

Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association

Chairman's Report

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the 16th AGM of the Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association for the year 2024/25 and thank you all for taking the time to come along this evening. The allotment site is currently divided into 329 plots of various sizes. During the period 1st November 2024 to 30th October 2025 a total of 53 plots were relet. This gives a 16% annual turnover of plots, which is the same as the previous year. People are continuing to join the waiting list which currently totals twenty-two. As the waiting list has now decreased to historically normal levels, in future, vacant half plots will no longer be split and let as two quarter plots. The allotment site and balancing pond were given the Green Flag Award® again this year. This scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces. This year SAGA continued routine works and held working parties for coppicing hazel and preparing bean sticks and repairing potholes on the stone access tracks. We carried out hedge cutting, cleared 23 vacant plots and bare fallowed three plots that were badly infested with perennial weeds making them ready for re-let.

We have seen the effects of shifting climate with hotter and dryer summers. Adaptation to such changes requires a radical rethink of gardening practices, varieties, and planting times so plant roots can grow as deep as possible to withstand dry conditions. Some possibilities may include:

- 1) more autumn planting with over wintering crops;
- 2) growing perennial types of vegetables see <https://incrediblevegetables.co.uk/shop/> ;
- 3) using large cloches to dry and warm up ground in February for early spring planting and;
- 4) possibly trying a second late sowing of some crops to make use of milder autumn weather.

A better understanding is required of soil health and how to improve it, so more water is stored in the soil and plants have a healthy root system. Also, the role of mulches, green manuring, shade crops and knowing which crops are drought tolerant and which require more water is important.

Activities on the community garden continued in 2025 with the group from GloActive attending every Thursday. A large part of the ground was repurposed to produce surplus produce to donate to the food bank at the Redwell Centre in Matson. This activity was developed by Tracey Simpson in response to the lack of fresh vegetables in food bank donations. I would like to thank Tracey for this work and Helen Dallyn and Ken Beedon for their work in supporting these activities. In 2026 we hope to erect badger fencing around the community garden and relocate the swap shop to another part of the site. We would welcome additional volunteers to help with the community garden.

I would like to thank John Merrick for continuing to manage the Association's web site and Facebook page, Helen Dallyn our Treasurer, and committee members Karen Franks and Dave Johnson for all their work. I also like to mention the mower elves Derek Austin, Frank Prentice, and John Merrick often seen mowing communal areas and allotment paths to keep things tidy. My role as chairman is gradually reducing as the years pass and I would like to extend special thanks to Tracey Simpson, our secretary who is the heart and soul of SAGA. Some of her many tasks include showing plots to new tenants, assisting the city council in plot inspections, liaising with plot holders and answering their questions, and dealing with all the email correspondence.

This ladies and gentleman concludes the chairman's report. Thank you

SAGA Chair
Stephen Simpson
November 2025