



Drainage

The Chairman and Treasurer carried out a number of surveys looking at drainage problems in very wet weather towards the end of the spring, when it was actually possible to see where water was coming from and where it was going. In addition to this we asked affected plot holders to provide details of their own experiences and several plot holders have done that, helpfully adding to our knowledge of what is happening.

Historically (and this is reflected in the site's management agreement with HBC), drainage problems on plots have been seen as the plot holder's responsibility and over the years many plot holders have taken all sorts of remedial measures, some successful and some not. It is often the case however that one plots' solution then becomes another plots problem, and this is what we are now currently trying to avoid. We do not want to rush in with an incomplete solution which improves things for some plot holders at the expense of others.

Several plot holders have mentioned the existence (or possible existence) of springs and old land drains and it was decided in the summer to get a dowser on the site to investigate these things. That visit took place on 22nd August and the dowser did identify what he thought were signs of several non-functioning land drains and a couple of inactive springs on the southern side of the site. (The Secretary has a full report of this visit if you are interested. Just ask her for a copy).

Two other Harrogate allotment sites have done large scale drainage works, Stonefall and Oatlands and we have been in touch with them to understand how they identified what needed doing and how they went about doing it. That has been very useful.

There is a drainage ditch down the southern side of the site (from plots 17 to plot 51) but this is blocked in several places and currently does not work. There is also a ditch beyond the hedge at the bottom of the site and this is also blocked. This is on land belonging to Coppice Valley Primary School. Although its website does not make it clear, this is now part of the Red Kite



Learning Trust academy chain. Given the topography of the site this ditch is where most of the water running off the site will be headed for. As a matter of common law, it is acceptable for rainwater to run naturally onto someone else's land but it is not permissible to make that happen by using pipes or culverts for example, so we need to make sure that whatever we do complies with the applicable law. We are in discussions with the trust about gaining access to survey and then carry out works on their land.

We know that both ditches referred to above need clearing out. We are in the process of identifying a contractor who could do that work and in addition supply & fit the necessary piping and infill to the southern boundary ditch. As well as this we will consult the contractor on what works might be advantageous elsewhere on the site so that we get the right result. Also we will be digging some test holes to try to find old land drains.

That won't happen overnight and we may need to get through another wet winter, but we will get there in the end. It would be helpful if any plot holder with any technical expertise in this area could make themselves known to the Secretary.

Alan Connell

Treasurer

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