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Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd

Annual Report 2024

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Introduction

As the Chairperson of Rotherham Allotments Alliance Ltd, I would like to extend a warm welcome to this year's Annual General Meeting. I appreciate your time and attention in reading this annual report, which outlines the operational activity of the Alliance in 2024.

I want to express my gratitude to all the hard-working directors who have dedicated their time and efforts to the alliance over the last twelve months. Their contributions have been invaluable.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Jamie for his support to me and the other board directors.

The increasing cost of living is still affecting both members and the RAA. However, the alliance is financially stable and continues to budget carefully for a secure future. Moving forward, we face a new set of challenges in the next twelve months. Climate change is having a significant impact on gardening, with unpredictable rainfall and unseasonable temperatures. Legislative changes are also affecting the availability of pesticides and growing styles are changing to suit diverse lifestyles. We are entering an exciting era of allotment gardening, where we must collaborate to overcome the new challenges and benefit from the opportunities that come with them.

Thank you for your continued support.

Brian Steele

Chairperson - Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd



Site Statistics

All Sites	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Grand Total	1342	1242	42	42	16	124	97%

Direct Managed	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Avenue Road Allotments	73	70	2		1	15	100%
Greasbrough Allotments	88	85	1	2		25	98%
High Street Allotments	43	35	1	2	5	15	95%
Highfield Road Allotments	5	4		1		3	80%
Lowfield Avenue Allotments	14	6	5	3		2	67%
Moor Road Allotments	22	18	2		2	15	100%
Psalters Lane Allotments	10	3	6	1		10	75%
Rectory Field Allotments	64	54	5	3	2	12	95%
Rosehill Park Allotments	28	26		2		18	93%
St Leonards Road Allotments	14	14				9	100%
Grand Total	361	315	22	14	10	124	96%

Society Managed	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Barnsley Road Allotments	58	54		3	1		95%
Broom Valley New Allotments	71	68		3			96%
Broom Valley Old Allotments	74	63		11			85%
Clifton Allotments	133	124	3	4	2		97%
Clough Bank Allotments	66	48	14	3	1		94%
Hartley Lane Allotments	148	148					100%
Herringthorpe Valley Road Allotments	105	105					100%
Kimberworth Park Allotments	32	31		1			97%
Queen Street North Allotments	32	32					100%
Queen Street South Allotments	48	48					100%
South Street Allotments	32	30	1		1		100%
Vicarage Field Allotments	53	49	2	2			96%
Wet Moor Lane Allotments	37	36			1		100%
Wharf Road Allotments	20	20					100%
Wood Street Allotments	72	71		1			99%
Grand Total	981	927	20	28	6		97%

*Society Site data is based on the static data provided to the RAA throughout the year.



Principal Achievements and Challenges

Principle achievements

Society / tenant forum meetings

Forum meetings have allowed tenants and societies to engage more with the RAA and discuss issues and ideas. It is hoped that the attendance of these meetings will improve with time.

Society forums	May	15 attended (of 9 societies)
	October	11 attended (of 6 societies)
Tenant forums	September	17 attended

Rotherham show

Attendance at the show was well-received by the public again this year. The competitions and free seed packets were popular with those who visited the stall. The show was promoted to both direct-managed and society tenants to encourage participation in the horticulture show.

New director appointment/roles

Richard Watson was appointed to the role of treasurer, until a permanent appointment is made. There are two vacancies for Director positions on the board to be nominated from the membership. There is a vacancy for one Director on the board to be nominated by RMBC.

Principal challenges

Signing of the lease

The head lease could still not be finalised due to several outstanding issues raised by the solicitor. The majority of these have been resolved and it is hoped that the final lease draft can be prepared for review in 2025.

Director vacancies

There are two vacancies on the board to be filled from the membership and one to be appointed by RMBC. Despite efforts to encourage applications, the positions remain vacant. This impacts the capacity and diversity of the board. It raises concerns over the sustainability of the RAA in the event of director absence or resignation.

Society engagement

There are some societies that have not been actively involved with the RAA, while others have taken a more proactive approach. Although the society forums have been successful, there is still a need to improve relations between some societies and the RAA. Due to limited sharing of data and reporting, the effectiveness of managing waiting lists across all sites is reduced. Society members may possess a wealth of information that has yet to be fully accessed for the benefit of all allotment tenants. A trial is underway to integrate society data into the RAA allotment management system.

Tenant engagement

Attendance at the AGM and shareholder forum was relatively low in relation to the total number of tenants. In summary, the flow of communication was from the RAA and to the tenants, suggesting a missed opportunity for useful tenant feedback and contributions. Due to limited resources a planned members survey has been delayed.

Historic waste

Historic waste and unsuitable structures on plots continue to be a problem on sites where these plots are made vacant and unsuitable for re-let. This includes new discoveries of materials potentially containing asbestos, worn tyres and other waste that requires specialist removal.



Summary of Works Completed



Site security improvements on 6 sites.

This includes fence and gate installation or repair.



Improvements to tracks on 4 sites

This will improve safety and access for tenants including during the winter months



Drainage works were completed on Vicarage Fields Allotments.

This will reduce water logging on site and allow unlettable plots to be tenanted. This work was jointly funded with the society.



Upgrades and repairs to water supplies and facilities

Improvements to allow leak isolation and frost damage prevention on three sites



Urgent repairs to Broom Valley Old site community building.

The roof and interior have been made fit for safe use by the society members.



27 skips were provided across sites, removing approximately 216m³ of waste from allotments.

14 of those skips were specifically allocated for plot clearance work to enable new tenancy.



Monthly rodent control across ten sites.

Operated by trained RAA directors and appointed volunteers.



Directors & Attendance

Directors	Brian Steele	Chair
	John Palmer	Vice Chair
	Jack Taylor	Secretary
	Sue Jackson	Treasurer
	Richard Watson	Treasurer
	Michael Hirst	Resigned May 2024
	Mohammed Sulleman	Appointed treasurer July 2024
		Resigned April 2024

For RMBC Councillor Dave Sheppard
 Vacancy

Director attendance at Board Meetings:

	Brian Steele	John Palmer	Jack Taylor	Mohammed Sulleman	Mick Hirst	Cllr Dave Sheppard	Sue Jackson	Richard Watson
15/01/2024	1						1	1
26/02/2024	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
18/03/2024	1	1	1		1		1	1
08/04/2024	1	1	1		1		1	1
21/05/2024	1	1	1					1
01/07/2024	1	1	1	1		1		1
12/08/2024	1	1		1				1
04/09/2024		1	1					1
23/09/2024	1		1			1		1
14/10/2024	1	1	1			1		1
18/11/2024	1	1	1			1		1
16/12/2024	1	1						1
Total Attendance	11	10	9	3	3	5	4	12
% Attendance	92%	83%	75%	25%	75%	42%	80%	100%



Policy Review and Amendments

Asbestos Policy

New Policy

Safeguarding Policy

New Policy

Vehicles Policy

New Policy

Complaints Policy

Amendment – new section – When we won't uphold a complaint

Clarification of the RAA complaints policy for members of society managed sites



Future Plans

The Rotherham Allotment Alliance is committed to enhancing the allotment experience for our community members. As we look ahead, we have identified several key priorities to address:

Plot Clearance of Unused Plots

Clearing unused plots will not only improve the overall appearance but also create opportunities for new gardeners. Significant work has already been completed to return unused plots to a cultivatable state. However, there are still 22 directly managed plots listed as unlettable. Plots being vacated with historic waste left behind will require clearance to enable new tenants the best opportunity to succeed.

Path Repairs and Improvement

Well-maintained pathways are essential for safe and convenient access to allotments. Due to increasing vehicle use on sites, some paths have been significantly degraded. We will prioritize repairing existing paths where a health and safety risk is present. Enhancing will be considered where the benefit is improved access, durability, or cost-effectiveness of maintaining the site.

Tenant Survey with a Focus on Encouraging Diversity

We value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of our allotment tenants. Through a survey, we will actively seek feedback and ideas to promote inclusivity and celebrate our community's richness.

Engaging More Actively with Societies

Collaborating with societies fosters knowledge sharing and camaraderie. We will actively engage with societies through the continuation of the forums and the introduction of dedicated web pages.

This will include the roll out of the Colony allotment management system for data management on a successful trial outcome.

Engaging Better to Support New Tenants

We will develop a new strategy, guided by tenant feedback, to support new tenants in the first steps of their allotment journey. This will encompass improvements to the existing new tenant documentation and website. The RAA will explore options for knowledge-sharing events.



Finance Report

The Alliance has continued to use the services of the Voluntary Action Rotherham Community Accountant. This has enabled for the accounts to be reviewed professionally and help to identify where any improvements could be made in the financial practices.

Rotherham Allotments Alliance Limited
Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income & Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
	Total	Total
	£	£
Income:		
Rent	75,588	67,471
Water charges	-	3,664
Capital re-imburement	-	25
Membership	-	3
Bank interest	576	145
Other	902	-
Total income	<u>77,066</u>	<u>71,308</u>
Expenditure		
Staff wages	2 22,726	17,256
Staff expenses	1,191	338
Repairs and maintenance	33,652	26,798
Security, keys, locks and gates	17,031	857
Pest control	1,487	1,279
Water	2,784	3,130
Accountancy fees	550	550
Directors expenses	64	-
Memberships and subscriptions	1,585	1,805
Insurance	947	932
IT and Communications	1,813	808
Admin expenses	742	476
Printing, postage & stationery	618	778
Marketing	134	-
Sundry purchases	168	60
Depreciation	741	744
Total expenditure	<u>86,233</u>	<u>55,809</u>
Net income/expenditure	(9,167)	15,499
Total funds brought forward	51,952	36,453
Total funds carried forward	<u>42,785</u>	<u>51,952</u>



Rotherham Allotments Alliance Limited
Balance Sheet
as at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible fixed assets	3	4,439	5,181
Current Assets			
Debtors	4	3,034	1,390
Cash		<u>64,731</u>	<u>71,825</u>
		72,204	73,215
Current Liabilities			
Creditors	5	(29,420)	(26,444)
Net assets		<u>42,785</u>	<u>51,952</u>
Represented by:			
General Funds		<u>42,785</u>	<u>51,952</u>
Total funds		<u>42,785</u>	<u>51,952</u>



Rotherham Allotments Alliance Ltd Budget Overview

Expenses summary	2025		2026		2027	
Payroll	£	28,170.00	£	29,553.50	£	31,008.18
Finance Costs	£	-	£	-	£	1.00
Repair and Maintenance	£	35,182.13	£	36,941.23	£	38,788.29
Office / General Expenditures	£	5,210.75	£	5,501.08	£	5,810.40
Other Misc. Service Costs	£	690.38	£	724.89	£	761.14
Advertising / Promotional	£	220.50	£	231.53	£	243.10
Memberships	£	1,800.00	£	1,800.00	£	1,800.00
Insurance	£	3,000.00	£	3,150.00	£	3,307.50
Utilities	£	3,000.00	£	3,900.00	£	3,901.00
Total Expenses	£	77,273.75	£	81,802.23	£	85,620.60

Income	2025		2026		2027	
Societies	£	48,459.06	£	50,882.01	£	53,426.11
Direct Managed	£	23,339.93	£	24,506.93	£	25,732.27
Grazing	£	2,920.00	£	2,920.00	£	2,920.00
Water	£	2,813.90	£	3,500.00	£	3,700.00
Total Income	£	77,532.89	£	81,808.94	£	85,778.39

Total Income	2025		2026		2028	
Net Income/(Expenditure)	£	259.14	£	6.71	£	157.78



Summary

Difficulties with filling vacant positions on the board have led to some priorities from 2024 going unmet. A focus on these priorities will be maintained when reviewing potential applicants for new directors to address diversity and skills gaps.

Rising costs will continue to impact the work achievable with a limited budget. The board will aim for a balanced approach, spending cautiously to prioritise health and safety issues as well as maintaining existing assets.

The education and encouragement of good gardening practices will be focused on, with regular inspections ensuring that tenants are working their plots effectively.

The strengthening of the relationship between the RAA, societies and tenants will continue with the bi-annual society forum and shareholder meetings and information and advice will be shared where appropriate.

Waste removal is still one of the biggest issues on the sites and will continue as older plots are vacated.

Ground maintenance quality of work on sites has raised concerns and will need to be carefully monitored.

Demand for plots has still been high and waitlists for direct-managed sites have been managed accordingly.

The ASO remains to be a point of contact for all current and future tenants and will be responsible for promoting the sustainability of the allotment provision for future generations.