

DAHA - Chairman's Report 2021

- Chairman, Matt Peskett

2021, the second COVID-19 pandemic year, began with another lockdown and restrictions on public gatherings. Like 2020 this again impacted on DAHA's ability to run horticultural events prior to the summer 'unlocking'.

Our usual Spring into Action members' event was unable to proceed 'in-person' and Chris Dale gave a virtual talk instead. In September Chris also kindly arranged for our annual visit to RHS Wisley to take place - this saw 42 members attend as part of their annual membership benefits package.

Our annual squash and pumpkin show was unfortunately cancelled due to below average temperatures and reduced sunshine levels impacting on plant yields in the South East, we would have really struggled to fill the new venue at Denbies. We will likely return to a smaller venue at the Christian Centre for 2022 to avoid a reoccurrence. As it transpired some of us had to isolate thanks to contracting COVID during the proposed show date anyway. It is a shame that viruses and an unpredictable climate have doomed plans to take on a larger venue for two consecutive years.

DAHA's main role throughout the pandemic has been that of a supplier of peat-free compost, manure and other sundries. A service that was always available but really took off in part due to difficulties in accessing other routes (*for those who might buy at a garden centre or retail outlet*) and in part because of increased time spent at allotments by plot holders. Product demand by DAHA members has risen 700% from 2017/18 (£856.70) to a whopping £6137.50 in 2020/21. Our Treasurer Andy Whitehouse has worked his socks off processing all the orders and deliveries. Thank you to all those who have assisted with the moving of pallet loads of manure and compost each month.

More brilliance from our Treasurer has seen the full rollout of Membermojo – a website that makes it easier to process memberships, renewals and orders. With so many things moving to a web-only processing method during the pandemic the transition to Membermojo has probably been more readily accepted by all. We now have 167 members, an increase of 15% on the preceding year and up 40% on the 2017/18 year.

Finally a new revenue stream has also been added to DAHA coffers – the Mole Valley Community Lottery is providing regular income now, another idea brought to us by our Treasurer! This year we have used the estimated funds from that to purchase a projector for future talks, avoiding the need for us to try and borrow one from local businesses. We may well rent out that projector to other local community groups in future.

On a personal note I have high hopes for allotments and DAHA in 2022, it has at times been difficult to enthusiastically make plans in most areas of our lives during the past 18 months. If the light at the end of the tunnel continues to brighten I look forward to organising some additional DAHA events as we bounce back into a world of mammoth allotment waiting lists.

Matt

Matt Peskett
November 9th 2021