

Chairs report, October 2025

I want to start by thanking all the committee members for their hard work over the last year. Committee work is voluntary and a large part of what the committee does often is unseen by plot holders. It can at times be a thankless task. So, it helps if you have a great team who work together and enjoy each other's company even after a 3 hour committee meeting.

At the time of writing there are two vacant plots – now ready to rent. With a waiting list of 447 people hoping to get a plot – up from 370 this time last year.

The maintenance morning held on the first Saturday of the months continues to be well attended and the perfect way to get jobs done on site. On a quiet day we have around 20 volunteers but up to 35 is not unusual. There has been occasion when we've had so many turn up that we've had to make a second food run to ensure enough cake and sausages! So, I want to thank all of you who give your time to volunteer.

And it does look as if we are all doing something right. Northfields has won second prize in the Large Sites Competition run by Cultivating Ealing. Wendy and Jon (Plot 219) grabbed second prize for Large Plot. While Jane (on Plot 197) was awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> prize for Large Plot. But also came second in the Biodiversity Awards. Congrats!

A huge thank should also go to the team who volunteered to make the site ready for judging. We have, without a doubt, a great allotment community to be proud of.

We have always strived for a good relationship with Pathways our landlord. The current senior property manager at Pathways is Eoin Donnelly and our main contact. We have been in talks with him about renewal of the management agreement for almost a year. The current management agreement was put together in our first year as a society. It was meant to be reviewed each year. But with multiple changes in Pathways' CEOs and property managers we were still holding on 10 years later with an agreement that was out of date and unfit for purpose.

I have to thank Jon Wilkins (Treasurer) and Clare Harrington (committee member) for their hard work and dogged determination in getting this new management agreement to the point it could be presented to Pathways' trustees. There have been multiple meetings, discussions, emails and follow up of the follow up emails to get us to 98% complete.

The great news is as of yesterday Northfields has signed the new agreement – it just needs Pathway's signature. Hopefully that will be done by the AGM meeting or very soon after.

You may have noticed some new things on site. There is a new gate which leads directly onto Mattock Lane. Now you don't have to leave by the unlit gate on the Radbourne Walk (a favourite haunt of drug dealers). But can exit directly and more safely onto a well-lit street.

We now have an 'event shed' where we keep all our open day paraphernalia. We lost a large sycamore but gained more light onto our fruit garden. Plus, Simon (plot 198) has been busy refurbishing one of our vintage sheds which made its debut at the Summer open day.

Visitors to the allotment continue to enjoy the site no matter what the weather. The Summer open day featured not one but two large downpours. This of course has an effect on visitor numbers. But Ealing folk are a stoic lot and those that came (just over 450 adults plus children) enjoyed their time with us eating lashings of home-made cake, sausages and Pimms. The plant stall did a cracking trade too and I want to give a shoutout to committee member Sam (plot 203) for his Rhubarb Cordial – which was a best seller and very profitable on the produce stall and bar.

We know that for many families in our community, the Halloween Pumpkin Trail has become a much-loved tradition and a highlight of the autumn calendar. We advertised 3,000 tickets - which sold out within a couple of weeks.

Open days require a great deal of support and hard work from volunteers, but are incredibly important. Over 100 people volunteered to help on these two events. Their efforts helped local people see how important the allotments are to the wider community, not just to those of us lucky enough to have a key to the site.

However, after much discussion, the committee made the difficult decision not to run the Pumpkin Trail in 2025. The trail is organised and delivered entirely by volunteers, and it requires an enormous amount of preparation, time, and energy to make it happen – from carving pumpkins, setting up decorations, and organising logistics, to stewarding on the day itself and managing the clear-up afterwards.

We felt we needed to take a rest, regroup, and ensure that the trail can return in 2026 stronger than ever. Our aim is to return refreshed, with new ideas and renewed energy to make the Pumpkin Trail a truly special experience for everyone. If you'd like to get involved do let us know – we'll start planning in January. It is such great fun – we do hope you'll join us.

Christina Fox  
Chair, Ealing Dean Allotments Society