of the committee or represent a horticultural society or Plotholders Association at a Quadron managed site.

The Federation has run allotment promotion stalls at several events over the past years, including the Green Fair, Kingston May Merrie, Malden Fortnight and the Surbiton Festival.

An allotment leaflet was produced in partnership with Kingston Council. The Federation works closely with Kingston Council; we introduced the Site Liaison Volunteer scheme and were involved in setting it up. We hold an annual meeting for all SLVs along with Quadron and Council representatives.

We were involved in discussions prior to the publication of the Council's 'Allotment Strategy' document and attend regular meetings at the Guildhall.



In 2008 we successfully negotiated with the Council a 'model' lease for new voluntary managed sites and for lease renewals at existing V.M. sites.

Last year, following discussions with Kingston Road Allotment Association (a Quadron managed site), we negotiated a "revised new tenancy agreement" with the Council for Quadron's plotholders

A regular newsletter is produced and distributed to our members, it is also sent to the Site Liaison Volunteers at Quadron sites to forward to their plotholders where possible and for display on site.

The Federation is in direct contact with most allotment sites in the Borough, both V.M. and Quadron managed. This network has proved beneficial to all.

We have information sheets about setting up a Plotholders' Association and Voluntary Management of allotment sites. We can supply examples of constitutions for Plotholders Associations and details of the main terms to be included in a lease which are available to anyone on request.

Membership of the federation is currently free and open to any organisation in agreement with our objectives.

If we can be of any help to you or your site please contact the secretary, Gloria Wallis.

Tel: 020 8942 9686 or email to gloriawallis@hotmail.co.uk

ALLOTMENTS PETITION SUCCESS

The on-line allotments petition together with the paper petition collected an amazing 561 signatures. Kingston Road Allotments Association, a Quadron managed site in New Malden, started the petition to protest against the new tenancy agreement issued to all Quadron ploholders in January 2010 after discussions with the Council failed. It was argued that the new agreement removed ploholders rights held under their previous agreement and it was legally incorrect for ploholders to be threatened with eviction if they did not sign.

Following the success of the petition discussions were held between the Federation and Kingston Road Allotment Association and a proposed revised new agreement was drafted. This was presented to the Council by the Federation and all amendments and new clauses were agreed. The revised new agreement was sent to all Quadron ploholders in January of this year but with no obligation to sign. Charles Cleal, lead petitioner, Kingston Road Allotments Association, said in his response posted on the petition website, "I am strongly of the opinion that this agreement is far better for plot holders, improving their rights and lays out clearly the council's obligations to maintain the allotment sites. I would like to thank you for signing the petition I never thought we would get as many signatures as we did."

The Federation considers that the revised new agreement is fair and reasonable and has encouraged all ploholders to sign it.

ASSOCIATIONS AT QUADRON SITES

Last year Kingston Road and Groveland Way allotments became the latest sites to set up Ploholders' Associations. Both sites now have elected committees and a recognised voice to represent all their ploholders.

Jeff Reardon, Chairman of the new Groveland Way Allotments Association, spoke of the advantages. "An Association would be the collective voice of the site and would carry more weight."

He also said that more effective action could be taken over known vacant plots; they could choose their own site liaison volunteer; greater communication between plot holders would be possible; site news could be circulated and it could increase camaraderie on the site. Ploholders were assured that the management of the site would still be Quadron's responsibility; setting up an Association would change nothing in that respect.

Any Quadron site can start a Ploholders Association if the interest is there. It needs 6 to 8 people prepared to form a committee. Quadron are now willing to write to all ploholders to invite them to attend any initial meeting. Starting an Association does not necessarily mean there is an intention to proceed to voluntary management. An Association can be of considerable value in its own right to an allotment site.



"Setting up the Kingston Road Allotment Association was an important stage in the allotment's progress to allow our voices to be heard as a collective, not just to deal with onsite issues but in the development of relationships with the rest of the sites in the borough. Working together as a team definitely helped in the on-line/paper allotments petition instigated by Kingston Road which proved to be a fantastic success due to the support from all concerned. We look forward to working together as an association in our long term aim to become a voluntary managed site" Charles Cleal

