

Chairperson's Report 2024

Personally, I will be remembering 2024 for a long time and not for the right reasons.

As some of you will know, back In March I was given membership to that one club that nobody really wants to be a member off, the Big C Club.

To say it turned my world upside down would be an understatement.

It meant that during the main growing season, I was either receiving treatment or having to isolating.

To be perfectly honest I didn't have the energy to beat an egg, far less dig an allotment.

Thankfully I got through the treatments with very little side effects, and now its just a waiting game.

This meant that I had to leave the day to day running of the allotments in the very capable hands of our secretary, Richard.

He has not only had to look after the day to day running of the Allotments, but he also had to deal with the "jobsworth" employees of the Council.

One of his main tasks was to prepare our Charity status application and get it accepted.

I am happy to inform you that Hawthorn Allotments Association is now a registered Charity and our registration number is SC 053641

You may well be asking yourselves "why did we become a registered Charity".

One of the reasons was to comply with Government and Highland Council legislation.

It has always been one of my fears that the Council could rezone the area for housing.

Another fear I had, was that Council in a bid to help fill their "funding gap", would dramatically increase our annual rent, after all it has remained static for well over 8 years.

Some 3 years ago the Council, took a big interest in allotments, because they had too, due to Scottish Government legislation.

Like a lot of Council projects it took off with great vigour.

New staff were appointed and new guidelines were drawn up.

Then it lost its momentum.

Becoming a registered Charity brings some pluses and minuses.

On the plus side, it offers greater protection from that threat that I mentioned.

On the minus side, we are now answerable to OSCR.

The Office of the the Scottish Charitable Regulator

As Richard will be reporting on our Charitable status in his report, I am not going to say any more on the matter.

Now I am going to move on to that prickly subject, plot inspections.

Over the past 12 months we have been a lot stricter regarding some of the plot.

Let's be honest some of our members have been neglecting their plots for years.

In your interest and that of our members, this had to be addressed.

Some plot holders have had their agreements terminated, others have left.

New members were allocated these vacant plots.

Some of them within months gave up their plot.

Like so many folk they had no idea how much hard work is required in the upkeep of a plot.

As this is item number 10 on the agenda I am going to leave it there.

Our waiting list is still very high and I have no doubt Richard will be referring to this in his report.

Early in 2024 one of our members suffered life changing injuries in a cycling accident.

His road to recovery has been long and challenging.

But I am happy to say that he amongst us tonight, I am of course referring to Jeff Macdonald .

Jeff, on behalf of all the members of the Association, can I offer you our best wishes, we all hope that you're recovery continues and we look forward to you being back full time amongst us once again.

In closing, can I wish each and everyone of you a Happy Christmas, and a Healthy and Prosperous 2025.

Sandy Goodall,
Chairperson.