

Chairman's Report 2025

The presentation of this year's annual report is made in the context of Value for Money

Rent for a half plot is £12 – the price of perhaps 3 coffees from one of the coffee chains

Rent for a full plot is £24 – the price of perhaps 3 coffees and cakes

So, what do us ploholders get for this bargain rent?

Aside from the joy of growing fruit and veg on our plot and the health benefits of some outdoors exercise plus home-grown produce, these are all the extras that we benefit from.

Firstly, our regular annual events throughout the RPA year. For the last year these were:

The Christmas café in December. A very jolly time with mulled wine and mince pies on offer plus the chance to buy a few Christmas gifts and mistletoe.

Super Sunday in March heralded the re-opening of the café after the winter closure plus the annual Seed Sale which did a roaring trade.

The Plant Sale in May– always a great success with so many donations and very reasonably priced plants.

The Annual Volunteer session with St John's Church. This year it was held in June. Two plots were identified for help as the ploholders were struggling due to unfortunate events.

The Autumn Show in August with the hotly-contested produce show; the pumpkin and sunflower competitions and the always fabulous lottery prizes was a great success.

Additional events this year were particularly supportive of our focus on helping new tenants These were:

A tool maintenance demonstration in January

A talk on prepping for next season, held in October

Then, throughout the season, our fabulous weekly café offering has continued each Sunday. Coffee, tea, cake and the opportunity to chat with our fellow plotters.

While we can already appreciate that all of this is available at a bargain price, let's not forget the behind-the-scenes volunteer support we also all benefit from:

The Website team that keeps us all up-to-date with events, important notices and the regular monthly emails.

The regular work parties that aim to keep our communal areas in good shape. If you think the communal paths, grassed areas or flower beds need attention, don't hold back, please offer to sort out.

The Gate team, who open and shut the vehicle gates in all weathers. If they aren't open at the normal time, please appreciate that a volunteer is doing their best, and maybe offer to join the team and give regular support.

The Inspection team - 12 volunteers plus a lead who assess the plots to ensure that cultivation is taking place in line with regulations. Rest assured that a caring approach is applied when needed. An initial 'letter of encouragement' is sent. This can be followed by a 30 day warning letter, but where unfortunate events are hindering plot holders these are taken into account and alternative solutions to help are sought. So, if you do see a plot that may have looked uncared for during the season, please bear in mind that you may not have the full picture, but do be assured that the inspection team is 'on the case'. For example, all plots that received a 30 day notice in 2025 were handed back.

The Pump team that keeps the pumps maintained and working throughout the season. They have reported that, despite the driest summer on their records, the water table held up remarkably well with only the odd pump failing. This is thought to be due to a wet 2024 plus the new pumps that were installed in 2023 spreading the load. There has also been reduced wear and tear and less need for replacement parts which is further proof that sinking those new bores in 2023 was indeed a sound investment and great use of RPA funds. The team is keen to remind plottolders to contact them if they have any pump problems or questions. The contact email is pumps@rpa.org.uk and can be found on the instructions posted at most pump sites.

In addition to these teams, we have other volunteers who you may not be aware of, but who all quietly contribute to making the RPA a place to be proud of.

Contributions include: maintaining the living hedge and the willow fedge around the compost loo; maintaining and cleaning the compost loo and the men's urinals; taking photos for our records; maintaining the bee area; cutting the grass; weeding the flower beds and generally keeping our site in good order.

Taking all the above into account, it's easy to understand why so many people are applying for plots at the RPA. With a relatively low turnover, the Waiting List was again closed this Summer as the waiting time approached 5 years.

In conclusion, I would hope that we all recognise what a bargain having a plot at the RPA is and that it continues to be a joy to visit thanks to the efforts of all the volunteers - too many to mention individually - who keep things going on the site.

This includes all those already mentioned plus everyone else who does their bit, picking up rubbish, helping their plot neighbours and supporting our café and all the events.

Thanks also to the committee for their support throughout the year.