

## S.H.A.G.S. SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024

After a prolonged winter season of nonstop rain our soggy sites are bursting back into life with lots of activity every time the sun shines in an attempt to get back on schedule. The grass has certainly grown and our site reps have been busy keeping the main headland paths neat and tidy.

This brings us to the main point of this newsletter, as we are facing a crisis with a shortage of site reps and volunteers to help keep our sites in tip top order. Currently we need at least one more person at Harpenden Rise, where following the sad loss of Marcia, Harriet is hoping to carry on in her mum's role but it is too much for one person on a site that size. At Oakley Road, Rod has persevered but needs an assistant urgently. There is a project for this year to finally get the stone embankment levelled, but now the chain link fence will be renewed, so then there will be access for a mini digger to clear the accumulated stones before the new fence is put up. At Churchfield, Keith has had a hard time, suffering with a bad back during most of 2023. The overgrown flower meadow takes a lot of looking after and there are a lot of nettles, brambles and docks which have overtaken the planted wild flowers, so regular strimming is necessary. We need at least two more reps/assistants there. Peter and Helen have agreed to carry on at Sibley Avenue for the rest of this year, but volunteers to help with the grass cutting would be much appreciated. Mike at Topstreet Way has a few volunteers with mowing tasks, but an assistant site rep is required to share the work. Rosie and Stephan at Cross Lane need help with regular volunteers to help with grass cutting, especially with such a large site with wide headland paths through the site and around all four sides. Aldwickbury relies heavily on Roger for most of the everyday site work, Hazel sorting out new recruits and new plotheolders, with Richard available for some of the larger tasks. At Piggottshill, our largest site, several of the site reps have other committee jobs, so a volunteer group for grass cutting is required. The main tasks for a site rep include:

- Keeping a check on site machinery
- Maintaining the headland pathways and boundaries
- General site maintenance, replacing leaking taps, site security
- Helping plotheolders with advice and assistance
- Reporting to regular committee meetings or attending on a rota

Please talk to your own site rep as soon as you can and offer what help you can, whenever you can ...

### MACHINERY UPDATE:

Nearly all our equipment has been serviced on site this winter. Our long-term plan to go electric using Stiga machines on every site has worked quite well, but the first battery mower we bought has had a few problems with an electrical fault, then a battery failed due to cold weather and more recently the plastic linkage for the height adjustment has broken. As PH is the only site with mains electricity, batteries have to be charged off site and this has led to problems, more recently where a battery has been lost – the batteries cost £159 - so that would have bought 100 litres of E5 petrol!

A reminder to all plotheholders that they are responsible for cutting the grass pathways between and around your own plots.

Don't forget to thoroughly clean down the machine when you have finished, including the underside of the deck and around the blade. There are brushes and scrapers in every shed, but the scrapers seem to disappear on a regular basis.

If there is a fault with any of the machines, please let your site rep know or leave a message with Roger White, Machinery Manager.

Wishing all our plotheholders, old and new, a healthy and productive Summer season ...

GET PLANTING!

Mike Cobley

April 2024