**Growers Group meeting May 4th 2017**

Meeting in Pack Horse Inn

Apols garry

1. **Meeting with Phil Tyler and Ian Todd**

Paul set the scene with background to GCF and Bright Ideas Fund. Agreed that the main person for Phil and Ian to liaise with is Mick, backed up by Rachel. Agreed that Phil and Ian would work together on Mondays starting on 15th May 2017. Ian can occasionally work either sat or sun pm.

Meeting interrupted by going along to the field to show the field to growers.

Insurance – neither of them have public liability insurance. GCF has been advised by its insurers to ensure that contractors have their own insurance, therefore Phil and Ian need to source insurance for themselves.

Communication – agreed that Phil and Ian will be on mailing list of GCF update, that we need a diary on the field to record what has been done, mick to supply the one he has bought. Scaling up production – discussion of a number of ideas for crops to increase production, this included squash, potatoes, leeks, broad beans, and rhubarb. Agreed that Phil and Ian would develop a plan to grow more crops on the field.

Mick agreed to meet the growers at Gibside on 15th May to show them the facilities there.

Phil agreed to meet with Rachel to advise on the development plan.

Phil and Ian left the meeting at this point.

1. **Contract with growers.**

Agreed that Rachel would draw up a contract for the growers and to ensure that it included the need for production to be more mechanised, need for weeding and that we want members to learn how to use tractor and tools

1. **Increase production**

Discussion whether to increase only in the plots already ploughed or to extend into new areas on the field. Agreed that we would extend into new areas of field, which are the garden plots 9,10 and part of the polytunnel area to the north of the field. Mick to ask Trevor to plough this, Howarth and Rachel to mark out the area.

1. **Communication with members**

Rachel will inform members through the GCF update that the growers will be starting and working on Mondays and ask members to come and work alongside, whilst keeping Friday as a working day as well.

1. **Flailing field**

John Lowrie, contractor, has provided price for flailing the field not in production – 4 hours at £30 an hour plus VAT and can do it next week. One of us to be there when he is doing the work.

1. **Northern regional csa meeting** 3rd june 11 to 3pm. Mick and Rachel possibly interested and maybe share travel with go local.
2. **School farms network conference** - not for us.
3. **Tractor driving training** – Mel and Howarth to start and others to get more experience. Paul to provide the training. Paul to send Rachel some dates when this can happen.
4. **Harvesting bags for members to collect** – try and do this on a market day. Aim for first market to be 1st July. Perhaps get the nationwide volunteers to help us on the farmers market. Twig event is 15th July.
5. **Gateshead volunteers month** – can get £300 for a set of leaflets. Mick will apply for this to produce a new leaflet and organise a celebration on 30th June in walled garden 5pm.
6. **Field infrastructure** – Mick Wilks has confirmed that there is no more money for hardcore from NT and that it is only available for 6 months. Rachel presented a diagram that showed that if we only put hardcore under the container and the track and gate that it might cost (pro rata from existing quotes) £4237, with the container with padlock, window and door is £2988, which is £525 more than the funding we have available. Howarth has a quote for cladding and roof round single container for £3,400 plus vat. He is waiting for another quote. Howarth concerned about condensation in containers unless get good ventilation and insulation so is keen to have a roof over the container. Woodland trust timetable is that the completed cabin, event and training has to be done by oct 2018. Mick will work with Garry to work up a time plan for that money. Awards for all is £10,000, not enough for our original plan. Could hear in 10 weeks from when apply. Agreed that Paul will apply for Awards for All for the cladding and hardcore.
7. **Water supply** – Northumbria water are coming tomorrow to tell us where the water will come into the field and what trenching we will need. Cost is likely to total £1000. Not sure that we can afford this now. Can we manage with the IBC’s for now?
8. **Biochar** – Ruth has requested to use her biochar kiln on our field. There is some smoke from the kiln. Its very heavy so unlikely to be able to be taken. How often will she use it and how much smoke will it produce? We would get biochar in return. We will need to talk to NT about having the kiln. Howarth and Rachel to meet with Ruth to discuss.
9. **Future meeting dates**, General - 15th May 7.30 pack horse, Growers 8th June 7.30 pack horse.