

Cultivating Communities: A Growing Challenge
An allotments strategy for the City of Edinburgh 2010 – 2015

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1 Introduction

Allotment gardening provides the opportunity for a year-round healthy lifestyle which is active, socially inclusive and which reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being. Unlike other leisure activities, it provides not only exercise, mental relaxation and lifelong learning opportunities, but a place to make and meet friends along with gathering the harvest of fresh fruit and vegetables. Allotments have a significant role to play in the protection and promotion of biodiversity and provide the opportunity to spend time out-of-doors enjoying nature.

Interest in gardening and allotments has risen dramatically over the last decade as more people appreciate the social, environmental and health benefits to be gained from gardening an allotment plot. Many factors have contributed to the idea of growing, cooking and eating your own produce, from concerns regarding health and nutrition, to raised awareness of climate change and the rise in “lifestyle” television programmes. In 1998 the waiting list for an allotment in Edinburgh was 417 now, in 2010, it stands at 2367 for just 1233 Council owned plots.

A strategic approach is required to address this unprecedented demand and to ensure that the benefits of allotment gardening are properly recognised and available to all.

This strategy follows on from Cultivating Communities, the first Allotments Strategy for the City of Edinburgh and the first of its kind produced by a Scottish local authority. This has been very successful in improving the quality of allotments across the city between 2002 and 2009, and has also been influential in the development of support for allotments in other council areas and at government level. This successor aims to build on its predecessors achievements by identifying ways to give more people the opportunity to grow their own food by increasing the number of allotments in Edinburgh and promoting other food growing initiatives. An Allotment Strategy Implementation Plan has been developed, alongside the strategy, to guide the work of the Allotment Service over the next five years.

This Strategy and Implementation Plan has been written in consultation with the Allotment Strategy Steering Group, which includes representatives of allotment holders and NHS Lothian as well as the City of Edinburgh Council Parks and Greenspace Service.

1.1 Legislation & Policy

1.1.1 Legislation

Councils are legally required to respond to the demand for allotments. The powers and obligations vested in The City of Edinburgh Council derive from the Allotments (Scotland) Acts of 1892, as amended by the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act 1919 and the Allotment (Scotland) Acts of 1922 and 1950.

Specifically, councils are required to:

- Consider any representations made by local residents to the effect that a council needs to take action in terms of the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892.
- Acquire any suitable land that may be available to be let as allotments to local residents, either through representations by the public or where council concludes there is a demand for allotments.
- Make the allotment regulations known by such means as it thinks fit, and provide to any local resident, on demand, a free copy of the regulations.
- Keep a register available for public inspection showing the details of (i) the tenancy acreage and rent of each allotment, and (ii) any un-let allotments.
- Provide an annual statement of accounts in respect of allotment provision.

Councils have powers to:

- Acquire land through purchase or lease and to do so by agreement or through compulsory measure.
- Improve the land acquired for allotments. This may be by enclosing the land, draining it, dividing it into allotments, or creating approaches or roads.
- Make regulations as they consider appropriate to regulate the letting of allotments (e.g. eligibility, size of allotments, conditions as to how they may be cultivated, rent, and period of notice). Such regulations require to be put to public consultation and then to Scottish Ministers for confirmation.

In Edinburgh, Allotment Regulations were verified by the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1913, and amended in 1924. They govern a number of aspects of the City of Edinburgh Council's allotment provision, including the fixing of rents.

In 2007, COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) published 'Allotments in Scotland: Guidance Notes for Scottish Councils', which recommends good practice for Scottish local authorities, drawing on the Edinburgh strategy, including the need to establish a clear point of contact for allotment enquiries, an assessment of provision and demand, and to count allotments separately from other forms of greenspace when preparing local plans or open space audits.

1.1.2 Policy context

Allotment provision is influenced by a number of national and local policies.

Scottish Planning Policy (2010) is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It states that local authorities have a statutory duty to provide allotments where there is proven demand. Existing and, where relevant, potential allotment sites should be safeguarded in the development plan.

The Scottish Government's strategy for physical activity "*Lets Make Scotland More Active*" (2003) aims to significantly increase the amount of physical activity in most people's lives. The creation of environments conducive to physical activity is one of the four key objectives of the strategy, and allotments are identified amongst a suite of local government services that can meet this objective.

The Sustainable Cities Index tracks progress on sustainability in Britain's 20 largest cities. The cities are ranked according to their performance on 13 indicators across three broad baskets: environmental performance; quality of life; and future-proofing. The food indicator in the future-proofing basket is based on the number of allotments plots per 1,000 residents. Edinburgh currently has 2.7 allotments per 1,000, which places Edinburgh 19th in the group of 20 cities.

The Edinburgh City Local Plan (2010) identifies allotments as part of the public open space network, and therefore protected from development under Policy Os1: Open Space Protection.

Policy Os3: Open Space in New Development, notes that: *The Council will negotiate the provision of new publicly accessible and useable open space in new development when appropriate and justified by the scale of development proposed and the needs it will give rise to. In particular, the Council will seek the provision of links which will extend the network of green corridors when opportunities arise.*

Open Space Proposal OSR7 (Leith Links Seaward Extension) comments that "*Land has been safeguarded to meet these [open space] needs in a landscaped strip of pitches, related facilities and other open space uses such as allotments.*"

The National Food and Drink Policy for Scotland aims to promote Scotland's sustainable economic growth by ensuring the Scottish Government's focus in relation to food and drink addresses quality, health and well being and environmental sustainability. A Grow Your Own Working Group has been established to liaise with public sector bodies and allotment organisations and take forward the grow your own agenda. In 2009 £700,000 was awarded to grow your own and community food projects through the Climate Challenge Fund, including the Edinburgh Garden Share Scheme.

The Central Scotland Green Network was launched in May 2010. It's over arching aim is to increase public well being while reducing carbon footprint.

It aims to co-ordinate the efforts of a number of bodies, including local authorities, community organisations and land owners, in order to create and support a network of quality green spaces for recreation, including spaces for local food production such as allotments and community gardens.

A draft open space strategy has been prepared for Edinburgh. The strategy aims to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to protecting and developing the city's network of open space. It sets standards that the Council will be expected to meet. It also estimates needs for certain types of open space, and proposes sites which could help address those needs. It includes information from this strategy on the proposed sites for future allotments.

The Health Inequalities Standing Group of the Edinburgh Community Health Partnership has recognised the link between the natural environment and health. As a result a sub-group – Greening Edinburgh for Health – was set up in 2009 to develop a strategic approach to supporting existing work and to improve links. Allotments and community gardens play an integral role in this.

The Strategic Framework on Healthy Weight in Lothian, produced by NHS Lothian in 2008, supports the development of strategies on allotments, and identifies allotment use as one of the means of tackling obesity and eating healthily.

Allotments and allotment gardening also feature in a number of Edinburgh's other strategic plans: the Edinburgh Parks and Gardens Strategy and the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan and in the forthcoming Sustainable Development Strategy and Open Space Strategy.

1.2 The value of allotments and gardening

Allotments provide many benefits for plot holders and their families, but also to the local environment and community. In terms of individual and social wellbeing, they offer physically active outdoor exercise, mental refreshment and stimulus, as well as the production of good value, nutritional fruit and vegetables. Less obvious are the wider benefits. Allotments form part of the open space resource of the city, and can be a focus for education and public enlightenment, neighbourliness and social solidarity. Allotment sites also encourage interaction with nature and make a significant contribution to biodiversity and sustainability.

Allotments and gardening contribute to all of the five Strategic Objectives established by the Scottish Government in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which gives a local authority the power to do anything which it considers is *“likely to promote or improve the well-being of its area and the persons within that area”*.

1.2.1 Wealthier & Fairer

Allotments are available to all, rich or poor, young or old, but are particularly attractive for those who do not have their own garden. Edinburgh's allotments offer real value for money and the rent is reduced for those on low incomes or who are retired.

IMAGE

1.2.2 Healthier

A typical allotment plot can provide fruit and vegetables for a family of four all year, which encourages people to eat the recommended minimum of five servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Gardening is an excellent way to keep physically fit and is an important activity for mental well-being. Current recommendations are that adults should participate in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week. Evidence suggests that physical access to nature helps people recover from illness quicker, reduces stress and lowers blood pressure.

The contribution allotments and community gardening can make to health are recognised in the Lothian Strategic Framework in Lothian on Healthy Weight, which includes recommendations bringing together partners including the NHS and councils to promote gardening and local food production. While the demographic of allotment gardens will undoubtedly change with the influx of younger people, allotment gardening continues to attract older people. This is a part of society for whom it is key that they take part in physical activity on a regular basis, and the exercise that allotment gardening provides can help keep older people active for longer. This reduces the chances that they will need to be cared for long term by local authorities and other public agencies. Children also benefit from becoming involved in food production through gardening, and allotments can provide a safe and welcoming space where parents and children spend time together, supporting family learning and intergenerational good practise.

IMAGE

1.2.3 Greener

Allotments, especially those in built up areas, contribute significantly to the biodiversity of the urban environment, providing food and shelter to many plant and animal species, as well as functioning as an important link in the greenspace network. In Edinburgh 90% of allotment holders follow organic growing principles and 98% compost their green waste (Allotment Survey 2007). The Bridgend Allotment is fully organic and other sites are interested in following suite.

IMAGE

Allotment gardening develops and demonstrates practices that will mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, including personal behavioural change. They help promote composting, and can be managed in ways that demonstrate sustainable practices like rainwater collection and toilets that use composting in place of traditional plumbing. They also promote local food production, so that “food miles” (transport costs and carbon emissions) are reduced, thus contributing towards the commitments made by City of Edinburgh Council under Scotland's Climate Change Declaration and towards emissions reduction targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

IMAGE

An average person is responsible for 12 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year and 2.3 tonnes of this will come from food. While 0.4 tonnes is used in domestic processing of food, 1.9 tonnes is due to agriculture, transport, processing, packaging and retailing of our food. Home grown produce avoids these emissions because gardeners eat their own vegetables and fruit, usually walk to their plots, use manual methods of soil cultivation and at best, nurture their soil through a virtuous compost cycle.

If we assume that 25% of a plot-holder's food is grown on his/her plot then 0.5 tonnes of an individual's total emissions will be saved each year.

Surveys show that crops are usually shared by families, friends and local community groups. Using a conservative estimate of two people benefiting, at least 1 tonne of CO₂ is saved by each standard allotment plot every year and a one hectare allotment site saves 50 tonnes of CO₂ per annum. This gives an annual estimated saving of almost 13,000 tonnes of CO₂ across the Council's 21 allotment sites.

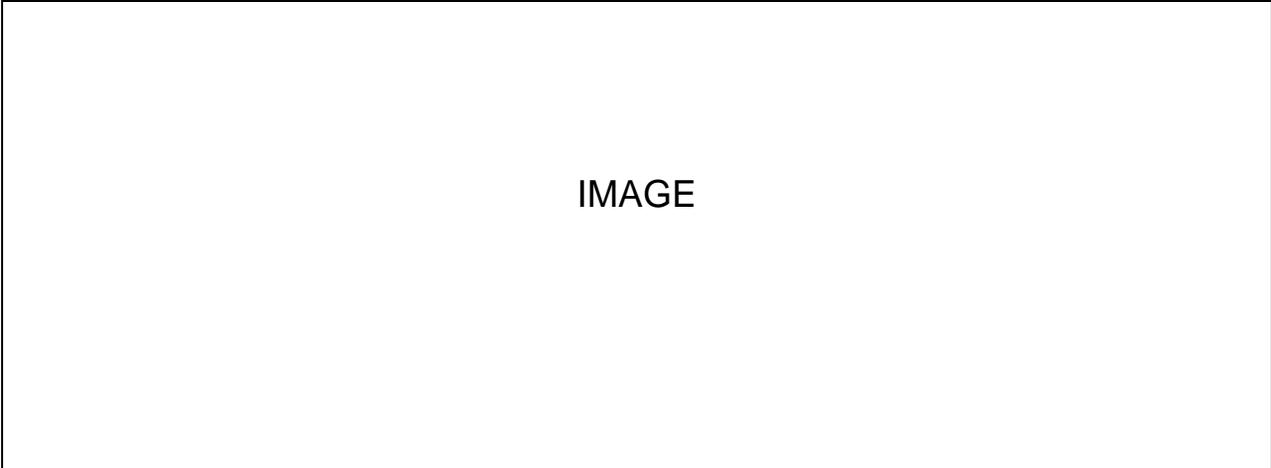
1.2.4 Safer & Stronger

Allotments are often at the heart of the community and allotment/gardening associations are important contributors to local advocacy and democracy. Volunteering is a central element of allotment management and for many people a starting point for a lifetime of social interaction and active citizenship.

Allotments provide an interactive community of people. While this benefits everyone on a site, it can also be particularly important for individuals who might otherwise be isolated, such as older people, the unemployed, or those with learning difficulties or mental ill health. Several Edinburgh allotments have links with environmental and care charities, schools and other bodies, further increasing interaction opportunities. There are also plots which are available for use by community groups and schools, which again increases the social value of allotments. There is a health project on one site, the Bridgend Allotment Community Health Inclusion Project, together with several plots used by community groups, and a demonstration plot run by the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

1.2.5 Smarter

Gardening involves many practical and academic skills, and has been shown to have immense benefits as part of neurological and social rehabilitation projects. Many allotments are used to develop learning and engagement in sustainable development, including horticultural therapy for those with learning difficulties and/or seeking better life opportunities. For many, they also act as a catalyst for lifelong learning and formal education.



IMAGE

1.3 Allotments in Edinburgh

IMAGE

1.3.1 Allotment provision

In Edinburgh there are 26 allotment sites on Council owned land (Table 1). 20 of these are managed by the Parks and Greenspace Service. A designated Allotments Officer is responsible for the tasks of maintaining sites, letting plots, charging rentals and operating waiting lists. The other Council owned sites are managed by devolved management committees (E.g. Wester Hailes, Greendykes). In total there are 1233 council managed allotment plots or half-plots (Table 1). All allotment sites have site representatives who liaise with the Allotment Officer over communal issues. 18 sites have Site Associations who help with the management of the site.

There are an estimated 8 privately owned and managed allotment sites with a total of 159 plots, as well as a “Common Good” site (East Scotland Street Lane – North) which is managed by a site committee. The larger sites report full take up of plots, with waiting lists of their own.

Allotments are rented out on a first-come first-served basis, without preferential treatment. At the time of writing, there are 2367 people on the council’s allotment plot waiting list. The turnover for allotments is low, consequently the waiting list is continually growing and the waiting time is currently between four and seven years. Because of the large waiting list allotment plots are not actively advertised by the Council. It is therefore highly probable that there is also a level of latent demand, which could add significantly to the waiting list number and period. The waiting list is regularly reviewed, to ensure those nearing the top of the list are still interested in renting an allotment plot. Details of those on the waiting list are not handed to third parties. Any correspondence with those of the waiting list is done through the Council’s Park and Greenspace Service.

63% of allotment holders live within 2 miles of their plot (Allotment Survey 2007). The demand for an allotment plot is greatest in the traditional tenement flat areas of Morningside, Leith, Bruntsfield, and Stockbridge (Table 2). It would therefore be reasonable to assume that demand is highest in areas where there is least access to garden space.

The legal definition of an allotment is 30 poles, or 10 x 30 metres. This was deemed sufficient to feed a plot holder and family of four with potatoes and vegetables plus a few fruits for a whole year. The average size in Edinburgh is 20 poles, or 10 x 20 metres

Allotment Site	Ownership	OS grid ref	Total Number of plots
Bridgend Farm	CEC	NT 28042 71039	54
Cambridge Avenue	CEC	NT 26539 75362	9
Carricknowe	CEC	NT 21662 72344	46
Chesser Crescent	CEC	NT 22000 71530	12
Claremont Park	CEC	NT 28100 75750	55
Craigentenny	CEC	NT 28532 75189	47
Craigentenny Telferton	Independent	NT 29700 74300	62
Dean Gallery	CEC	NT 23620 73893	12(*)
East Scotland St Lane Nth	CEC	NT 25550 74770	7
East Scotland St Lane Sth	CEC	NT 25540 74773	1
Greendykes	CEC	NT 29925 71069	26
Ferry Road	CEC	NT 25474 76053	72
Findlay Avenue	CEC	NT 28290 75050	8
Hutchinson Loan	CEC	NT 22264 71279	8
Inverleith Park	CEC	NT 23950 75220	165
Lady Road	CEC	NT 27395 71374	36
Leith Links	CEC	NT 27820 75980	36
Midmar 1 & 2	Independent	NT 25180 70750	153
Morningside Station (Balcarres Street)	Network Rail	NT 24450 70970	2(*)
Pilrig Park	CEC	NT 26480 75480	33
Portobello East Junction	Independent	NT 31120 73200	25
Prospect Bank	CEC	NT 28100 75450	11
Redhall	CEC	NT 21655 70337	46
Relugas Place	Independent	NT 26280 70930	4
Restalrig	CEC	NT 28062 75475	28
Roseburn Cliff	Independent	NT 23075 73325	4
Saughton Mains	CEC	NT 21600 71130	175
Slateford Green	Independent	NT 22771 71966	12
Stenhouse Drive	CEC	NT 20880 71950	35
Succoth Gdns	Independent	NT 22845 73660	3
Warriston	CEC	NT 25626 75839	119
Warriston Cres	CEC	NT 25250 75490	2(*)
West Mains	CEC	NT 26280 70950	83
Westerhailes	CEC	NT 19280 69600	80

(* estimated from viewing)

Table 1: Allotment sites in Edinburgh (Based on Finding Scotland's Allotments 2007)

EH3	Inverleith, north of city centre	11%
EH4	Stockbridge, Drylaw, Cramond	8%
EH6	Leith	19%
EH7	Restalrig, Craigentenny	8%
EH9	Marchmont, Grange	8%
EH10	Morningside, Fairmilehead	11%
EH11	Saughton, Sighthill	6%
	Other areas	29%

Table 2: Waiting list broken down by postcode

1.3.2 Profile of allotment holders

Surveys of allotment holders shows the allotment population is aging (Appendix 1). Whilst the number of females with plots has declined since 2002, the number of female plot holders is still higher than the number of males. In 2007 the number of plot holders with an ethnic background was 4.2%, whilst 9% were disabled. The biggest draw for allotment holders is the production of fresh fruit and vegetables, closely followed by exercise and contact with nature. On average a plot holder spends 11 hours a week on their plot during the summer and four hours during the winter (Allotment Survey 2007). At some sites plots are worked by community organisations and/or school. For example, the Royal Blind School has a plot at Bridgend allotments.

1.3.3 Allotment Strategy Steering Group

The Steering group is made up of representatives from the City of Edinburgh Council, the Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Associations (FEDAGA), the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS), the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, the Bridgend Allotment Community Health Inclusion Project and NHS Lothian. It was formed to oversee the implementation of the first Allotment Strategy, as well as other issues relating to allotments in Edinburgh. The group calls upon experts to provide advice on particular issues as they arise. The group has advised the Council on the production of this second strategy.

1.3.4 Funding

The Council currently commits around £60,000 a year on managing and upkeep of its allotments. Of this £45,750 is recovered from annual rents (Table 3). Since the launch of Cultivating Communities in 2002 a total of £306,174 has been spent on improving allotments in the capital. A further £250,000 was spent on the construction of Bridgend Allotment site, with funding coming from the Council, the Big Lottery Fund and support in kind from NHS Lothian for the Bridgend Allotment Community Health Inclusion Project.

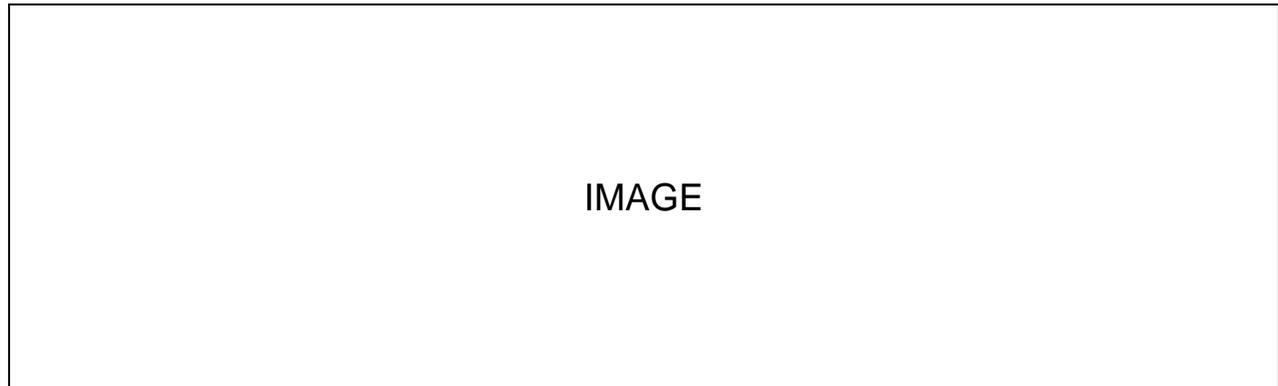
Full Plot	£60/pa	with concession(*)	£30/pa
Half Plot	£30/pa	with concession(*)	£15/pa

* Concession is given to those on state benefits and pensions

Table 3: Rental rates 2010

1.3.5 Communication and promotion

All Council managed sites have notice boards used by the site association or representative, FEDAGA and the Council to post information. Bi-annual newsletters are produced by FEDAGA and distributed to all plot-holders. The Council's website provides information on allotment sites, waiting lists, management rules and inspection, termination and appeals procedure. Allotment site associations (e.g. Midmar) hold open days to allow the general public access to the site and showcase the work and produce of the allotment holders. Other site associations welcome schools to visit their sites (e.g. Inverleith).



2 Purpose of Strategy

The first Allotments Strategy for the City of Edinburgh, “Cultivating Communities” has been widely acclaimed for improving the standard of allotments in Edinburgh. However, the waiting list has continued to grow and has now reached an all time high of 2367. Appendix 2 lists the achievements of the Cultivating Communities strategy, and sets out the reasons why some of its recommendations have not been implemented.

The overall objective of this new strategy is to meet the ever increasing demand for allotments by increasing allotment provision in Edinburgh and promoting alternative ways to grow your own food.

Seven key objectives have been drawn up in accordance with ‘Allotments in Scotland – Guidance Notes for Scottish Councils’ Cosla (2007). They will be delivered by a five-year Implementation Plan, which will be reviewed annually by the Allotment Strategy Steering Group.

Objective 1: Ensure adequate provision of allotments

Objective 2: Promote other forms of food growing

Objective 3: Provide high quality allotments

Objective 4: Ensure good administration

Objective 5: Ensure environmentally sustainable allotments

Objective 6: Develop and sustain partnership working

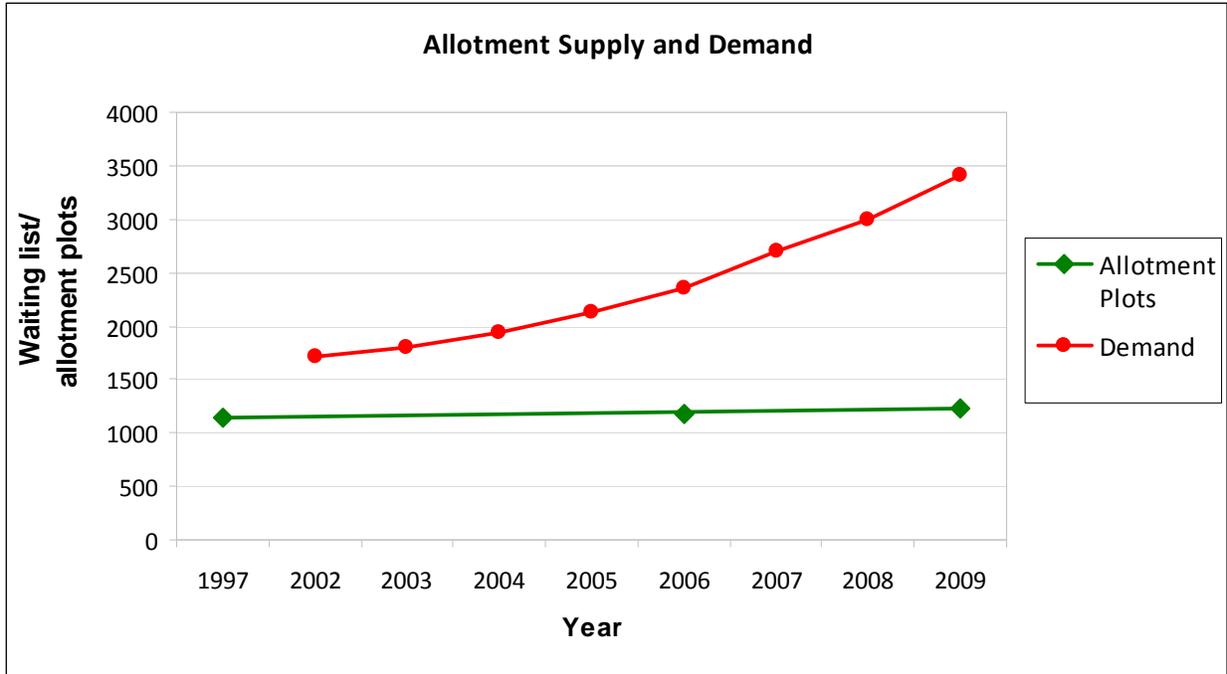
Objective 7: Secure resources

2.1 Objective 1: Ensure adequate provision of allotments

2.1.1 Council owned land

Currently there are 2367 people on the Council’s allotment plot waiting list. The waiting time is at least four years for an allotment plot and up to seven years at the most popular allotment sites. To meet the current demand 43.04 hectares of land would be required, based on a standard allotment plot 10m x 20m (Figure 1). Land acquisition will almost certainly prove very difficult because of the high value of land in the city. Other options therefore need to be considered such as the use of Council owned land, other public land and private provision, or in certain cases a communal approach to food growing.

IMAGE



Three new allotment sites have already been agreed by the Council (Finances and Resources Committee, June 2009), to replace land taken away from allotment sites for tramway construction. These sites will be developed once the tram works in those areas have been completed and funding has been agreed (Table 4).

Location	Neighbourhood	Potential plots*
Stenhouse Phase 2	South West	11
Stenhouse Phase 3	South West	16
Carricknowe Phase 2	West	18

* Equivalent to one full plot (10m x 20m)

Table 4: Allotment sites already agreed by the Council

Through the development of this strategy a comprehensive search has been undertaken to identify potential allotment sites in Edinburgh. An initial 32 potential sites were identified by the Allotment Strategy Steering Group. Other sites have been suggested through the consultation of this strategy and the Open Space Strategy for Edinburgh. All the sites that were identified have been assessed for their suitability as an allotment site, by looking at a range of influencing factors, including; land ownership, current and previous land use, soil quality, availability of services, potential number of plots, demand, proximity to public transport, proximity to social housing, vehicular access, security and site designations.

The sites which will be taken forward for further consideration are listed in Table 5. Further information on these sites and the other potential sites listed in the draft of this document is provided in Appendix 3.

Potential allotment sites

- Balgreen Road
- Baronscourt (Jocks Lodge)
- Blinkbonny Park
- Dumbryden School
- Frogston Road
- Inch Park
- Midmar Field 3
- Niddre Marischal Road
- Redhall allotment extension
- Restalrig Crescent
- Silverknowes farmland
- St Marks Park
- Whinhill Park

Two further sites have been identified as potential community food growing sites:

- Burgess Road, South Queensferry
- Harrison Park East

Table 5: Potential allotment sites and food growing projects

This is not the definitive list of future allotment sites in Edinburgh, as other sites may become available in the future, for example an upcoming audit of Housing Revenue Account land is likely to identify other potential allotment sites.

ACTION 1.1: Identify potential allotment sites as part of the audit of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land.

The integration of allotments into public areas will challenge assumptions as to the best use for public open green spaces and will need to be handled carefully with full consultation of all stakeholders. The support and collaboration of users and local communities will be crucial to the success of new sites and effective communication will be required to promote the wider community and wildlife benefits of allotment sites. Therefore thorough community consultation will be undertaken in partnership with the local Neighbourhood teams for all potential allotment sites.

Community consultation will help shape the design of the allotment site, taking into consideration the design standards explained later in this document (See Section 2.3) and local issues such as requirements for parking and desires for community plots.

At new allotment sites 50% of the plots will be allocated to the local community, regardless of whether they have previously been on the allotment waiting list. The other 50% will be offered to those at the top of the allotment waiting list.

ACTION 1.2: Carry out further community consultation for potential allotment sites to support the design process.

Following community consultation funding, will be sought for the construction of new allotments. It is estimated that it costs approximately £2500 per plot for the creation of a new allotment site. Capital resources, along with external funding, will be required to enable the creation of any new allotment sites. Once funding has been obtained and an allotment site designed planning permission will be applied for. The creation of allotments is not considered a change of land use (Edinburgh City Local Plan, 2010), but fences and paths do require planning consent. It is expected that one allotment site will be created every year over the lifespan of this document.

ACTION 1.3: Allocate funding from the Council Capital Programme for new allotments from 2010/2011.

ACTION 1.4: Explore all opportunities for external funding to aid the construction of new allotments.

Community groups and/or voluntary organisations may be interested in taking the lead on the development of an allotment site (Case Study 1). Two sites have been identified where either a local community group or voluntary organisation are interested in the creation of a community food growing initiative (Table 5). Where this is the case a lease must be drawn up between a constituted group and the Council. To ease this process a simple template for a lease agreement will be created.

ACTION 1.5: Produce a template lease agreement for the use of Council owned land for allotments and/or food growing initiatives by a community organisation.

Case Study 1: Greendykes Organic Allotments

Residents from Greendykes worked with the Greendykes Concierge Office to develop an organic allotment site, with 26 plots, on Council owned land to the rear of their housing block. Following consultation with residents and their representative groups, a committee was formed to drive the project forward. They secured initial funding from the Council's housing department and the local regeneration group 'Parc' which allowed the site to be constructed in 2007. All the 26 plots are taken up, with plot holders paying a token rent of £10 per annum which goes towards insurance for the site. The committee has obtained further funding from a number of sources to provide composting facilities, promote composting and plant fruit trees.

2.1.2 Other publicly owned land

In October 2008 the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Richard Lochhead, announced that the Scottish Government was to explore how surplus land could be made available to help Scottish people “grow their own” as part of the developing national food policy. Public bodies were encouraged to consider how the land they manage for the Scottish Government could be made available to local communities to increase the amount of land available to grow food. NHS Lothian is actively involved with this as there is a strong case to be made for wider access to and better use of green space around hospitals to benefit patients, people visiting patients, hospital staff and the wider local community. The ‘Growing Plots’ project at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital is an example (Case Study 2). A bigger project started in May 2010, where fifteen acres of the hospital grounds is being used for community gardening to address health inequalities. It is managed by the Cyrenians in partnership with the NHS and local community groups. This has proven so successful that NHS Lothian is now considering developing similar projects on their land, including the grounds of the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Edinburgh. The Council is keen to support this, and similar projects, and will promote these projects to those on the allotment waiting list.

ACTION 1.6: Support NHS Lothian in establishing community growing projects on NHS land by providing advice and promoting projects to those on the allotment waiting list.

Case Study 2: ‘Growing Plots’, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

The Growing Plots project was started in 2009. It is part of Artlink’s Growing Spaces Project at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. With help from BTCV Scotland and many local conservation volunteers growing spaces were created for both patients and staff. For patients the growing areas are part of therapeutic programmes for both mental health and physical recovery/rehabilitation. For hospital staff the growing areas are valuable for food production, particularly where they don’t have access to gardens at home.

2.1.3 Vacant development sites

The development of vacant sites is an option for temporary allotment provision. Within Edinburgh there are 92 vacant or derelict sites, amounting to 226 hectares (survey undertaken in 2008). A report to Council in August 2009 on the ‘Temporary Greening of Development Sites’ concluded that the development of short-term allotments would have a beneficial environmental impact, but the Council did not currently have the resources available to actively pursue any temporary greening initiative. However, the report states that the Council should respond positively wherever possible to requests from the community for temporary use of its own brown field land as sites for growing fruit and vegetables, or as short-term allotments or community gardens. If short-term allotments, or indeed community gardens, were to be developed on vacant sites there are a number of considerations:

- Leases would need to be time-limited and all tenants aware that when redevelopment proposals came forward the site would have to be vacated
- Growing methods would need to be adapted to site conditions. Traditional cultivation may not be possible on cleared sites and raised beds may be a suitable alternative
- It is likely that sites used for growing would need to be fenced in order to afford some security and that secure storage facilities would be required. The developer or the community group would need to cover these costs
- Planning permission would be required, and would need to be submitted from the developer or community group.

ACTION 1.7: The Council will support the use of vacant development sites as temporary allotments or food growing spaces by providing advice and promoting initiatives to those on the allotment waiting list. On request, the Parks and Greenspace Service will administer any temporary allotment sites.

2.1.4 Private landowners

The private provision of allotments is an important element to meeting the demand for allotments in Edinburgh, especially as the scarcity of land restricts the Council's capacity to meet the ever increasing demand. Private landowners may be interested in developing their land for allotments and/or food growing initiatives but have concerns on how this can be done. At a national level a 'Grow Your Own' Working Group has been established to implement the 'grow your own' element of the Government's Food and Drink Policy. This group has been tasked with developing practical guides which, amongst others, aid private landowners to develop their land for allotments and other food growing initiatives.

ACTION 1.8: The Council will support private landowners looking to develop allotments or food growing spaces by providing advice and promoting initiatives to those on the allotment waiting list. On request, the Park and Greenspace Service will administer privately owned allotment sites.

Where private land is developed for housing, consideration should be given to the provision of allotments or communal food growing areas. At Slateford Green (Case Study 3) allotments were part of the initial design brief for the development when it was created in 2000. In the Leith Docks Masterplan land has been allocated for allotments. Further Section 75 monies will be sought to aid the development of new allotments.

Case Study 3: Slateford Green Allotments

Dunedin Canmore Housing Association provides 12 allotment plots for residents at its Slateford Green development in Edinburgh. They are available for an annual rent of £30, the monies going to the Slateford Green's Residents' Association. Some of the allotments are also used by the supported tenant groups within the community. The plots have been very successful and there are currently six people on their waiting list. As a result Dunedin Canmore is now considering creating further plots to replace a play area which has fallen into disuse.

2.1.5 Plot sharing and half-plots

Plot sharing and plot division on existing sites are options which can go some way towards reducing waiting times for allotments. Plot sharing is also advantageous for new and inexperienced gardeners, who can benefit from working alongside an experienced allotment gardener. Half plots may also be of benefit to new gardeners and those struggling to manage their whole plot. Half plots will be offered as people reach the top of the allotment waiting list, however, when a full plot becomes available, and the person has become more experienced, they will be offered a full plot. Further splitting of plots, for example, quarter plots, will not be considered due to issues relating to crop rotation and crop disease management.

ACTION 1.9: Promote the sharing and sub-division of plots when inviting those at the top of the waiting list to take up a plot.

2.2 Objective 2: Encourage other forms of food growing

With such a long allotments waiting list, the Council will actively promote alternative means of food growing, such as community gardening. There are already a number of initiatives in Edinburgh that offer people opportunities to derive the benefits associated with food growing and gardening in general.

Community gardens aim to address health inequalities through ensuring that everybody is both welcome and can become involved. The promotion of mental and physical health, and building inclusive communities, are core aspects of the approach. Environmental sustainability is also central, through the production of locally grown food and the use of techniques such as composting. There are a number of community gardens within Edinburgh. Projects such as Redbraes Community Garden (Case Study 4) aim to allow local people to grow their own fruit and vegetables, learn about gardening, healthy eating and teamwork with a view to increasing the health of the local community. The number and extent of community gardens and food growing initiatives in Edinburgh is currently unknown. However the Greening Edinburgh for Health group will undertake research, via consultation and questionnaires, to establish the number of these groups in the Capital. This will help with the promotion of community gardening projects and identify where there are gaps in the provision across Edinburgh.

The Shandon Local Food Group is a community organisation in the Shandon area of Edinburgh with 160 members who are interested in growing, buying and consuming local, seasonal and organic food. They are actively involved with the Royal Edinburgh Hospital Community Garden, but as with many groups, are interested in looking for land where they can grow their own food. Developing community gardens and food growing initiatives is often hindered by the search for suitable land and obtaining funding. The Council will actively support community groups looking to create community gardens on Council owned land by providing a template lease. An informal networking group will be established where information on training, funding and events is circulated to interested groups in the city. Garden tools are available for community groups to borrow.

ACTION 2.1: Develop guidelines for community groups looking to use Council owned land for community gardens and other food growing initiatives.

ACTION 2.2: Provide advice and support to groups looking to develop community gardens and other food growing initiatives.

ACTION: 2.3: Create a comprehensive list of community gardens and food growing initiatives in Edinburgh, and set up information-sharing network.

Case Study 4: Redbraes Community Garden

Located within a highly populated area in the east of Edinburgh, Redbraes Community Garden has been developed from an area of unused grass between community housing into a flourishing and vibrant well used community area, with vegetables, flowers and wildlife. In 2008 Redbraes Residents Association joined forces with the local Community Police Officer to develop the garden to provide new activities for residents, an opportunity to interact with nature as well as to try and promote greater community integration. The garden is now popular with local families, community groups and schools using the site.

The Edinburgh Garden Share Scheme, run by Care and Repair Edinburgh, aims to match garden owners who are struggling to maintain their gardens, or owners who have space to share, with people who are keen to garden (particularly to grow fruit and vegetables). While the Scheme is aimed at owners who are older or have a disability, any garden owner is welcome to take part. Anyone with an interest in growing food is welcome to apply to take part as a volunteer gardener. Before being matched with a garden they are asked to complete an application form, give two references, attend an informal interview and complete a Disclosure Scotland check. This is necessary as many of the garden owners are considered vulnerable. The scheme was established using a grant from the Western Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership and is currently funded by the Climate Challenge Fund.

Garden sharing has many potential benefits, including:

- Otherwise unsightly gardens are well tended improving the overall area;
- Older people are less vulnerable in their own homes (having an unkempt garden can make them more at risk of receiving bogus callers);
- Older people are less worried about their gardens;
- There is an increase in intergenerational relationships within the community;
- Gives those keen to grow their food an opportunity to do so;
- For those people new to gardening, they can try out a small patch of garden, and develop their gardening skills.

The Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association (ECBA) is a community run organisation, which seeks to regenerate tenement backgreens and improve the amenity and environmental sustainability of tenement households in Edinburgh. ECBA have supported residents to establish 13 community gardens across the city. A small area in the centre of each site is developed as a 'community green'. Each community green has a shared shed with tools for the use of the residents. Wherever possible, access is made to the community green from all of the tenements around the site by creating paths, removing sections of fences and walls or installing gates. The community green will often include raised beds for growing vegetables and other plants, as well as fruit trees and bushes.

Case study 5: Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association

In 2009 the Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association (ECBA) developed a six week Grow Your Own course, which it teaches from a tenemental site in Leith leased from the City of Edinburgh Council. So far 50 people have participated in the course and it is anticipated that another 150 will take the course before the end of 2010. ECBA are supporting course participants to install raised beds and plant fruit trees and bushes in their own backgreens, by delivering materials direct to households at cost price. The Council supported this initiative by promoting the project to those on the allotment waiting list in the area. During 2010 a series of low cost workshops will be delivered to aid tenement dwellers to build their capacity to work with their neighbours to regenerate their backgreens and food growing.

The Drylaw and Telford Community Gardens Project in the north of Edinburgh has been funded by the Climate Challenge Fund to create seven food growing areas to grow fruit and vegetables for local people. As well as growing their own food, local people benefit from a series of cooking classes and Climate Challenge workshops.

Research shows that things we learn and experience in childhood affect our lives and also what we pass on to the next generation. A school grounds project can link with many other sustainable initiatives, enabling principles to be put in to practice. It can provide pupils with a context for participation in a healthy lifestyle and the joy of growing and harvesting plants.

At many schools in Edinburgh committed parents and friends also make a big contribution to the maintenance of gardens. The Eco-schools award programme draws together nine principles of environmental practice, including use of school grounds and biodiversity. In 2010 a new principle is being developed to cover food growing. A CPD course for school teachers has been developed and is being delivered by the Bridgend Allotment Community Health Project, to support schools in Edinburgh to grow their own food in their school grounds.

The Council will take a proactive role in promoting these food growing initiatives, and others when appropriate, to those waiting for an allotment as they give people an opportunity to develop their gardening skills whilst waiting for an allotment. Some may even come off the waiting list once they discover the joys of communal gardening.

ACTION 2.4: Promote community gardens and other food growing initiatives to those on the allotment waiting list.

ACTION 2.5: Support community groups and voluntary organisations undertaking food growing initiatives through the Neighbourhood Grant Programme.

2.3 Objective 3: Provide high quality allotments

Over the lifespan of the previous allotment strategy £306,174 has been spent on the upgrading of allotment sites; water supplies have been upgraded, paths improved, additional security fencing, notice boards and composting toilets installed. Appendix 4 gives details of these facilities at each of the allotment sites. All Council allotments now have running water (excluding Hutchinson), surfaced footpaths and most are secured with chainlink fencing, weldmesh or panelled fencing. 13 sites now have composting toilet facilities, the maintenance of which is the responsibility of the local site committee. All sites over 50 plots now have a site hut and/or secure storage.

All sites have appropriate rubbish collection facilities (wheelie bins and/or skips) as agreed by the site committee and Allotment Officer, excluding Cambridge Avenue, where there are access difficulties. The site committee at West Mains has decided against having a collection service and plot holders remove their own rubbish. The Allotment Service is working to move away from waste collections and supports Allotment Associations in the reduction of waste and composting on site.

Future site improvements will be identified by the Allotment Officer through regular meetings with site representatives, site associations and plot holder surveys. The works will be prioritised by the Allotment Officer in conjunction with the Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotment and Gardens.

2.3.1 Design standards for new allotment sites

With the creation of a new allotment site there is an opportunity to provide high quality allotments from the outset. The Council, in partnership with the Allotment Strategy Steering Group, has developed design standards to ensure there is a consistent, best practice, approach taken to all new sites in Edinburgh. A degree of flexibility will be required, and the final design of any new allotment site will be guided by the requirements of the local community and the size of the land being developed.

Soil conditions: soil tests and historical research are undertaken to assess the suitability of new allotments for food growing so all new sites will have appropriate growing medium. However, where a site has poor soil condition alternative means of developing the site may be undertaken, such as drainage, importing topsoil or using raised beds. This may be the case where a site has previously been a landfill site.

Site security: sites will be fenced, with strong and durable material, and at least 2m high. Fencing is required to protect against vandals and grazing animals. Where possible native hedging and climbing plants will be used to soften boundaries, provide screening and shelter and support wildlife. Fencing may not be required in some community led projects. This will be considered on a site by site basis.

Access: all new sites should be fully compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). Accessible plots were built into the site design at Bridgend. However, despite extensive advertising in the local and wider community by both the Council and NHS Lothian, not all the plots have been taken up. Therefore plots for the less able-bodied will be provided on the basis of demand. This will also help ensure the plot meets the needs of the individual.

There is a presumption against the use of vehicles for plot holders to get to their allotment. In the 2007 Allotment Survey only 36% of plot holders used a car to travel to their site. The majority either walking (35%), cycling (19%) or taking the bus (10%). The provision of car parking within the allotment will not be supplied unless identified as a particular issue through community consultation. Vehicular access, for deliveries and the drop off of tools etc, will be provided at all allotment sites.

Plot size: full and half plots will be provided at all new allotment sites. A communal growing area will also be included where space allows. Other types (e.g. raised beds) will be considered to support specific interest groups

Communal shed / storage facilities: will be provided to ensure secure storage of communal equipment and provide a focus for communal meetings. Individual plot holders are permitted to erect their own sheds, on permission from the Allotment Officer.

IMAGE

Water provision / water conservation (water butts): mains water will be supplied to all sites. Water butts will be supplied to collect rainwater from communal buildings on site.

Toilets: toilet facilities will be supplied according to the size of the allotment site, and in the majority of cases this will be a composting toilet.

Signage: all sites will have notice boards for the display of information. It is recommended that all notice boards are issued with a standard key to enable both the Allotment Officer and site representative/association to put up information easily.

Areas for biodiversity: all sites will have native trees and shrubs, wild areas and native hedge and climbing species around boundaries. The actual area left for biodiversity will be dependant on the size of the allotment site. Where possible ponds will be created within the biodiversity area. This will bring added benefits of pest control by invertebrates and amphibians. The inclusion of traditional orchards, with locally important fruit varieties, will be promoted at the design stage of new allotment sites. These will be of value to biodiversity and help meet targets set in the Edinburgh Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 3.

Communal composting: bays for communal composting and the storage of woodchip and/or leaf mould will be available on all new sites. There are some issues relating to communal composting, for example the disposal of diseased plants, so guidance will be issued to all plot holders

ACTION 3.1: Apply design standards to all new allotment sites.

ACTION 3.2: Provision for the less able-bodied should be prioritised on the basis of demand.

2.3.2 Allotment Site Associations

The best allotment sites in Edinburgh tend to be those that have an active site association. Informative notice boards, clean and tidy entrances and communal huts (where appropriate) are all indicative of this. The majority of sites in Edinburgh do have associations but many are informally run. Fully constituted site associations are more beneficial to the allotment community, for a number of reasons. In particular they can access a variety of funding sources. To help allotment associations in becoming constituted and ensure they are democratically run, the Council will supply sample constitutions and other appropriate advice. They will also be directed to the Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI) which has a network of trained mentors who have direct experience of managing allotments at a local level.

The Council will continue to work to improve the relationships with the site representatives and site associations, through the Allotment Strategy Steering Group and liaison meetings to ensure there is at least one meeting between the Council and stakeholders every month. An annual networking event for sharing best practice and information exchange will be held.

The Council will support devolved management. So where the majority of the plot holders on the site are in favour of having this, it will be permitted as long as the Site Association:

- adopts the Council's policies pertaining to the renting and maintenance of allotment plots.
- shows that it is capable of carrying out devolved duties in a fair and transparent manner by (a) having a committee annually elected at an AGM by the plot holders in accordance with the constitution (b) meeting regularly and keeping accurate minutes for scrutiny (c) maintaining the site waiting list and managing the induction of new plot holders (d) undertaking inspections as part of the Inspection, Termination and Appeals Policy.

Devolved status shall be reviewed by the Council every three years and may be rescinded if Council policies and/or site management requirements are not being met. Likewise, the site may revert to direct Council management by agreement with the Site Association.

ACTION 3.3: All site associations will be supported in becoming fully constituted. A template constitution will be developed for site associations.

ACTION 3.4: Hold annual networking event for Edinburgh's site associations and site representatives.

ACTION 3.5: Set up an email group for allotment associations and site representatives to allow the dissemination of information on training, events and others.

2.3.3 Mentoring and training

The retention of new plot holders is a high priority for the Council. At Midmar Allotments the association runs a mentoring scheme matching novice allotment holders with more experienced people on nearby plots. This has been successful in supporting new gardeners and the Council will encourage other associations to develop mentoring schemes at their sites. In Edinburgh allotment holders are also invited to open days and training sessions to find out how to get more out of their allotment at the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society demonstration plot at Bridgend. These have proved to be very popular and it is intended that these are extended so a full programme of training events are run annually. They will be administered by the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society and funded from the allotment rents.

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society is currently revising some sections of the booklet 'Allotments: a plot holder's guide' produced by the Allotment Regeneration Initiative to make it relevant to Scottish allotments. It will give the basics of allotment gardening and Scottish allotment law to help get beginners started, and highlight the range of organisations that offer help, advice and support to plot holders.

ACTION 3.6: Set up four mentoring schemes every year until 2015.

ACTION 3.7: Establish an annual training programme for allotment holders.

ACTION 3.8: Use monies from allotment rents to cover the cost of the training programme.

2.3.4 Allotment plot holder surveys

The Council carries out surveys to assess the allotment service, recognise where it is improving and identify where improvements are still required. A short on-line survey gathers information from plot holders for performance monitoring. Larger surveys were carried out in 2002 and 2007. New surveys will be carried out in 2012 and 2017 to monitor the development.

ACTION 3.9: Undertake surveys of allotment users every five years.

2.4 Objective 4: Ensure good administration

The Allotment Regulations, verified by the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1913, and amended in 1924, govern a number of aspects of the City of Edinburgh Council's allotment provision, including the fixing of rents. These are now out of date and need to be reviewed.

In addition, new issues relating to the management of allotments, including evictions, numerous inspections of a plot, the inheritance of plots and the number of plots an individual can rent, require clarification.

ACTION 4.1: Review and update the current allotment regulations, carry out consultation on the new regulations, and seek ministerial approval.

Clarification is also required on the keeping of bees on allotments, as it is acknowledged that bees provide a valuable pollination resource and crops requiring pollination benefit from the presence of bee hives nearby. Bees in monitored situations will be allowed on allotment sites. Establishing managed colonies on Edinburgh's allotments will also help combat the dramatic decline in the UK bee population.

IMAGE

The Council, in association with the Edinburgh and Midlothian Beekeepers Association (EMBA), proposes to carry out a trial on a small number of suitable sites. There are a number of practical considerations for the management of apiary sites; including location, screening, swarm control, apiary hygiene, water supply and neighbouring plot holders. Therefore a plot holder will be given guidelines on the keeping of bees and EMBA will provide training, mentoring and support during the scheme, which if successful will be extended to further sites in years to come. Suggested rules for the keeping of bees on sites are detailed in Appendix 5.

2.5 Objective 5: Ensure environmentally sustainable allotments

2.5.1 Recycling

Recycling is carried out on a grand scale across the allotment sites in Edinburgh. Plot holders do not just pay lip service to recycling; they are doing it everyday. Some inventive recycling can be found, not just limited to using a few pallets to make compost bins or sticking plastic bottles on sticks to scare away pigeons. Such inventions as a homemade compost roller and a device to sieve stony soil made from an old kitchen sink unit, can be found. At Craigentiny allotments there is a recycling bay of items available for other plot holders to use.

2.5.2 Composting

Plot holders are actively and regularly encouraged to compost all green waste on site and the majority of plot holders do have some form of composting facilities on their plot. Some sites have communal composting areas (Case Study 5), and some site associations (e.g. Pilrig, Leith Links) have purchased shredders to chip larger and/or woody green waste using the City of Edinburgh Council Waste Action Grants. However, some green waste is still put in the trade waste bins, along with general waste, and 44% of plot holders would like to see communal composting on their site. The Council will continue to encourage site associations to develop communal composting areas, where appropriate, and to secure funding for shredders. There are some issues relating to composting, in relation to the disposal of diseased plant material, therefore the Council will provide best practise advice on composting. In addition the Council will also promote the use of compost generated from the Council's kerbside green waste collections and initiatives such as the Master Composter Project.

IMAGE

ACTION 5.1: Set up communal composting at all appropriate allotment sites.

ACTION 5.2: Promote access to the compost generated through Edinburgh's green waste collections and the Master Composter Project.

Case Study 6: Communal composting Midmar Allotments

The Site Association at Midmar has been instrumental in the development of communal composting facilities on the site. They obtained a City of Edinburgh Council Waste Action Grant to build a number of composting bays across the site. A large tumbler which speeds up the composting process has also been purchased. Clear information is given at the composting bays indicating what green waste materials can be composted. Allotment holders are encouraged to use the resulting compost to improve soil condition, and raised beds have been built in the communal area to demonstrate how the compost can be used. Green waste being placed into the Council's Trade Waste bins has now been dramatically reduced.

2.5.3 Biodiversity

Allotments are important urban habitats for wildlife as they provide food, shelter and breeding sites. They also provide an important link for wildlife with other green spaces in the area. This can be enhanced by the use of native hedge and climbing species around site boundaries. As well as shelter for wildlife it gives visual interest and, if plants such as *Berberis* and holly are used, protection from intruders. Some site associations, such as Bridgend (Case Study 6), have already obtained funding from the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership to plant native species along their boundary. Areas within allotment sites/plots left to 'go wild' also provide a great habitat for wildlife – trees within these areas are also of benefit.

What can be done at allotment sites to enhance them further for wildlife, by planting native boundaries or leaving areas uncultivated, will vary from site to site. For example some of the smaller sites in Edinburgh will struggle to find the room to leave wilder areas. The Council will therefore develop a biodiversity action plan for each of its allotment sites, which will identify appropriate ways of enhancing biodiversity at individual sites. More generally practical tips and advice for supporting wildlife in allotments will be circulated to plot holders. When new allotment sites are established biodiversity will be a fundamental part of the design, with native trees and shrubs used within the site and also around the edges.

As a result of the previous allotment strategy the booklet 'Gardening in Harmony with Nature' was adapted from Glasgow and given to all new allotment holders. This has been well received and will be reprinted. Sessions on biodiversity will be included in the training programme being developed for allotment holders (Section 2.3.3).

ACTION 5.3: Develop biodiversity action plans for allotment sites.

ACTION 5.4: At new sites biodiversity will be encouraged as a fundamental objective, with native trees and shrubs used within the site and also planted around the edges.

ACTION 5.5: Update the 'Gardening in harmony with nature' booklet, promoting locally important native species, local nurseries and organic methods.

Case Study 7: Bridgend Organic Allotment Site

The Bridgend Organic Allotment Site is a model of good practice in allotment development and operation. Environmental sustainability is key to the design and operation of the site. It features rainwater collection systems that are used to water plots and a composting toilet that does not require sewerage connections. Biodiversity has been designed as a fundamental objective. Native trees and shrubs are used within the site and also planted externally to screen and protect it. Finally, the site operates using only organic cultivation techniques. Plot holders are supported through demonstration areas and advice provided on site by partner organisations, the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society and the Bridgend Allotment Community Health Inclusion Project.

2.6 Objective 6: Develop and sustain partnership working

It is the Council's intention to sustain the strong and productive partnership it has with allotment and gardening stakeholders. This will be realised through its continued chairmanship of the Allotments Strategy Steering Group, and also through its active relationship with FEDAGA (Federation of Edinburgh & District Allotments & Gardens Associations), SAGS (Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society), NHS Lothian, the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, site associations, individual allotment plot holders, communities neighbouring allotment sites, and the owners/managers of private allotment land.

It is recognised that wider membership of the Steering Group would enable broader discussion and positive action for allotments and gardening. For instance, the work and interests of representative organisations such as the National Vegetable Society, Eco-schools, BTCV Scotland, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and Trellis include allotments. These, and other, organisations will be co-opted onto the group as required and included in circulation list with an annual networking event for wider group debate.

Allotment Officers' Forums are run in England by the Allotment Regeneration Initiative. The events are for anyone who works for a local council and has 'management of allotments' in their remit. The aim is to share good practice in allotments management and develop a supportive network for allotment officers. It is intended that similar events will be brought to Scotland. Edinburgh supports this move and will work with the Allotment Regeneration Initiative to develop the initiative and will seek to host events on a regular basis.

Case Study 8: Bridgend Allotment Community Health Inclusion Project and site

The site is the base for an innovative social referral project that has links with GP practices, health practitioners and support agencies in South Edinburgh and Craigmillar to offer gardening as therapy, teaching people how to grow their own fruit and vegetables. This is being run in partnership with NHS Lothian and the Edinburgh Community Health Partnership. The Health Project is also proactive in the community, supporting groups and individuals seeking to set up their own growing projects. Additionally, the site includes areas where raised beds can be custom built for disabled gardeners and there are also optional half plots. The Royal Blind School, Waverley Care, The Thistle Foundation and Craigmillar Ability Network have all taken plots.

ACTION 6.1: Review membership of Allotments Strategy Steering Group and co-opt relevant representative organisations when required.

ACTION 6.2: Host and attend the Scottish Allotment Officers' Forums

2.7 Objective 7: Secure resources

The City of Edinburgh Council provides resources to maintain and administer its allotments. Other resources are often secured to establish new allotment sites or fund major improvements. For example, the development of the new allotment site at Bridgend used funding from the sale of the land at Hawkhill as well as NHS Lothian support in the form of staff time and management services, two grants from the Big Lottery Fund and smaller grants from the Council's Biodiversity fund.

In the preparation of this strategy the Council has liaised closely with the Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Associations (FEDAGA) to look at future allotment rents levels. FEDAGA are very supportive of the City of Edinburgh Council in its drive to supply more allotment plots on new sites and to provide improved services. FEDAGA recognises a responsibility to those on the waiting list and is keen to see increases in allotment rents to support these aspirations. However, they also acknowledge that much larger additional sums of capital funding will be required for the creation of new allotment sites. This Strategy recognises the importance of ensuring that allotments remain accessible to all by continuing to offer subsidized plots for those people on pensions and benefits.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Full plot	£70	£80	£90	£100	£100
Full plot with concession	£35	£40	£45	£50	£50
Half plot	£35	£40	£45	£50	£50
Half plot with concession	£17.50	£20	£20	£25	£25

Table 6: Proposed allotment rent increases over next five years

ACTION 7.1: Inform allotment holders of the rental changes.

Allotment site associations have been successful in obtaining small grants for communal huts, communal composting bins, training courses, etc. In addition, small amounts of money for the site have been raised at open days from the sale of surplus produce and again this is welcomed, although the sale of produce for personal gain is not permitted (Allotments Acts, 1892).

ACTION 7.2: Circulate information on funding opportunities to allotment committees.

ACTION 7.3: Provide advice and support on funding applications.

IMAGE

3 Conclusion

This Allotment Strategy highlights the seven broad objectives which the City of Edinburgh Council aims to deliver over the next five years: to ensure the adequate provision of allotments; provide high quality allotments; to ensure good administration; to ensure environmentally sustainable allotments; to develop and sustain partnership working; to secure adequate resources and to promote other forms of food growing. The Allotment Strategy Implementation Plan brings together all the actions that will be undertaken to meet these objectives.

The strategy will be reviewed every five years. The Allotment Strategy Steering Group will monitor progress through an annual review of the Allotment Strategy Implementation Plan.

4 Allotment Strategy Implementation Plan 2010 – 2015

Objective 1: Ensure adequate provision of allotments			
No.	Action	By whom	When
1.1	Identify potential allotment sites through an audit of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land.	Parks and Greenspace Service	2010
1.2	Carry out further community consultation for potential allotment sites to support the design process.	Allotment Strategy Steering Group & neighbourhood teams	From 2010
1.3	Allocate funding from the Council Capital Programme for new allotments from 2010/2011.	Parks and Greenspace Service	From 2010
1.4	Explore all opportunities for external funding to aid the construction of new allotments.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On-going
1.5	Produce a template lease agreement for the use of Council owned land for allotments and/or food growing initiatives by a community organisation.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On-going
1.6	Support NHS Lothians in establishing community growing projects on NHS land by providing advice and promoting projects to those on the allotment waiting list.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On-going
1.7	The Council will support the use of vacant development sites as temporary allotments or food growing spaces by providing advice and promoting initiatives to those on the waiting list. On request the Allotment Service will administer any temporary allotment sites.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On request
1.8	The Council will support private landowners to develop allotments or food growing spaces by providing advice and promoting initiatives to those on the waiting list. On request the Allotment Service will administer any privately owned allotment sites.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On request
1.9	Promote the sharing and sub-division of plots when inviting those at the top of the waiting list to take up a plot.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On-going

Objective 2: Promote other forms of food growing			
No.	Action	By whom	When
2.1	Develop guidelines for community groups looking to use Council owned land for community gardens and other food growing initiatives.	Parks and Greenspace Service & Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens	2011
2.2	Provide advice and support to groups looking to develop community gardens and other food growing initiatives.	Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens	On request
2.3	Create a comprehensive list of the community groups and food growing initiatives in Edinburgh, and set up an information sharing network.	Greening Edinburgh for Health	2010
2.4	Promote new community gardens and other food growing initiatives to those on the allotment waiting list.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On request
2.5	Support community groups and voluntary organisations undertaking food growing initiatives through the Neighbourhood Grant Programme.	Neighbourhood Partnerships	On request

Objective 3: Provide high quality allotments			
No.	Action	By whom	When
3.1	Apply design standards to all new allotment sites.	Parks and Greenspace Service	As required
3.2	Provision for the less able-bodied should be prioritised on the basis of demand.	Parks and Greenspace Service	As required
3.3	All site associations will be supported in becoming fully constituted. A template constitution will be developed for site associations.	Parks and Greenspace Service	2011
3.4	Hold annual networking event for Edinburgh's site associations and site representatives.	Parks & Greenspace Service	Annually
3.5	Set up an email group for allotment associations and site representatives to allow the dissemination of information on training, events and others.	Parks and Greenspace Service	2010

Objective 3 continued			
3.6	Set up four mentoring schemes every year until 2015.	Parks and Greenspace Service & site associations	2015
3.7	Establish an annual training programme for allotment holders.	Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society	Annually
3.8	Use monies from allotment rents to cover the cost of the training programme.	Parks and Greenspace Service	Annually
3.9	Undertake surveys of allotment users every five years.	Park & Greenspace Service	2012 and 2017

Objective 4: Ensure good administration			
No.	Action	By whom	When
4.1	Review and update the current allotment regulations, carry out consultation on the new regulations and seek ministerial approval	Parks and Greenspace Service and Legal Services	2010

Objective 5: Ensure environmentally sustainable allotments			
No.	Action	By whom	When
5.1	Set up communal composting at all appropriate allotment sites.	Parks and Greenspace Service and site association/ site representative	2015
5.2	Promote access to the compost generated through Edinburgh's green waste collections and the Master Composter Project.	City of Edinburgh Council Waste Services and Parks and Greenspace Service	Annually
5.3	Develop biodiversity action plans for allotment sites.	Biodiversity Officer	2015
5.4	At new sites biodiversity will be encouraged as a fundamental objective, with native trees and shrubs used within the site and also planted around the edges.	Allotment Strategy Steering Group	On going

Objective 5 continued			
5.5	Update the 'Gardening in harmony with nature' booklet, promoting locally important native species, local nurseries and organic methods.	Biodiversity Officer	2011

Objective 6: Develop and sustain partnership working			
No.	Action	By whom	When
6.1	Review membership of Allotments Strategy Steering Group and co-opt relevant representative organisations	Allotment Strategy Steering Group	2010
6.2	Host and attend the Scottish Allotment Officers' Forums	Parks and Greenspace Service	Annually

Objective 7: Secure resources			
No.	Action	By whom	When
7.1	Inform allotment holders of the rental increases.	Parks and Greenspace Service	2010
7.2	Circulate information on funding opportunities to allotment committees.	Parks and Greenspace Service	On request
7.3	Provide advice and support on funding applications.	Allotment Strategy Steering Group	2010 and 2015

APENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Plot holder demographics 2002 and 2007

Age	2002	2007
<24	0%	0%
25 – 34	5%	3%
35 – 54	39%	38%
55+	53%	58%
No response	3%	1%

Age demographics

Gender	2002	2007
Male	40%	47%
Female	58%	50%
No response	2%	2%

Gender demographics

Disabled	2002	2007
Yes	13%	9%
No	80%	84%
No response	7%	7%

Disabled demographics

Ethnic background	2002	2007
White	91.4%	92.5%
Black African	0.4%	0.3%
Black Caribbean	0.1%	0.0%
Chinese	0.1%	0.3%
Other	0.6%	3.5%
No response	7.3%	3.4%

Ethnicity demographics

APPENDIX 2: Status of the recommendations made in “Cultivating Communities”

Recommendations achieved

- (1) A participatory approach to the management and development of allotments has been established.
- (2) An Allotment Strategy Steering Group (ASSG) has been established and meets every six weeks.
- (4) Partnerships with NHS Lothian, FEDAGA and SAGS have been secured.
- (5) A land survey has been undertaken to identify possible new allotment sites.
- (7) City of Edinburgh Council confirmed its commitment to retaining, at a minimum, the existing number and area of public and private allotments.
- (8) Ensured that revised Local Plan gives due cognisance to allotments and their protection.
- (10) An organic allotment site, Bridgend, has been developed as a model of good practice in relation to both social and environmental factors at Craigmillar Castle Park.
- (11) Creation of allotments considered as part of large-scale developments
- (12) Continued employment of council full-time Allotments Officer.
- (13) Guidelines to good allotment practice are being written by the Scottish Allotment Gardeners Society.
- (14) Stakeholder participation in the management of allotments fostered through site associations and regular plot holder surveys.
- (15) The lease agreement has been reviewed by the Council in consultation with the Allotment Strategy Steering Group and rules for allotment plot holders produced.
- (16) Site-by-site surveys are regularly undertaken to identify under-utilisation.
- (17) The site inspection, termination and appeal procedures have been reviewed by the Council in consultation with the Allotment Strategy Steering Group.
- (18) Waiting list positions communicated annually via the Council’s website.
- (19) Plot holders are invited to share or divide their plot upon renewal of their lease.
- (21) Expert advice was sought from the Council’s Biodiversity Officer on how allotments can enhance biodiversity. A booklet ‘Gardening in Harmony with Nature’ was produced and distributed to all current and new plot holders. Workshops on organic gardening were run in conjunction with Ask Organic.
- (22) A communications methodology agreed. Information is distributed to plot holders via site notice boards, bi-annual newsletters and the Council website.
- (23) An open and transparent approach to allotment allocation and management has been adopted.

- (27) New council capital funds were secured for allotment improvements.
- (28) The council revenue budget for allotment management was reviewed.
- (29) The level of plot rental reviewed and annually thereafter.
- (30) Secured new funding sources and encourage allotment sites to fundraise directly.

Recommendations not achieved

- (3) The role and composition of Site Associations to be revised to take account of local neighbourhood interests.
- (6) Agree targets for allotment waiting times. The Allotment Strategy Steering Group agreed that this is unrealistic in the light of the growing waiting list and the unmet need.
- (9) A 5 year Action Plan drawn up for upgrading existing sites. The Allotment Strategy Steering Group has agreed that following the improvements at all allotment sites this no longer required.
- (20) Expert advice sought on the landscape impact of allotment sites. As Planning Permission is required for all new allotment sites this is not considered necessary.
- (24) Training programme based on training needs assessment and skills audit. The Allotment Strategy Steering Group agreed that an assessment and audit of individual plot holders skills would be too difficult to undertake. However, it was acknowledged that a training programme for allotment holders is still important and an action has been incorporated in the new strategy to address this.
- (25) Council provision of resources to promote the development of allotments in areas such as churches or schools. The Allotment Strategy Steering Group agreed that the Council need not duplicate the works of both the Eco-school and Eco-congregation Award programmes.
- (26) Establish a pilot allotment project with a private landowner. A willing private landowner has not been identified.

APPENDIX 3: List of potential allotment sites and recommendations

Name	Area	Recommendations
Alnwickhill Reservoir	S	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Balgreen Road	SW	Carryout further community consultation
Baronscourt (Jocks Lodge)	E	Carryout further community consultation
Blinkbonny Park	SW	Carryout further community consultation
Burgess Road SQ	W	Potential community food growing project - support local community group to develop community food growing project
Cammo Walled Garden	W	Unsuitable
Campbell Park	SW	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Craigentiny Avenue North	E	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Cramond Walled Garden	W	Unsuitable
Davidsons Mains Park	W	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Dovecot Park	SW	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Dumbryden School	SW	Carryout further community consultation
Frogston Road	S	Carryout further community consultation
Gracemount Walled Garden	S	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Gypsy Brae	N	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Hailes Quarry Park	SW	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Harrison Park East	SW	Potential community food growing project - carryout further community consultation
Inch Park	S	Carryout further community consultation
Joppa Quarry Park	E	Unsuitable
King George V Park	SW	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Lauriston Castle	W	Unsuitable
Liberton Park	S	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Lochend Park	E	Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Midmar Field 3	S	Carryout further community consultation for allotments on smaller scale

Niddre Marischal Road	E		Carryout further community consultation
Pilrig Park	N		Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
Redhall allotment extension	SW		Carryout further community consultation
Restalrig Crescent	E		Carryout further community consultation
Silverknowes farmland	W		Potential allotment site at much smaller scale - carryout further community consultation
Seven Acre Park	S		Allotment site not to be pursued at this time.
St Marks Park	N		Carryout further community consultation
Whinhill park	SW		Carryout further community consultation

APPENDIX 4: Facilities at allotment sites

Site	Toilets	Water supply	Notice boards	Composting facilities	Rubbish collection	Site hut / secure storage	Access	Security	Lighting
Bridgend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	Yes
Cambridge Ave	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Good	Good	No
Carricknowe	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Chesser Cres.	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Claremont Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
Craigentenny	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Ferry Road	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
Findlay Ave	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Hutchinson Loan	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Good	Good	No
Inverleith Park	Yes	Yes	Yes (x2)	No	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
Lady Road	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Leith Links	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Midmar 1 & 2	Yes	Yes	Yes (x2)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
Pilrig Park	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Prospect Bank	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Good	Good	No
Redhall	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Restalrig	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Saughton Mains	Yes (x2)	Yes	Yes (x2)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
Stenhouse Drive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Good	Good	No
Warriston	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good	Good	No
West Mains	Yes	Yes	Yes	no	No	Yes	Good	Good	No

APPENDIX 5: Management rules for the keeping of bees

1. There should be no automatic right to keep bees on any allotment site or plot. Some sites will not be suitable due to the proximity of footpaths or houses. Other sites may be too insecure, leaving hives open to vandalism.
2. Where conditions are suitable there should still be a limitation on the number of hives. Two hives would be a reasonable number on one plot and the total number would need to be governed by the size of the site. Six hives should be considered the maximum even on the largest sites. Initially, it would be best to allow only a single beekeeper on any one site in order to gauge the reactions of fellow plot holders over a period of time.
3. Only beekeepers with reasonable experience should be given permission to keep bees on an allotment. An applicant should hold a “Basic Beemaster Certificate.” This is a qualification awarded by the Scottish Beekeepers Association (SBA) to beekeepers who have passed a foundation examination the theory and practice of beekeeping. It is usually awarded to beekeepers who have kept bees satisfactorily for one or two years. An allotment is not a suitable place for a new beekeeper to start with a first hive and, even if they have one or two years experience, it would be wise for them to be members of their local association where they would have access to an experienced mentor.
4. Beekeepers must be members of the Scottish Beekeepers Association as membership provides £2,000,000 Public Liability Insurance. This covers public footpaths and houses.
5. All plot holders adjacent to the proposed apiary site must be in agreement. Dissenters should not be over-ruled by a majority vote as the wishes and needs of gardeners should be paramount. On smaller sites it would probably be necessary for all the plot holders to agree. There would also need to be some protection for an established beekeeper. An adjacent plot that becomes vacant should not be let to someone opposed to bees.
6. Manipulations of hives should not be carried out when other plot holders are working nearby. Time must be allowed for bees to settle after these manipulations.
7. There must be provisions in place to deal with any situations arising during a beekeepers absence. Reliable contact numbers should be available, somewhere on the site, in case of problems. Cover must be arranged if the beekeeper is away.
8. Bees could cause problems because of poor management but it might well be possible to resolve these. Plot holders who are experiencing problems from bees should bring these to the attention of the Allotments Officer, who will be able to call upon advice from an Edinburgh and Midlothian Beekeepers Association member. Very aggressive bees should never be permitted on a plot.

APPENDIX 6: Useful contacts

Organisation	Contact details
Allotment Regeneration Initiative	http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari
Bridgend Allotments	http://www.bridgendallotment.org.uk
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities	http://www.cosla.gov.uk
Drylaw and Telford Community Gardens Project	http://www.drylawandtelfordcommunitygardens.org.uk
Edinburgh and Midlothian Beekeepers Association	http://www.edinburghbeekeepers.org.uk
Edinburgh Community Backgreens Association	http://www.ecba.org.uk
Edinburgh Garden Share Scheme	http://www.careandrepaiiredinburgh.org.uk
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens	http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/
Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Associations (gives links to local site websites)	http://www.fedaga.org.uk
Garden Organic and Henry Doubleday Research Organisation	http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk
'Growing Plots', Royal Edinburgh Hospital	Email: royaledinburghcommunitygardens@cyrenians.org.uk
Master Composter Project	http://www. Changeworks.org.uk
National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners	http://www.nsalg.org.uk
Redbraes Community Garden	Email: redbraes@blueyonder.co.uk
Soil Association Scotland	http://www.soilassociationscotland.org
Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society	http://www.sags.org.uk
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/16118/Biodiversitystrategy
Scottish Government – National Food and Drink Policy for Scotland	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/food-industry/national-strategy
Scottish Natural Heritage	http://www.snh.org.uk/
Slateford Green Allotments	Email: info@dunedincanmore.org.uk
Trellis (Horticultural therapy)	http://www.trellisScotland.org.uk
Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society	http://www.rchs.co.uk
Royal Horticultural Society	http://www.rhs.org.uk
Waste Action Grants	Email: wasteaction@edinburgh.gov.uk

APPENDIX 7: Acknowledgements

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