

LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY 2009 - 2013

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR ALLOTMENTS:

OUR 5 YEAR PLAN

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ACTION PLAN 2009 - 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy sets out Land and Environmental Services' commitment to allotments, and our plans for improving them over the next 5 years.

The Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) recently published its State of the Market Survey 2008 Report into local authority allotments in Scotland. From its findings, I am delighted to see that Glasgow is at the forefront of Scottish local authorities in terms of the level of allotment provision, and the level of service we provide.

This reflects the progress that has been achieved in recent years, thanks to the dedication of plot holders, site associations and the Glasgow Allotments Forum, and the efforts of my staff.

Our allotments strategy builds on this progress, and looks at where we want to be in 5 years' time.

We have taken on board the feedback to the draft strategy consultation, and I extend my thanks to the many individuals and organisations who contributed.

The strategy details the ways in which we will deliver improvements, by means of six key commitments, carried forward into a 5 year action plan. We want to be clear to people about what we aim to do, and how we plan to do it.

Let me state from the outset that achieving these aims will depend on support from plot holders, allotment site associations and the Glasgow Allotments Forum.

I am writing this at a time of slowdown in the economy, when all local authorities are being asked to review their expenditure. Now, more than ever, we need to expand our partnership working with other organisations who are recognising the benefits of allotment gardening and can allocate resources to actively support them.

I am determined that Glasgow will remain at the forefront of allotment providers in Scotland. We owe it to the tenants on our allotment sites; to the health and well-being of Glasgow's citizens; to the wider good of our communities and our environment - and to the heritage we leave for future generations.

Together, I am confident we can achieve this.

Robert Booth
Executive Director
Land and Environmental Services

FOREWORD

Allotment gardening can be a solitary pleasure, but we hope that our allotments strategy will encourage people to see the bigger picture too – and make them want to be a part of it.

Our vision is for a community of allotment gardeners in Glasgow, working in support of one another, with Glasgow City Council and our community partners at the heart of that.

By doing so, we can help to ensure a sustainable future for allotment gardening in Glasgow, with allotments of sufficient quality and quantity to fulfil their true potential.

Allotments have come a long way from being seen as hidden enclaves, and relics of the past. Today, they are widely recognised for the contribution they make to the quality of urban life - and to future sustainability.

A raft of exciting initiatives are taking place on our allotment sites, promoting health and well-being; lifelong learning; restorative justice; community food projects; and environmental causes, all with support from their allotment site associations and fellow plot holders.

Demand for allotments has risen dramatically. Our allotment sites are fully occupied, with waiting lists at their highest since the nation's 'Dig For Victory' campaign some 60 years ago. Levels of media interest and endorsement for allotments are unprecedented.

Recent years have seen an increase in the amount of policy and legislation at international, national and local levels, in growing recognition of the need for amenity green space, sustainable local food production, habitat creation and protection for biodiversity.

As a working document, our allotments strategy will continue to reflect such changes, through regular monitoring and updating – in consultation with our allotment partners.

I look forward to a positive and expansive future for Glasgow's allotments.

Bailie James McNally, JP
Executive Member for Land and Environment

OUR VISION IS FOR AN INCLUSIVE, VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF ALLOTMENTS IN GLASGOW, CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELLBEING OF OUR CITIZENS AND A GREENER FUTURE FOR OUR CITY

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In March 2008, we launched our draft strategy for allotments and invited stakeholders and partners to comment on our proposals.

The consultation generated some 150 responses from individuals and organisations interested in and involved with Glasgow's allotments.

With these, we finalised our 5 year strategy, with the aim of bringing about real and lasting benefits for allotments in Glasgow.

We propose to achieve this through six key commitments, which set out our goals for improving our allotments service and for increasing opportunities for allotment gardening in Glasgow.

The ways in which we plan to fulfil these commitments are outlined in an action plan, which accompanies this document. The action plan will be reviewed and updated regularly, to take account of changes in policy, and feedback from our partners and stakeholders, over the course of the five year strategy period.

1.2 The scope of our strategy

Primarily, Land and Environmental Services' strategy for allotments is written for the sites we manage - we have no authority or management responsibilities over the independent sites in the city. However, a key aim of our strategy is to bring about closer links between all allotment sites in Glasgow. We shall continue to work with Glasgow's Allotments Forum, which serves both Council-owned and independent sites, and take a pro-active approach to working in partnership with allotment associations on independent sites, as well as Council ones across the city.

The areas of allotments, community gardens, orchards, transitional growing spaces and environmental education are all inextricably linked and cannot easily be separated. Community gardens and orchards play an important role in the greenspace and growing space of the city, not only to supplement allotment provision, but also to meet the demands of different target groups. There are many allotment sites which could easily be described as community gardens and much good practice is already being carried out on these sites, linking with young people, those with mental and physical disabilities, and those otherwise excluded from communities.

We are in a time of increasing awareness of the need for a more sustainable social and environmental future – of increasing interest in local food production, reducing food miles and packaging, healthy eating, improving physical activity in young and old and of improving the environment in which we live. Allotments

within Glasgow have a vital role to play in the development of all of the above. There is a large, and growing, community of charities and organisations within Glasgow who are committed to improving the physical, mental and environmental health of Glasgow and its citizens. We see the provision and expansion of an allotments service as an essential contribution to this community.

1.3 Policy Context

By producing a 5 year strategy for allotments, we are fulfilling the commitment given in the Strategic Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces, carried out by Land Services in 2005.

This in turn came from Glasgow City Council's '2020 Vision', which set out the long-term planning approach for Land Services to provide high quality services up to the year 2020.

The Strategic Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces highlighted the need for the Service to "develop an allotments strategy to include innovative partnerships and improved access, to deliver an improved allotment service for the city" (Key Action 59) and to "disseminate good practice information and strengthen links with allotments and community groups" (Key Action 119).

The tasks and targets set by the Review (principally, to establish a post of Allotments and Recycling Officer; support the city-wide allotment forum; and promote the benefits of allotment gardening) have already been implemented and continue to be developed within our strategy.

In the course of writing this document, we referred to the national and Council policies, and the statutory legislation, which influence allotments – for details of these, see Section 2: Key Policies and Legislation.

1.4 Strategy Aims

The key aim of the allotments strategy is to underline the Council's commitment to protecting and developing allotment provision in Glasgow.

Our strategy is intended to deliver Land and Environmental Services' clear commitment to its allotment service and its support for allotment gardening in Glasgow.

We intend that the allotments strategy will help to increase recognition, influence policy development and resource allocation in favour of allotments at a local and national level.

1.5 Strategy Objectives

The strategy's objectives can be summarised as follows:

- 1 To introduce a range of measures that will improve Council owned allotment sites, in line with the Council's key objectives and stakeholder expectations
- 2 To develop and enhance the range of facilities and amenities on allotment sites, through partnership working and other approaches
- 3 To develop a Council-wide approach in the planning and delivery of the cross-cutting proposals identified in the strategy to improve and increase allotment sites in Glasgow
- 4 To identify and source the resources required for implementing the proposals
- 5 To communicate effectively with key stakeholders, external agencies, communities and other council services
- 6 To create a better understanding and awareness of the benefits of allotments through advocacy, education, marketing and promotion

2.0 KEY POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Recent years have seen an increase in the amount of policy and legislation relevant to urban green space at international, national and local levels.

The volume and pace of change in policy and legislation reflects political cognisance of the need for amenity green space, sustainable local food production, habitat creation and improved biodiversity.

The key policies and legislation which influence our allotments strategy are summarised below.

2.1 GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL POLICIES:

The Glasgow City Council Plan

Glasgow City Council's Key Objectives are developed in its Council Plan, which was approved in February 2008. The Plan sets out the Council's main aims, supported by targets and actions, for the years 2008 – 2011.

The Council's 5 Key Objectives are:

1. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of services;
2. Increasing access to lifelong learning;
3. Making Glasgow a cleaner, safer city;
4. Building a prosperous city; and
5. Improving health and wellbeing

Allotments can contribute to these in a variety of ways, as we outline throughout our strategy. Examples include increasing involvement rates in physical activity; decreasing the amount of organic waste going to landfill; and reducing the level of vacant derelict land in the city.

The City Plan for Glasgow

Glasgow City Council recognises the importance of green space in making the city an attractive and viable place to live, and as an integral part of the community. Glasgow's City Plan sets out strategic aims for green space, as an essential element of the regeneration of the city.

Allotments are now a recognised part of the city's greenspace and feature in the Finalised Draft of the City Plan 2 (May 2007) under Environment Section 5.54: Allotments.

In this, the City Plan acknowledges that allotments "provide an important, and long-standing, resource for many communities living at high density and with little or no provision for sizeable private gardens. Allotments can make a valuable contribution to improving social inclusion, physical and mental health, diet and biodiversity, leading to an improved quality of life.

In certain circumstances, the Council will seek the provision of new, additional allotment gardens in support of the open space obligation for new development (see policy ENV 2)".

Within our strategy for allotments, key commitment 4 on increasing allotments refers further.

The Environment Strategy and Action Plan 2006 – 2010

Glasgow's long-term vision is to become one of the most environmentally sustainable cities in the U.K. The Strategy looks at how global environmental issues such as climate change, and the international pollution of land, water and air, affect our local communities.

The Strategy sets out Glasgow City Council's Environmental Objectives, and gives an overview of the of the wide range of activities relating to environmental protection and enhancement that are being carried out or supported by the Council.

Allotment sites are acknowledged as an important feature of Glasgow's green space provision. The Council recognises the importance of allotment site provision and management in the Environmental Strategy.

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Strategy

The Glasgow and Clyde Valley (G.C.V.) Green Network Partnership comprises eight local authorities in the area (including Glasgow City Council); Scottish Government Housing and Regeneration Directorate; Forestry Commission Scotland; Scottish Enterprise; Scottish Natural Heritage; and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

In September 2008, the Partnership launched a 20 year strategy, which aims to transform the G.C.V. region by developing green spaces, cycle routes and walkways in one of Europe's largest 'greening' projects.

Allotments and community gardens are recognised particularly for the opportunities they provide for health improvement through healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health and well-being.

2.2 NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICIES:

Agenda 21 / Local Agenda 21

Agenda 21 requires that nations participating in the quest for a more sustainable social, environmental and economic future develop national strategies for their sustainable development. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy recognises that everybody has the right to a healthy, clean and safe environment. It addresses global environmental threats, such as climate change and poor air quality, to protect human and environmental health, and recognises the need for a new, more environmentally sound approach to development.

Glasgow is committed to its own Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Strategy. Like Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21 strategies follow the principles of sustainable development and focus on economic, social and environmental development, particularly through local community involvement.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan / Glasgow's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan is a national plan for the protection of plant and animal life and their habitats.

Glasgow's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was launched in 2001. As part of the process, a Biological Audit was prepared and action plans for the improvement of habitats and various species have been approved and progressed. A Glasgow Biodiversity Partnership has been set up with a range of partner organisations to pursue the aims and objectives of Glasgow's LBAP.

The environmental policy designations set out in the City Plan support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity (policies ENV6 & 7 refer).

Single Outcome Agreements

Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) are the agreements reached between all 32 Councils and the Scottish Government in June 2008, concerning the planning and delivery of public services in Scotland.

The SOAs establish Outcomes for Councils to seek to achieve with their community planning partners. These reflect local needs and priorities, and also relate to agreed National Outcomes, which include explicit targets. Progress is monitored at local level by way of Local Indicators selected by the Council from a national menu or identified locally.

At the time of writing, Single Outcome Agreements are being reviewed for formal agreement with the Scottish Government for 2009/10 onward. It is acknowledged that there is significant potential for parks, open spaces and other categories of green space, such as allotments, to contribute more widely to delivering national and local outcomes.

2.3 NATIONAL POLICIES

At national level, policies influencing allotments also include:

Scottish Planning Policy SPP11, Physical Activity and Open Space

Acknowledgement of the value of allotments to the quality of people's lives has been reflected at national level. The 2003 Local Government Committee Inquiry into Allotments recommended that 'the issue of allotment provision should be considered in future planning guidelines'.

In recognition of the Committee's concern at the loss of allotment land, the Scottish Government have incorporated reference to the protection and provision of allotments within the SPP11, Physical Activity and Open Space.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a legal duty on public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity in all of their functions.

The City Council promote policies, programmes and other mechanisms aimed at furthering the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the City. (The Glasgow Local Biodiversity Action Plan and our key commitment 6 refer).

Equally Well

'Equally Well' is a Scottish Government project which sets out a programme for change across the key priority areas such as children's early years, mental and physical health and wellbeing, drug and alcohol issues, physical environments and links to violence. The Implementation Plan links several existing and continuing projects in these areas with a series of 'test sites' throughout Scotland, one of which is Greater Glasgow – Integrating Health and Planning in Glasgow.

This specific test site aims to:

- develop good practice in incorporating health within the planning process

- incorporate lessons learned from existing experience through working in the East End
- provide new and innovative means for partners to engage with each other
- offer new ways of shaping the health impact of private sector investment in buildings and land
- assess the impact of such changes on health and wellbeing focussing on inequalities.

Under the auspices of this project, work is currently underway to create a community garden on a vacant site in Govanhill.

In addition, we have taken cognisance of:

- Glasgow City Council's Equality Policy
- The Scottish Government's 'National Food and Drink Policy'
- The Scottish Government's 'Healthy Eating; An Action Plan to Improve Diet, Increase Physical Activity and Tackle Obesity' (June 2008)
- The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society Briefing Paper on 'Allotments, Food and Climate Change: how growing one's own food can reduce emissions from food production' (September 2008)
- The call by the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment for unused public land to be made available for allotments (October 2008) and the motion by Bailie Dr Nina Baker to provide short term public green space on vacant development sites, passed by Glasgow City Council on 30 October 2008
- The Association for Public Service Excellence (A.P.S.E.) State of the Market Survey 2008 Report into local authority allotments in Scotland

A full list of references is given at the end of the strategy.

2.4 LEGISLATION

The powers and obligations vested in local authorities in Scotland are to be found in the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892, which remains the key statutory tool for local authorities as regards allotments; the subsequent Allotments (Scotland) Acts of 1922 and 1950, and the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act 1919.

The 1892 Act set out local authorities' duties in relation to allotment provision within their areas. Within the 1892 Act, an "Allotment" was defined by size, to a maximum total area of one acre, enabling an allotment holder to keep farm

animals.

The 1922 Act introduced the concept of the allotment garden – a smaller area of ground to be used mainly for the cultivation of vegetables for consumption by the allotment holder and his/her family. The current use of the term ‘allotment’ should properly be ‘allotment garden’.

Allotment legislation in Scotland is different to that in England. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) plays a key role in providing guidance for local authorities on allotment provision. 'Allotments in Scotland: Guidance Notes for Scottish Councils' (COSLA 2007) advises on Councils' legislative powers to acquire, manage and develop land for the purpose of allotments. These are summarised in an Appendix to this document.

Because of the archaic nature of the legislation regarding allotments, the statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide allotments is open to interpretation. In its publication 'Allotments: a plot holder's guide (Revised edition, June 2007), the Allotments Regeneration Initiative advises that "each Council decides for itself how much of its resources to devote to allotments.

However, if a council considers there is a demand, it has a statutory duty to provide a sufficient quantity of plots and to lease them to people living in its area. If local people feel there is a demand for allotments that is not being met, they can get together any six residents who are registered on the electoral roll and put their case to the local authority to consider".

We believe that allotment legislation needs to be updated. We will seek to pursue this through COSLA and the Association of Public Sector Excellence with other local authorities in Scotland.

3.0 THE CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Land and Environmental Services – Our Current Role

Land and Environmental Services (L.E.S.) is now landlord for 15 of the 24 allotment sites currently operating across the city. The remaining nine sites operate independently.

Over the course of the strategy, these figures are likely to change, as two sites, which currently operate independently, have requested to transfer to the Council's management.

We carry out a variety of functions related to our allotments service.

As landowner and landlord, we have a statutory responsibility to:

- enforce tenancy rules and regulations
- collect rental income
- deal with issues such as ground subsidence and land contamination
- respond to security issues
- deal with health and safety issues;

and we support the allotment associations on our sites to enforce their site rules and regulations.

In addition, our responsibilities for all our sites cover:

- paying water charges
- arranging and paying for skip hire
- arranging and paying for pest control
- maintaining perimeter fencing/hedging, entrance gates, main pathways and trees on sites
- removing graffiti and fly tipped rubbish
- specialist treatment of invasive weeds, notably giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed
- clearing unlet derelict plots
- soil testing for potential contaminants, through the Council's land remediation team

We offer advice and technical assistance on a range of horticultural, environmental and management issues to:

- Allotment Associations
- Individual plot holders
- The Glasgow Allotments Forum
- Other key stakeholders in allotments – funding bodies, social enterprise companies, charities
- Other Council Services – including Education, Social Work Services and Development & Regeneration Services
- Other allotment providers – independent sites, other Local Authorities, Housing Associations etc

We also promote the interests of allotments through dealing with enquiries from members of the public, politicians and the media (through the Council's press office).

3.2 Financial Resources

Plot Rental

The cost of allotment provision by the Council significantly exceeds the only source of revenue income to the allotment service, namely plot rental.

For 2007, income from plot rental amounted to £14,111.

In 2008, the cost to rent a full plot for one year was £30.50.

Following the Strategic Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces, concession rates were introduced in 2007 for plot holders aged over 60, in receipt of benefits or in full-time education. Some 26% of the total number of plot holders have applied for a concession so far.

The current concession rate is £25. We also offer separate charges for half plots, at £15.25 full rate and £12.50 concession.

To make allotments affordable for as many people as possible, we have committed to increasing our plot rental charges by £1 per year over each of the next three years. This will bring charges for a full plot to £31.50 in 2009, £32.50 in 2010 and £33.50 in 2011.

Rental charges for half plots will be £15.75, £16.25 and £16.75 respectively.

The concession rate will be kept at £25 for a full plot or £12.50 for a half plot for 2009. Rates for 2010 and 2011 are still to be set.

For clarity, these charges are set out in the table below:

Year	Annual Charge			
	Full plot	Full plot concession	Half plot	Half plot concession
2008	£30.50	£25.00	£15.25	£12.50
2009	£31.50	£25.00	£15.75	£12.50
2010	£32.50	To be confirmed	£16.25	To be confirmed
2011	£33.50	To be confirmed	£16.75	To be confirmed

We also plan to introduce lesser charges for starter plots and raised beds.

We discuss plot rental further within our key commitment 2 on funding for allotments.

Revenue Budget / Expenditure

The current revenue budget for allotments is £10,000 per annum.

The revenue budget is used to pay for water and skip hire / disposal charges on our sites. In 2007, and again in 2008, the combined charges for water and skip hire / disposal on our sites far exceeded the annual revenue budget.

January – December 2008 water charges for all our sites amounted to £8,900.
January – December 2008 skip hire and disposal charges totalled £8,200.

The restrictions on the revenue budget to date have precluded any planned programme of works for repairs, maintenance or improvements, such as new site facilities, from this budget.

The historical under-funding of allotments impacts on many of Glasgow's allotment sites to the present day. An initial estimate of the cost of outstanding repairs on our allotment sites is in the region of £300,000.

Additional Funding

Since 2004, funding for upgrading works on allotment sites has been made available from the LES parks development budget on an ad-hoc basis. Projects on allotment sites compete with other parks development initiatives for funding from this budget. Over the past 2 years, some £80,000 has been secured from this budget to improve allotment sites.

Some allotment associations have been successful in their direct applications for funding from a variety of sources. A number have secured funding for improvements to their sites from local Area Committees, usually on the basis of matched support from LES, either financially or in kind (for example, works carried out by parks operations).

We recognise that it is imperative to secure additional and sustainable funding for allotments in order to improve our existing sites and finance additional allotment provision. This is detailed in key commitment 2 of our strategy.

3.3 Staffing Resources

A full-time Allotments and Recycling Officer was formally appointed in June 2005, in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces. Before that, allotments were included within the remit of Golf and Outdoor Leisure.

Since the draft consultation strategy was published, Land and Environmental Services has undergone an organisational restructure. The Allotments Officer will now be based within the horticultural team, part of L.E.S.' Parks Development.

To deliver the commitments of the strategy, as well as new and ongoing projects and developments, we have acknowledged the need to increase staff resources for allotments, especially since the number of allotment sites coming under Council management is likely to increase (as mentioned in 3.1).

Our Allotments Officer will be supported in various aspects of his duties by LES personnel in parks development, parks operations, administration, and community engagement teams, for whom allotments will now be an integral part of their existing green space remit.

The sourcing of funding for allotments will be the key priority of a designated post within LES.

4.0 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Glasgow City Council is committed to improving its services in response to the experiences and opinions of its citizens.

Community involvement is a key principle for LES in helping to shape management decisions regarding present and future developments.

In consulting about allotments, we decided that it was appropriate to restrict our consultation to Glasgow's 'allotments community' (the individuals and organisations with a direct involvement / interest in allotments), rather than survey the general public.

In our draft consultative strategy for allotments, we set out our proposals for improving our allotments service, our allotment sites, and access to allotments in Glasgow, through six key commitments, each with associated recommendations and actions.

We believed that the final version of the allotments strategy needed to reflect the majority views of key stakeholders, to bring about their support for the aims of the strategy and the partnership working to deliver it.

4.1 Method

The National Standards for Community Consultation were used as the template for organising the key stakeholder consultation for our draft allotments strategy. A detailed outline of our methodology is available on request from our Allotments Officer.

4.2 Result

By the closing date, the Council had received 146 completed returns – 131 from individuals and 15 from associations and other groups.

Responses to the draft consultative strategy were collated and analysed by LES Policy and Development. Their 'Report on Findings for the Draft Allotments Strategy' is again available on request from our Allotments Officer.

Feedback in support or opposition to proposals, or where opinion was evenly divided, has been referred to and reflected within each of the relevant key commitments.

4.3 Ongoing Consultation

It is evident that not everyone who was invited to comment on the draft strategy actually did so. Anecdotally, we are aware that some plot holders are happy with the status quo. Others are cynical regarding the Council's motives and determination to implement its ideas. One of the comments we received on the strategy is that "allotmenting is an individual activity, and people need encouragement to see the big picture".

We shall continue to engage with key stakeholders for the duration of the strategy period. We discuss our plans to improve our communication with plot holders and allotment associations within key commitments 3 and 5 of this strategy.

Amongst our proposals is to survey plot holders to assess their opinions on progress on sites and with our service. This information will be used to update the action plan, as detailed under 'Monitoring and Review' in section 6.

5.0 OUR KEY COMMITMENTS

Within our Strategy for Allotments, we are making 6 Key Commitments. These are to:

Key Commitment 1:

IMPROVE OUR ALLOTMENT SITES

Key Commitment 2:

SOURCE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR ALLOTMENTS

Key Commitment 3:

FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO BENEFIT ALLOTMENTS

Key Commitment 4:

INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF ALLOTMENTS

Key Commitment 5:

DEVELOP ALLOTMENT SITES TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Key Commitment 6:

PRIORITISE BIODIVERSITY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, AND RECYCLING ON ALLOTMENT SITES

Key Commitment 1: IMPROVE OUR ALLOTMENT SITES

We will:

- 1. Improve conditions on our allotment sites**
- 2. Improve the way we manage our allotments**
- 3. Expand the service we offer to plot holders**

5.1.1 Improving conditions on our allotment sites

We will:

- Tackle outstanding repairs**
- Instigate a programme of planned maintenance**
- Upgrade facilities**
- Review health and safety**
- Improve security**

We will capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the current climate of public and political support for allotments to improve our allotment sites, based around the needs of the people who use them.

The Scottish Government policy SPP11: Open Space and Physical Activity advocates high quality open spaces and recommends that sites are:

- Fit for purpose**
- Easily accessible**
- Inclusive**
- Pleasant and welcoming**
- Safe**
- Well designed**
- Actively managed**
- Well maintained**

Over the past three years, we have made improvements to some of our sites. We have carried out or part funded works to provide new pathways and security fencing; cleared disused/derelict areas within sites; upgraded water supplies and improved drainage; and installed raised beds for plot holders with special needs.

A programme of soil testing for each of our allotment sites is on-going.

However, we acknowledge that we still have sites without basic facilities, such as toilets, and we will address our stakeholders' concerns over site standards, and their wish to be involved in making decisions on these issues, by the following measures:

Repairs

We will ensure that all our sites are upgraded to similar standards.

Our Allotments Officer will meet with associations on site to update the schedules of work outstanding and agree on priorities. These will be finalised with the allotment associations, and timeframes allocated, as funding becomes available, and incorporated into the Action Plan.

To address any concerns about the transparency of this process, our Allotments Officer will provide progress reports through G.A.F.

Maintenance

Since the draft consultation strategy was published, we have secured agreement that allotments will be included in the maintenance programmes for green space in each of the city's five recently created Community Planning Partnership Areas.

The costs of programmed maintenance on our allotment sites will be met from Council budgets. There will be no cost to allotment associations for the standard maintenance agreed for each of our sites.

Programmed maintenance may involve strimming the edges of main pathways, spraying along fence lines or paved areas, grass cutting for communal amenity areas, and cutting perimeter hedges. (As we outline within Key Commitment 5.6.1, we are mindful that habitats on allotment sites, such as perimeter hedging, plays an important role in supporting biodiversity by providing food and shelter. We will take this into account when planning maintenance regimes).

Our Allotments Officer and staff from Parks Operations will meet with representatives from allotment associations on each of our sites to determine standard maintenance requirements, and will provide written confirmation of the agreed works.

Summer and winter maintenance programmes will then be drawn up. From these, we will be able to notify our site associations as to how often and when works are scheduled to be carried out.

The agreed works will be monitored, to ensure they are carried within the time periods allocated, through the Council's grounds maintenance reporting system.

We plan to follow Birmingham City Council's policy of involving site associations in monitoring performance. To do so, we will ask for a representative from each site association to complete a questionnaire at the end of the summer and winter maintenance periods. The questionnaire will ask whether work was carried out on time and in a satisfactory manner, and will ask for any other comments.

We will continue to treat giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed on our allotment sites in accordance with the Environment Agency code of practice, as these require specialised methods of eradication and disposal because of their invasiveness.

We will prioritise clearing the handful of derelict plots which are unfit to be let on our sites, due to factors such as broken glass and debris left by previous tenants.

Based on responses to the draft strategy, we will also look into the possibility of extending a maintenance service to independent sites, where we are requested to do so. It is probable that independent sites would incur charges.

Upgrading Facilities

Although an allotment provider is not obliged to provide facilities other than safe access at allotment sites, we consider it good practice to do so. We acknowledge that poor site facilities can impact hugely on people's enjoyment of allotment gardening.

There are still some allotment sites in Glasgow without toilet facilities.

Mains toilets are expensive to install and are not considered to be as good for the environment as composting toilets (that is, toilets without sewerage connections, which uses natural biological processes to break down waste matter into composted material).

A composting toilet is currently being trialled on one of our sites. We are talking with the committee of the allotment association there to decide whether the design of the toilet and its requirements for cleaning, emptying and maintenance make it suitable for other sites or whether we need to look for alternatives. Composting toilets have been given a mixed response on allotment sites in other cities.

As we outlined at the beginning of this section, we will work in partnership with allotment associations to secure funding for increased and improved communal facilities on sites. It will be for each allotment association to consult with its members to decide what's wanted.

The provision of toilets was a priority for many respondents to the draft strategy, but other suggestions included communal meeting huts, tool storage units, compost heaps, polytunnels, wildlife gardens and landscaped areas for barbecues and children's play facilities.

There may be opportunities to involve apprentices from Glasgow City Council and its arms-length partners in some of these projects.

Glasgow City Council promotes volunteering, and it may be that volunteers, community action groups could assist with implementing some of these ideas.

The Restorative Justice programme created a wildlife garden for the B.U.G.S. children's garden at Balornock allotments [see Key Commitment 5.5.4 for more details]. We are seeking to work with the Restorative Justice Service on a wider range of activities on our sites.

Outside Allotment Sites

We are also taking on board draft strategy feedback which advocates working with plot holders to improve the exterior of our allotment sites, through screening and planting.

Wherever possible, we will use the services and experience of 'Clean Glasgow' to improve areas outwith, and inside, our sites.

Health and Safety

In our draft consultation strategy, we committed to carrying out Health & Safety audits and risk assessments for all our sites as part of our site improvement programme.

Of all the topics raised in our draft strategy, this proved the most contentious. Although most respondents agreed in principle that sites should be safe from hazards, there were concerns that the Council might be too prescriptive in trying to achieve safety on sites and that control might be taken away from plot holders and allotment site associations.

Some respondents feared that health and safety audits would lead to the unique and individual characteristics of their allotment sites being lost, and pointed out that using recycled materials and makeshift structures are a tradition of allotment gardening and in keeping with the environmentally friendly ethos of recycling.

Health and safety is the responsibility of the Council, as landlord and landowner, but a duty of care also rests with allotment associations and individual plot holders. It is incumbent on us to carry out health and safety audits and risk assessments. The purpose of them is not, as expressed to the consultation strategy, "a charter for closing sites down". Rather, they are to protect our tenants, visitors to the site, contractors and Council employees.

It remains our intention to carry out Health and Safety inspections and risk assessments on all our sites during 2009/10 and to carry out regular checks thereafter, as necessary.

We assure our tenants that we will adopt a pragmatic approach to health and safety on allotment sites, as far as possible. We intend to follow the guidance provided by the A.R.I. in its fact sheet 'Health and Safety on allotments: all about risk assessments' and we will ensure that each of our site associations are provided with a copy.

The A.R.I.'s 'Allotments: a plot holder's guide' also contains a section on plot holders' responsibilities with regard to health and safety and the reporting of day-to-day hazards and incidents. We will again make copies of this guide available on our sites.

Initial audits will be carried out by our Allotments Officer, in conjunction with a Health and Safety Officer. It is our intention to involve site association representatives in each step of the health and safety process, including the initial site visits.

Information from these visits will be gathered to produce a template for identifying common causes of risk [such as structures, steps, ponds, tools, chemicals etc] and how to assess and deal with them. It is also essential that procedures for recording risk assessments, remedial actions and any incidents occurring are put in place. We will determine these in partnership with G.A.F.

We envisage that allotment site associations will carry out their own site checks (as many already do) in future, working to the template. We will work in partnership with allotment associations whenever remedial action, be it repairing, rebuilding or removing, or changes in practice, is required.

For clarity, however, as landlord and landowner, we carry ultimate responsibility for ensuring that agreed remedial actions are carried out within a set timescale. The Council shall have ultimate sanction against any tenant failing to comply.

The A.R.I. guide to health and safety on sites also advocates the need for allotment associations to have public liability insurance. We currently encourage, but do not stipulate, that associations on our sites are covered by public liability insurance. It is often necessary for obtaining funding.

Public liability insurance may become a requirement, once we have received clarification from the Council's Legal Services. We shall notify G.A.F. and the allotment associations as soon as a decision has been reached and we shall incorporate any requirements or recommendations in our updated tenancy agreement. More information follows, under 5.1.2 'Improving The Way We Manage Our Allotments'.

Improving Security on Allotment Sites

The security concerns raised by plot holders in Glasgow – vandalism, theft and fire-raising – are echoed across allotment sites throughout the UK. As these are widespread social problems, it is unrealistic to expect to eradicate them on allotment sites.

However, as the A.R.I. points out, "such blights – and the fear of them – can push an allotment site to dereliction faster than any developer."

It is essential that all allotment stakeholders – Council, plot holders, allotment associations and G.A.F. - work together to improve site security, and personal safety on allotment sites. We hope to involve Glasgow's independent sites in these discussions.

The A.R.I. emphasises the importance of a strong community on site for site security and personal safety. Plot holders get to know each other's movements and look out for each other's plots. A high level of activity and presence on a well-tenanted site deters intruders, and makes it easier to identify who is misusing the site and why.

We intend to take general and site-specific advice from the Police and the Community Safety team within Community Services. We will also look at safety initiatives for sites in other sites throughout the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe.

We also intend to follow the advice given in the A.R.I.'s 'Safe Sites' publication, which identifies a range of measures for tackling vandalism and other offences, such as theft, fly-tipping and menacing behaviour, on allotment sites.

The suggestions range from preventative measures, such as good housekeeping on sites, 'Plot Watch' schemes and patrols by Community Safety Patrol Officers, to ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour and intruders.

We will incorporate all relevant advice in our 'Good Practice' guides for allotment gardeners and allotment associations.

The A.R.I. stress that no one solution is failsafe – each has its limitations and one may be more appropriate or more practicable than another, depending on the nature of the problems a site is experiencing.

As highlighted by a respondent to the consultation strategy, the location and layout of many allotment sites hides them from local residents, passing pedestrians or motorists, whose surveillance can help to protect sites.

The respondent recommends that allotment associations give thought to how the layout of their site impacts on plot holders, as well as neighbours, parks personnel, wardens or police being able to survey or inspect a site with relative ease. The respondent further suggests that new allotment sites are laid out in accordance with a police architectural liaison officer to ensure they are 'secured by design'.

G.A.F. proposes evaluating the effects of open access on a new (or existing) site, which is an established practice in Europe and North America.

Security on allotment sites is not about enclosing sites behind ever higher fencing. Whilst fencing and defensive hedging can be part of the solution, the A.R.I. warns that "major fencing can attract intruders by presenting an irresistible challenge and implying there are valuables worth looting on the inside".

According to the A.R.I., "evidence shows that vandalism is rare on sites that have regular contact with people in the surrounding community".

Glasgow's Balornock Allotments' B.U.G.S. project, which involves schoolchildren and the wider neighbourhood, has secured funding from the community police over a number of years in recognition of the project's contribution to a "marked decrease in vandalism in the area" [more information on the B.U.G.S. project is given in Key Commitment 5.5.4].

It is also true that some problems, such as vandalism, theft and fire-raising, can arise within sites as a consequence of inter-personal disputes among plot holders. These situations impact not only on the individuals directly involved, but also on overall site safety and harmony.

Anecdotally, we have been told that people can feel victimised and vulnerable, uneasy to be on the site, having lost all sense of enjoyment and relaxation from their allotment.

We take the view that these situations should not be tolerated, ignored or hushed up.

It is right that the Council policies in place against bullying, victimisation and discrimination are enforced on our allotment sites.

Usually, it is the responsibility of the site association committee to deal with inter-personal disputes in the first instance. Under Key Commitment 3, we outline how we plan to increase support for allotment associations to prevent and deal with problems of anti-social behaviour.

5.1.2 Improving the way we manage our allotments:

We will:

- **Update our tenancy agreements**
- **Review our current method of rent collection**
- **Secure additional staff to deal with basic telephone enquiries**
- **Consider requests from independent allotment sites to be managed by Land and Environmental Services**

Tenancy Agreements

We shall improve the service we provide to our tenants by updating our tenancy agreements and reviewing our financial management procedures.

The Missives we currently issue were first produced by the Glasgow Corporation in 1959. We recognise that an update is long overdue. As Missives have already been sent out for 2009, we shall work with our Council colleagues in Legal Services with the aim of producing a new tenancy agreement, ready for issue in 2010.

Our tenancy agreement will follow the guidelines of the A.R.I. and will set out the rights and responsibilities of each plot holder – essentially giving a code of conduct. G.A.F. will also be invited to comment on the tenancy agreement in its draft stage.

General information on the purpose of a tenancy agreement and what is commonly included can be found in the A.R.I. publication "Allotments: a plot holder's guide" which is available on line or in hard copy. (We are currently arranging to send a set of A.R.I. publications to each of our Site Associations and to provide links on our website).

For clarification, each allotment association also has rules and regulations for its own site, usually to ensure day-to-day harmony on the site. These rules shall continue to apply in addition to, and do not replace, the tenancy agreement.

Financial Procedures

We shall incorporate a review of our financial procedures – particularly, the way we collect annual rental payments – as a part of updating the tenancy agreement.

Handling General Enquiries

We have also recognised the need to increase administrative support for the allotments service. The nature of the allotments post is such that the officer requires to be out on sites for much of the working week. Additional office-based support will improve the service by enabling general telephone and e-mail enquiries to be dealt with promptly, freeing up the officer's time for other issues.

5.1.3 Expanding the services we offer:

We will:

- **Investigate demand for a plot preparation service**
- **Provide more information and training on allotment gardening**
- **Increase support for new plot holders**
- **Improve facilities for people with special needs**
- **Encourage private sites**

Within our draft Strategy, we proposed various ways in which we might increase the support we offer to allotment gardeners on our sites and, potentially, on independent sites also.

Plot Preparation Service

We suggested offering a plot preparation service, where a dedicated 'allotments squad' would, for a fee, carry out the heavy work of preparing a plot at the start of the growing season or clearing a neglected plot, on behalf of the plot holder.

We envisaged that the service would allow less able plot holders to keep their plot for longer and would prevent people who were temporarily unable to tend their plot (for example, due to illness, bereavement or other exceptional circumstances) from having to give it up. In turn, it would help to prevent untended plots from becoming overgrown eyesores and spreading weeds.

The proposal met with qualified support from the key stakeholder consultation. Some who responded on this issue were firmly against offering the service for fear of encouraging 'lazy and uncommitted' gardeners to take on a plot. On many sites, fellow plot holders already volunteer to help others maintain their plots in times of difficulty. Other respondents believed that such a service would be beneficial in certain circumstances and might encourage people to take on plots in less cared for sites, alleviating pressure on those sites with the greatest demand.

Based on this feedback, we have concluded that, before deciding whether to introduce a plot preparation service, we must first establish whether demand for the service on both Council and independent sites, and the costs of providing it, would justify its implementation.

There may be demand from initiatives outwith the current allotment provision. As detailed more fully in key commitment 5.4.5, a number of projects are being developed to create allotments and other opportunities for growing / gardening, for example, in the grounds of churches and schools.

People involved in setting up these projects have flagged up their need for practical assistance, particularly for help with the heavy work of clearing and preparing the ground. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of the organisations who would have helped out in the past now have such extensive waiting lists that they can no longer take on new projects.

That could present opportunities for extending the remit of a dedicated allotment squad. The service may be provided by the Council, perhaps involving apprentices, or could involve social enterprise companies, organisations such as Restorative Justice, or a combination of the same. We will investigate the demand for such a service and who could best provide it.

Information and Training on Allotment Gardening

Feedback on the draft consultation strategy supports our intention to produce a 'Good Practice Guide for Allotment Gardeners', available for all plot holders on Council and independent sites. The aim of the guide will be to improve gardening skills and raise standards of cultivation on allotments.

We will include topics such as:

- safety on site
- being a good neighbour
- advice on plot cultivation, biodiversity and environmental sustainability
- advice on recycling and waste management
- a brief explanation of the respective roles of the Council, Allotments Associations and GAF
- general 'do's and don'ts' of site management rules and regulations
- contacts and references for further information

For Council sites, this will support the updated Tenancy Agreement by setting out plot holders responsibilities on sites.

We will include advice on good practice from the A.R.I. in the Guide. We will also invite G.A.F., allotment associations and individual plot holders to contribute, as well as our own Council colleagues specialising in areas such as horticulture and biodiversity.

As we discuss in key commitment 5.3.2, the Guide, along with the updated Tenancy Agreement, should also support allotment associations in managing their sites.

We will continue to support G.A.F.'s programme of workshops on various aspects of cultivation, cooking and site management. We will also increase our links with the A.R.I. and horticultural colleges / courses.

Support for New Plot Holders

Our proposal to work with G.A.F. and the allotment associations to increase support for new plot holders met with widespread approval.

We aim to reduce the number of allotment gardeners giving up their plot during the first year [estimated in Edinburgh at 50%].

Many sites already offer help in various ways, and we see our role as supporting G.A.F. (or a committee of volunteers set up for this task) to share best practice and co-ordinate activities. We believe that all allotment associations should have procedures in place to look after their new members.

Amongst the initiatives suggested are:

- providing small starter plots (or even raised beds) for new gardeners
- setting up demonstration plots
- arranging guided tours of allotment sites in Glasgow and other cities

- providing details of award winning plots and arranging visits to them
- holding gardening workshops
- setting up 'buddy' schemes, whereby new plot holders would be assigned a 'mentor' on site
- arranging a welcome event at a central location for all new plot holders
- arranging social events on allotment sites to introduce new plot holders

We will liaise with G.A.F. and the allotment associations to determine the most effective ways of supporting new plot holders and ensure measures are in place on all sites.

Improved access to our allotment sites for people with special needs

We are committed to ensuring that our allotment sites are accessible for people with special needs, wherever possible.

The Scottish Government Policy SPP11 states that "statutory equal opportunities obligations should be taken into account in planning for open space and physical activity, including the duties under the Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005 to promote disability equality".

Accordingly, in planning and implementing improvements to our allotment sites, we shall include provision for the special needs of existing and potential plot holders wherever possible. Modifications such as variable height beds and pathways through plots, as well as the provision of handrails, shelter, toilets and vehicular access may be appropriate, as well as adaptations to printed material (such as correspondence and site notices) to formats suitable for the partially sighted.

We plan to develop closer links with Trellis, an organisation which supports, promotes and develops the use of horticulture to improve health, well-being and life opportunities in Scotland. Trellis currently works with over 130 gardening projects and its network helps projects to support each other through the sharing of expertise, good practice and resources.

We would like to involve allotment associations from Glasgow's independent sites in our discussions with Trellis.

To date, solutions for allotment gardeners with special needs have generally been tailored to meet individual requirements.

Innovative stakeholder feedback has encouraged us to take a broader approach to this issue, by suggesting that in future:

- we prioritise specific sites or plots which are easily accessible and close to

necessary amenities and facilities

- we make some adaptations for people with special needs as a matter of course whenever new sites are being designed
- we assist hospitals and institutions wishing to create allotments within their grounds for therapeutic purposes
- we encourage health boards, social work organisations and community health and care partnerships to design, build and operate new allotment sites specifically for their clients with special needs, thereby concentrating resources in the most effective way for particular client groups.

We also bring up these issues under our Key Commitments 4 and 5 which cover increasing the number of allotments and social inclusion respectively.

Keeping Livestock

Allotment legislation does not prohibit the keeping of livestock, provided that the plot is mainly used for growing vegetables and fruit. However, allotment authorities can impose conditions and restrictions (and prohibitions) as they see fit. Allotment legislation specifically allows for the keeping of poultry (but not cockerels) and rabbits.

Currently, we do not permit livestock to be kept on our allotment sites.

However, we are prepared to review this, should demand be identified. Any requests should be made to our Allotments Officer. Applications will be considered on an individual basis. Any permissions granted would be subject to agreement by the allotment site association, and will be subject to strict terms and conditions regarding issues of public health; nuisance; animal welfare, and animal husbandry.

We refer to bee keeping on our sites under key commitment 5.6.1: 'Promoting Biodiversity'.

The initiatives we have outlined to improve our allotment sites will be included within the Action Plan to accompany the Strategy

We will continue to consult with key stakeholders throughout the process of upgrading allotment sites, and our allotment service, to ensure that key commitment 1 is being achieved. Section 6 of our strategy on 'Monitoring and Reviewing' gives more information.

Key Commitment Two:

SOURCE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR ALLOTMENTS

We acknowledge that this commitment is crucial to our ability to deliver the strategy. Funding is required both for short-term one-off projects, and for the long term sustainability of the allotments service.

We acknowledge the need to take a broad approach to securing sustainable funding, and have identified our key actions as follows:

We will:

- **Prioritise sourcing funding, with a designated officer within Land and Environmental Services**
- **Set up a strategic mentoring group ('Allotment Champions') to monitor and progress the strategy, with particular emphasis on sourcing sustainable funding**
- **Secure funding (both capital and revenue) for allotments from Council and other sources**
- **Support fundraising initiatives by GAF and Allotment Associations**
- **Review future plot rental**
- **Review opportunities for cost saving**
- **Seek to facilitate income generation on allotment sites**
- **Investigate opportunities for sponsorship & support in kind**
- **Investigate in-kind and reciprocal funding opportunities through partnership working**

5.2.1 Prioritise sourcing funding

Our proposal to designate responsibility for sourcing funding for allotments to a delegated officer with specialised knowledge and experience met with widespread approval. That expertise will also directly benefit G.A.F. and the allotment associations, by providing support for their fundraising initiatives, thereby helping their development. More information is given in the section below on direct fundraising by G.A.F. and allotment associations.

We intend that the officer will investigate further opportunities for funding through working in partnership with some of the community groups and social enterprise projects who are plot holders on our sites.

The funding remit will be designated at the earliest opportunity, to initiate and sustain momentum in progressing this key commitment.

In addition to this, we propose to set up a mentoring group to monitor and advise on the strategy's development and implementation, with particular emphasis on sustainable funding. We envisage the group as comprising individuals from within the Council and from external organisations who have the necessary expertise and resources to help progress the strategy – 'Allotment Champions'.

5.2.2 Secure funding for allotments from the Council and other sources

Improving and increasing allotment provision will be capital intensive.

We acknowledge the need for long-term funding, and not a reliance on grants on a 'year on year' basis.

We must ensure that all sources of funding available to and by way of the Council are explored.

It is not considered to be an option that the Council generates capital for reinvestment by selling off unused allotment land, as has perhaps happened in other authorities.

In the words of one respondent to the draft strategy, "The Council and government are committed to providing green space for the health and wellbeing of the people of Glasgow and [allotments] should be an integral part of council/government funding."

We shall continue to advocate for allotments, to demonstrate allotments' contribution to Council objectives, to secure additional capital funding from the Council and influence policies which support and prioritise allotments (such as the Single Outcome Agreements, described in section 2.2).

We will attempt to secure an increase in revenue budget over the five years of the strategy (our target is for an additional £50,000 in revenue budget per year for 5 years) and we shall be looking for a significant contribution from Council sources to meet the £300,000 needed to bring the standard of our sites up to an acceptable level. Any shortfall will be sought from external sources.

We are mindful of the benefits of 'spend to save' projects, where improving the infrastructure may help to lower ongoing maintenance costs.

We intend to take full advantage of funding opportunities from Glasgow's five

new Community Planning Partnership Areas, which aim to promote inclusiveness within key policies headed 'Healthy Glasgow', 'Learning Glasgow', 'Safe Glasgow', 'Vibrant Glasgow' and 'Working Glasgow'.

We shall also work with Glasgow City Council's Development and Regeneration Services with a view to accessing sustainable funding for allotment sites through Policy Res 3 [Res 3 funding is monies allocated for facilities to benefit the local community within an area of development or re-development] and other developer contributions (through section 75 agreements).

This could create additional allotment provision within new developments or through exchanges of land [see Key Commitment 4: Increasing Allotments in Glasgow for more details]. It has been suggested that allotments be classified and promoted as 'leisure gardens' to facilitate accessing this funding. Allotment gardening is clearly a leisure activity, and meets leisure objectives of using recreational activity to improve health and promote community development.

In our draft strategy, we outlined the need for detailed investigation into funding opportunities afforded by the National Lottery, Scottish Natural Heritage and other bodies such as Trusts and Charitable Foundations.

To maximise potential sources of funding, and opportunities for partnership working, we see the need to link allotments with a broader range of strategies, such as health and well being; climate change / reducing carbon emissions; food production; urban greenspace; wildlife corridors; urban biodiversity; and opportunities for education / engagement and social inclusion.

We are aware of research which links potential savings in healthcare with allotments, and we would like to investigate this through our partnership links with the N.H.S.

We will seek to encourage organisations who participate in carbon compensation schemes to allocate funding for improving and enhancing allotments in their locality. We are also aware of the potential for allotments and community gardens to apply directly for funding from the Climate Challenge Fund, which supports community-led efforts to make serious carbon reductions across Scotland.

The potential for funding from external agencies is addressed within Key Commitment 5.4.5, which discusses the potential to increase allotment provision through partnership working.

5.2.3 Fund-raising by G.A.F. and Allotment Associations

Partnership working between all allotment stakeholders will be key to accessing funding from within and outwith the Council. It is vital that G.A.F., the allotment associations and other key stakeholders commit fully to participating in the fund raising process.

Potential sources of funding which preclude direct application by local authorities may be accessible to G.A.F., individual allotment associations and projects or client groups on allotment sites.

Allotment associations have made successful applications for funding from charitable foundations, and local Area Committees, (the latter with matched support in funds or in kind from LES). This expertise should be shared with other associations, through G.A.F.

The aim for the end of the five year period of this strategy is not only that sufficient funding has been obtained to achieve the objectives of the strategy, but also that, through partnership working, a shared pool of knowledge and expertise in sourcing funding has been built up within all allotment sites in Glasgow.

We are mindful of the concerns raised from the consultation of "undue burden" being placed on allotment associations to raise their own funds, since all members are volunteers. We understand that it is important for us to offer the necessary support to facilitate this. We will continue to support allotment associations and client groups with funding bids.

A designated LES officer will be a particular asset in identifying potential sources of grant funding for allotments; providing a list of common basic requirements for funding so that they are in place before applications are made; co-ordinating applications and assisting allotment associations and G.A.F. to complete application forms.

We would encourage G.A.F. to take an active involvement in fund-raising in its own right, as well as in aiding and co-ordinating grant applications by allotment associations. The opportunity to have access to funds through G.A.F. might encourage membership of the Forum.

5.2.4 Review future plot rental

Details of current plot rental, and our commitments for the next three years, appear under Section 2.6: Current Funding Resources.

As stated, for each of the next three years (2009, 2010 and 2011), we have limited rent increases to £1 per year for a full plot and 50p for a half plot.

Concession rates will not be increased for 2009 and are yet to be set for 2010 and 2011.

To promote social inclusion and access to healthy foods for people on low incomes and benefits, we shall continue to offer concessions throughout the five year period of this strategy.

In our draft strategy, we considered setting future rents based on actual plot size. However, our own investigations, and feedback to the consultation strategy, indicate that this would be an administrative burden, adding to costs, not revenue. Therefore, we do not intend to progress this.

Some, though not all, respondents to the draft strategy believe there is scope for increasing annual plot rental charges and still keeping allotments affordable to people living on an average salary.

However, we were also reminded of the expenses incurred in working a plot – for seeds, plants, tools, fertiliser, netting, canes, maintenance of structures etc - particularly in the first year.

In the years before concessions were introduced, any attempt to raise rental charges beyond the rate of inflation met with considerable resistance from some long-standing plot holders. However, it may prove that, as facilities on sites improve and people's perception of 'value for money' increases, resistance to future rent rises may lessen. In the words of one respondent, "If people could see that the Council is investing in sites, this would allow for support for increases in the yearly rental".

As we outline in key commitment 4, in time other opportunities for gardening and growing will come about through new initiatives proposed for community gardens and orchards. These should provide opportunities for growing at little or no cost.

Currently, we are comparing plot rental charges in different parts of the U.K. by a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities, through the Association of Public Sector Excellence (A.P.S.E.)

Informed decisions on plot rental for the years 2012 and 2013 can only be made nearer the time, in accordance with progress on the strategy and prevailing economic and social conditions.

5.2.5 Review opportunities for cost savings

This is an ongoing commitment as part of the Council's Best Value Review process.

We shall look at opportunities to reduce costs on allotment sites through partnership working. To save on L.E.S. labour costs, it has been suggested that we explore possible sources of 'in-kind' labour, such as community service orders or plans to make benefits dependent on 'volunteer' work. As we highlighted within key commitment 1, some projects on allotment sites, such as creating wildlife gardens, have been carried out through the Restorative Justice Service and we hope to expand these types of initiatives.

Engaging with volunteers is a key Council commitment and we refer to volunteer working on allotment sites again under key commitment 5.4.3, as a means of getting people off waiting lists and actively involved in allotment gardening.

Within our key commitment 5.6.3 on protecting the environment and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill, we outline our commitment to reduce the levels of skip hire and waste going to landfill on our allotment sites. An indication of costs for these were given in section 3.2 on current financial resources.

We plan to monitor water consumption on our sites. We are confident that current procedures to deal with obvious water leakage on our sites are adequate. However, underground pipe bursts can be more difficult to detect, and may only become evident from increased water bills.

We plan to further investigate leak detection systems.

We also propose to take advantage of funding available to investigate the viability of creating bore holes on allotment sites and the potential savings arising from that.

5.2.6 Facilitate income generation

To help generate funding, support and self-sufficiency for allotments, several respondents to the draft strategy put forward the need to change the legislation which currently prohibits the sale of produce from allotments, albeit with safeguards to prevent misuse and commercial exploitation.

Added value would come from the environmental benefits in selling more local and organic food. Sales at Open Days or from permanent facilities on sites would also provide opportunities for the promotion of allotments, 'growing your own' and healthy eating.

A representative from one of Glasgow's Food Initiatives with an allotment plot emphasised the particular benefits a change in legislation would have for them. At present, Food Initiatives can offer volunteers opportunities to grow fruit and vegetables on allotments, and sell affordable fruit and vegetables. Being allowed to sell the food they grow (from facilities on allotment sites or at local farmers' markets) would complete the cycle from growing to selling. It would also add to the learning opportunities for those involved, through enterprise skills, marketing

and dealing with the public.

Linking to this is a further proposal that new allotment provision could be designed with market gardens adjacent and associated with the sites, that would allow for the sale and trading of gardening and farm products. The respondent proposes adopting a not for profit system, whereby anything over operating costs becomes funding for allotments generally or for the adjacent allotment. Otherwise, rent or rate charges collected from the organisation or company running the market garden could be used as budget funding.

Over the course of this strategy period, we shall seek to work in partnership with S.A.G.S. and other local authorities, through COSLA, and with the Council's Licensing Section, to assess the law and policy governing the sale of food and other products from allotments by the plot holders and associate members of allotments.

5.2.7 Investigate opportunities for sponsorship or support in kind

We received several ideas in response to the draft strategy. These include sponsorship by groups or partners who could provide charitable contributions direct to an allotment association in return for fruit, vegetables and flowers from the site.

Another suggestion was to create and promote an 'Adopt An Allotment' scheme, similar to the adopt a highway scheme in the United States. In effect, a company would adopt a relationship with an allotment site through annual contribution and ongoing support. Depending on the business, they could provide building / gardening materials. In return, sponsors would be acknowledged by a plaque at each site and a certificate for display in the sponsor's premises. There may be joint promotional opportunities and could be awards or events to acknowledge best practices.

It is our view that proposals from G.A.F., allotment associations and potential sponsors should be welcomed. Every initiative would have to be considered and funding offers explored on merit and, for Council sites, jointly agreed between the Council and the allotment association concerned.

5.2.8 Investigate in-kind and reciprocal funding opportunities through partnership working

We acknowledge that there is a wide and varied community of organisations currently and potentially involved in the provision of growing spaces and therapeutic horticulture throughout Glasgow, Scotland and the UK.

We also acknowledge that external funding opportunities may be more freely

available to organisations outwith the Council.

We therefore commit to working with a variety of organisations like the NHS, Community Health Partnerships, churches, charities and private landowners to encourage the provision of allotments for example in hospital or church grounds.

There is potential to explore concepts like GP referrals to allotments and green gyms with GPs and community health partnerships; creating allotments in hospital grounds to link with therapeutic and rehabilitation programmes, including food production and preparation.

Many organisations have ground which could be used for allotments, for example, churches and The National Trust in England has recently announced that it is releasing land specifically for allotments on some of its sites.

We will try and facilitate projects which link ground with groups who may wish to create growing space, and may be in a position to apply for funding in areas the Council cannot.

Key Commitment Three:

FORM PARTNERSHIPS TO BENEFIT ALLOTMENTS

Our vision is that, by the end of the five year period of this allotments strategy, we will have helped to foster a strong sense of community amongst allotment gardeners in Glasgow, with the Allotments Forum, allotment associations and plot holders working in partnership for the benefit of all allotment sites in the city.

In recent years, the appointment of a dedicated officer for allotments has enabled us to strengthen our working relationships with the key stakeholders in allotments, including the independent sites.

As well as the allotments forum, allotment associations and plot holders, we now work with a variety of voluntary and public sector services, whose clients are enjoying the many benefit allotments have to offer, often for the first time. Details are given within key commitment 5.

As our Executive Director outlined in his introduction, we are committed to developing existing and new working partnerships in order to deliver this strategy.

5.3.1 The Glasgow Allotments Forum (G.A.F.)

We will:

- **Encourage all Glasgow's allotment associations to become members of the Glasgow Allotments Forum (G.A.F.)**
- **Support G.A.F. in expanding and clarifying its remit**
- **Support G.A.F. and allotment association committees by providing information, training and on-going support**

G.A.F. was set up some six years ago as a Forum for representatives from Glasgow's allotment sites, both Council and independent, to meet and discuss allotments issues.

G.A.F. advocates for allotments with local government, and works to promote the benefits of allotments to the wider community and the media. In addition, it organises gardening workshops for its members and publicity displays at other events and conferences.

The Forum maintains links with the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (S.A.G.S.) and it is our view that G.A.F.'s membership of S.A.G.S. strengthens allotments in Glasgow. G.A.F. also has links with the A.R.I. and its mentor for central Scotland.

G.A.F. meetings are held every two months throughout the year. Most meetings are attended by our allotments officer, who provides progress reports and answers enquiries.

Though the Forum is increasingly well supported (18 of the city's 24 sites have been represented at least at one meeting this year), not all the city's allotment associations have elected to join or attend regularly. We believe that it would be beneficial for all allotment sites to be represented and to have a voice in shaping G.A.F.'s future direction. We will encourage all allotment associations to become active members of G.A.F.

G.A.F. has expressed a willingness to investigate what other functions it could take on to encourage associations to join. We propose to assist by contacting all of the Council site associations who do not attend, to identify barriers to membership and possible incentives to join.

We also see opportunities for G.A.F.'s role to be expanded and clarified. Throughout the strategy, we highlight where we see opportunities for involvement by G.A.F. In particular, we believe there is great potential for representatives from G.A.F. to take on a mentoring role with new and potential allotment providers and their plot holders, perhaps 'twinning' new sites with well established ones.

We also believe G.A.F.'s assistance could be beneficial in mediating in disputes on sites – see below in 'site management by allotment associations'.

We see G.A.F.'s role as working with the Council but operating independently of it, perhaps along similar lines to the 'Friends Of' groups now established for many of Glasgow's parks.

We believe that G.A.F. will benefit from having its own website (www.glasgowallotmentsforum.org.uk), with for example discussion forums, progress updates and advice open to all of Glasgow's plot holders and the wider community.

We fully commit to supporting G.A.F. in further developing its roles and responsibilities to their full potential.

5.3.2 Allotment Associations

We will:

- **Clarify requirements regarding allotment association constitutions, liabilities on sites and public liability insurance with Glasgow City Council Legal Services**
- **Secure support for allotment associations requiring assistance to set up new association constitutions**
- **Develop a good practice guide to site management for Allotment Associations**
- **Review procedures for investigating and mediating in disputes on allotment sites**
- **Support allotment association committees by providing information, training and on-going support on allotment site management**

The majority of allotment sites in Glasgow have an allotment association, run by a committee of plot holders. The committees are responsible for issuing annual missives, managing waiting lists, and maintaining any communal facilities such as toilets and site huts. Most allotment associations are formally constituted bodies with mandatory association membership for plot holders, and Management Rules and Regulations agreed for each site. Many associations are pro-active in engaging with their local communities and in applying for funding to improve their sites.

From our research for this strategy, we believe that Glasgow is ahead of many cities in the U.K. in the set-up and professionalism of its allotment associations and a great deal is owed to the many individuals who have dedicated their time and effort over the years to improve their allotment sites.

In our draft strategy, we proposed waiving plot rental fees for allotment association secretaries in recognition of their contribution to maintaining waiting lists and acting as the main point of contact for new and potential plot holders. However, some respondents to the consultation strongly believed this was inappropriate and, accordingly, because of their strength of feeling, we shall not implement this proposal.

Site Management by Allotment Associations

As landlord and land owner, it is our responsibility to ensure that our allotment sites are managed properly and fairly.

Constitutions / Public Liability Insurance

We shall continue to encourage, and in future may require, all allotment associations on our sites to be legally constituted bodies. We believe this to be good practice and, furthermore, it is almost always a requirement when applying for funding and public liability insurance (as we refer in key commitment 1: health and safety also). As requested by respondents to the draft strategy, we will obtain clarification from the Council's Legal Services with regard to allotment association constitution and relative liabilities in the event of a claim.

We understand that some allotment associations may require assistance to deal with any legal aspects in setting up new association constitutions and we shall seek to secure support for them through G.A.F., in the first instance, and possibly other allotments organisations such as S.A.G.S. and the A.R.I.

The A.R.I. stresses the common duty of care on anyone involved in allotment management to ensure their allotment site(s) is run in as safe and appropriate manner as possible.

It is our intention to develop a 'Good Practice Guide for Allotment Site Management' for Allotment Associations, in consultation with G.A.F., allotment association committees and plot holders. The Guide would incorporate much of the advice on good practice from the A.R.I. and would aim to ensure best practice and continuity of standards of management across all our sites.

Complaints against allotment association committee members

Several respondents to our draft strategy complained of discrimination and bullying by allotment association committee members on sites. Comments alleged that some sites were run as "fiefdoms". It is our responsibility to ensure that this does not occur on any of our sites.

We would emphasise that every plot holder on Council sites has the right to contact our Allotments Officer directly and we would encourage any such incidents to be reported.

It is our intention to ensure that Council policy on issues such as health and safety, bullying and harassment, equality and discrimination are laid out within the Site Management Guide and adhered to by allotment associations. If necessary, we will also provide training on these issues.

We have a duty of care to all tenants on our sites. Therefore, we shall review the current practices for investigating allegations of wrong-doing by committee members to ensure that procedures are sufficiently robust.

Allotment site rules and regulations

Where this procedure is not already in place, we plan to ensure that every plot holder is provided with a copy of their Site Rules and Regulations and asked to sign their agreement to them.

Our 'Good Practice Guide for Allotment Gardeners' (outlined in Key Commitment One) which will clearly set out plot holders' responsibilities on site, and our updated Tenancy Agreement, with its code of conduct for plot holders, are intended to support allotment associations to enforce their site rules and regulations, reduce the number of disputes, and help to ensure harmony and co-operation on sites.

Also, we believe it is reasonable for all allotment associations to levy a small fee on their members to cover association expenses.

Supporting Allotment Association Committees with disputes on site

Human nature is such that inter-personal disputes do arise on sites between plot holders. These situations can be difficult and stressful to resolve, and can lead to tensions on the site as a whole (we refer to this also under site security in key commitment 1).

On Council owned sites, it is customary for the allotment association committee to attempt to resolve the issue, by taking action in accordance with the site rules and regulations. Should a plot holder wish to appeal against a committee's decision, the LES Allotments Officer will rule on the outcome.

We plan to review the appeals procedure, and are proposing to involve G.A.F. in mediation on our sites. We believe there may be merit in setting up appeals committees, comprising our allotments officer and two representatives from G.A.F., one each from an independent and another Council site. Procedures would be documented and made available to all allotment associations.

However, we take on board feedback from the draft strategy which asks us to clarify that, whilst we would value their assistance in disputes, G.A.F. is not likely to ever become an executive agency capable of enforcing agreements. Therefore, any final say on breaches of tenancy on Council owned sites could be summarily decided upon by LES.

Where necessary, we will seek advice and support from the Community Relations Unit within Glasgow City Council. The Unit tackles anti-social behaviour, with powers granted under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, and supports a range of city-wide anti-social behaviour initiatives.

Training and support for allotment association committees

We support the request for coach or mentor support for office bearers, which came from the draft strategy consultation. We will liaise with allotment association committees to find out what they think would be most useful, and shall investigate the most appropriate training and support. This may come from the Council; an organisation such as the Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector; a parks 'Friends Of' group; and/or the A.R.I. or S.A.G.S.

As a means of promoting community development and empowerment, we believe it is important that we extend opportunities for training to people who might consider holding office, to encourage their future participation.

Equally, we welcome the suggestion from one community group in response to draft strategy, who outline the potential for allotment associations and community groups to share their various training opportunities.

Through G.A.F., we hope to extend training opportunities to independent sites, if requested, and also to the community groups involved on allotment sites, as a way of developing all site associations and improving allotment site management.

5.3.3 Ongoing communication with all our tenants

We will:

- **Increase direct communication with our tenants**

The success of the strategy depends upon allotment stakeholders supporting it and working in partnership to deliver it.

In the past, there was little direct communication between the Council and the vast majority of the tenants on our sites. Equally, some plot holders have little interaction with their site associations.

We appreciate that, for many, the solitary nature of allotment gardening adds to its appeal. However, we want to ensure that information about the "bigger picture" for allotment gardening in Glasgow is available to everyone.

We plan to update and expand our website, and provide links to other useful sites. We will also look to facilitate setting up websites by individual associations through training workshops and/or practical support, and links to our own allotments website.

In addition, since a sizeable proportion of returns to the consultation came in hard copy, we will produce regular newsletters to keep our tenants up to date with developments on the allotments strategy, and on other sites. Periodically, we will include questionnaires with the newsletters to help us get feedback on our progress, or on new initiatives.

We will also ensure that every site has a notice board.

Amongst our proposals in the draft strategy was to host an annual prize-giving / social event. The limited response to this idea has led us to decide that, before committing to this proposal, we will have further discussions with allotment associations and G.A.F. to look at any alternative suggestions they may have. It may be more appropriate to strengthen links with allotment associations through an annual conference.

5.3.4 Future developments

We will:

- **Investigate the viability of and demand for greater self-management on allotment sites**
- **Monitor the progression of Allotments Trusts within other UK local authorities and keep key stakeholders informed**

As the development of allotment sites, G.A.F. and the allotments associations' progress, it may be appropriate for us to devolve additional aspects of site management to allotment associations who have a willingness and an ability to do so. This could include responsibility for administration, plot letting, rent collection and/or site works being passed in whole or in part to the allotment association, with appropriate training and ongoing support provided by LES. There would be a requirement for such a move to tie in with the long-term vision and direction for allotments in Glasgow at such a time.

Similarly, it may be appropriate to devolve certain aspects of managing and developing allotments in Glasgow to G.A.F.

With regard to the long-term development of allotments, other UK local authorities are looking into the feasibility of setting up Trusts to manage their allotment estates. This may be an option worthy of consideration by Glasgow City Council and other key stakeholders at some stage in the future.

In order to deliver Key Commitment Three, we commit to taking an active role in supporting the ongoing development of G.A.F. and each allotment association. Working in partnership can ensure that this objective is fulfilled for the benefit of us all.

5.3.5 Forming partnerships to benefit allotments

We recognise that within the Council, departments other than Land and Environmental Services have a responsibility and input to green space development. We will work with DRS to establish how allotments and community gardens can be promoted within new developments through the planning process. We will establish, along with DRS, how other growing spaces like transitional allotments and market gardens can be implemented.

We will also build relationships with the NHS, Community Planning Partnerships, charities and other community networks to bring additional value to existing and proposed allotments.

Key Commitment Four:

INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF ALLOTMENTS

Key commitment 4 within our draft strategy generated one of the highest responses to the consultation, with all respondents strongly supportive of the aim to create more allotments in the city.

Within our final strategy, we re-state our commitment to protect existing allotment sites and, where possible, increase allotment provision in the city.

There is, as yet, no national directive for a level of allotment provision per head of population. However, as allotments are now classed as part of green space provision (Scottish Government Planning Policy SPP11 refers), targets may be introduced in future.

Targets set by Glasgow's City Plan will influence LES' plans for future allotment provision. Current proposals within the draft City Plan 2 reflect existing allotment provision, and are now subject to review.

5.4.1 CURRENT DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

In general, demand for allotments in Glasgow tends to be highest in areas where people are living in tenements and high-rise accommodation. More than half of the total waiting list for LES' allotments is held by Beechwood and Kelvinside Allotment Associations, both in the west end of the city. A respondent to the draft strategy told us of someone who had been seven years on a waiting list, only to be advised that, at the current rate of turnover of plots, they may have a further twenty years to wait for an allotment on that site.

Within this key commitment, we look at short-term measures to get people off waiting lists and on to an allotment, and we identify a variety of means by which we shall work to increase allotment provision in the city.

5.4.2 MANAGING WAITING LISTS

We will:

- **Discuss prioritising allotment applicants with G.A.F. and allotment associations**

- **Agree standardised procedures for managing waiting lists, through discussion with G.A.F. and allotment associations**

We will continue our current policy to restrict plot applications for our sites to people living within the city boundary. (Some independent sites do accept people from outwith the Glasgow city boundary). For clarity, however, we do not propose to terminate the tenancy of any established plot holder currently living outwith the city boundary.

To reduce waiting times and ensure that procedures for allocating allotments are as fair and transparent as possible, our draft strategy proposed reviewing criteria for eligibility for our allotment sites, and possibly prioritising applicants. Some respondents to the consultation suggested creating a points system which would prioritise people on benefits, social referrals, pensioners and people living in tenements or flats. Others believed that any form of means testing was unfair, and that it would be inappropriate to expect allotment associations to administer any such system.

We have reached the conclusion that the administration and enforcement of a points system, and the independent verification required for it, would be overly burdensome.

We believe a compromise can be achieved, which would simply prioritise applicants who do not have a garden of their own over those who do. Allotment associations could keep a priority list for the former, and a secondary list for the latter, based solely on the information provided by the applicant.

We plan to take this to G.A.F. and the allotment associations for their feedback, and write the agreed outcomes into the site management guide being produced for allotment associations.

Respondents to the draft strategy flagged up some concerns over fairness and transparency with current waiting list procedures on some sites. We will include this in our discussions with G.A.F. and our allotment site associations.

5.4.3 EXPANDING CAPACITY ON OUR CURRENT SITES

We will:

- **Lead discussions with GAF and Allotment Associations on prioritising access to plots and managing waiting lists for Council sites.**

- **Encourage Allotment Associations to develop plot sharing & plot division initiatives as appropriate for their sites & members**
- **Introduce lesser charges for raised beds and starter plots**
- **Introduce a 'Plot Exchange' scheme**
- **Promote and progress the use of volunteer helpers on allotment sites**
- **Carry out initial enquiries into voluntary community care schemes matching prospective gardeners with garden owners requiring assistance**

Plot division and plot sharing

In our draft strategy, we proposed options to help move people off waiting lists and onto allotment sites. Amongst these, we looked at dividing plots and sharing plots.

Respondents raised concerns over forced or automatic plot division and plot sharing. Otherwise, opinion was evenly divided. Those in favour highlighted the benefits particularly for ageing plot holders and people with special needs, to make it easier for them to tend their plots and keep them for longer.

They also pointed out the advantages for new and inexperienced allotment gardeners, who often underestimate the time and effort required to tend a full sized plot (and the main reason for an estimated 50% of plots being given up in the first year in many places). By offering half plots or smaller 'starter' plots, the drop out rate was found to decrease. In key commitment 1, we list various measures we will introduce to provide more support for new plot holders.

Some respondents caution against plot division as, if a plot is too small, it can lead to difficulties with crop rotation and less productive soil. Others prefer to keep to the traditional ethos of allotment gardening, with plots big enough to provide for a family. They point out that, in practice, plots are often already shared by partners, friends and/or family members, even though only one name may appear on the missive.

Following the consultation, our decision is to encourage allotment associations to develop plot sharing and plot division initiatives, as they think appropriate for their sites, their members, and their waiting lists. We will not insist on these measures being implemented. We already offer terms for half plot rental and propose to introduce lesser charges for raised beds and starter plots.

Some allotment associations have already introduced half plots on part of their sites for new members, or for existing members choosing to downsize. One site has recently introduced the concept of 'taster' plots, quarter sized plots for new gardeners.

Plot Exchange Scheme

Through consultation on our draft strategy, we received a proposal to include a 'Plot Exchange' scheme. This would allow a plot holder whose present plot is not close to their home to exchange plots with another allotment gardener whose plot is more local but who lives a distance away. The scheme could also be useful when plot holders move house, and particularly, for the elderly; people with mobility problems; and people finding transport to their site both difficult and expensive.

We firmly support this initiative, and will work out how best to action it in our discussions with G.A.F. and the allotment associations. It should be straightforward for people to register their interest in plot swapping, and for lists to be co-ordinated by association secretaries, through G.A.F. or through the Council. We hope to encourage independent sites in the city to participate also.

Volunteering on allotment sites

Another option to start people gardening sooner is to encourage volunteer helpers on allotment sites. This idea was shown on the BBC's Gardeners World Live programme, as a long-established and successful practice on an allotment site in the north of England. The programme featured a plot holder who had started years earlier as a novice volunteer, matched with an elderly plot holder. In exchange for some hard labour, he gained valuable advice and a share of the produce. Through time, a firm friendship developed and the two worked jointly to grow an ever extending range of crops.

We believe this idea could work in Glasgow, to be offered as an option to people already on waiting lists (or to publicise outwith waiting lists, depending on uptake). Voluntary work could encompass helping ploholders, 'working parties' for communal and / or wildlife areas on sites (a practice on many independent sites), or assisting with Open Days etc. As well as learning about allotment gardening, volunteers' health and well-being could benefit through outdoor physical activity and socialising with others on site.

Glasgow City Council promotes and encourages volunteering. Volunteering on allotment sites links to our agenda for improving our allotment sites in key commitment 1. We look at other opportunities for volunteer work on allotment sites, through voluntary organisations and community projects, under key

commitment 5.5.3: 'Developing Allotment Sites To Their Full Potential'.

Voluntary garden maintenance

We are grateful for two further suggestions to our draft allotments strategy, although it is not within our remit to implement them directly. One respondent with a garden lying unused offered it for someone else to use. Expanding this, another respondent suggested looking at the feasibility of matching people on allotment waiting lists with local disabled or elderly people who would welcome voluntary assistance with their garden maintenance, thereby promoting sustainable community care. Because of disclosure issues, a project of this type would need to be carefully managed.

We can see that both these options could be mutually beneficial for prospective gardeners and for people needing assistance. Therefore, we undertake to research into similar schemes and potential stakeholders. If progress can be made, we could assist by publicising the scheme on our allotments website and on our allotment sites. On joining the waiting lists for our sites, applicants could be provided with details of the scheme or be invited to register their interest in it.

Until more allotments or other opportunities for gardening can be created, we acknowledge that options for reducing waiting times are limited.

Proposed access to new allotment sites

We consider it appropriate that a percentage of plots in any new sites created are reserved for allocation to people living locally and for social referral projects within the local community. This would contribute significantly to promoting social inclusion on allotment sites, and to sustainability by reducing travelling time. We refer to these issues in more detail within our key commitment 5.

Where possible, when new sites are scheduled to open, we will flag this up to sites with waiting lists in the vicinity, to give people on the lists an early opportunity for a plot or, at least, early entry onto the waiting list for the new site.

5.4.4 LATENT DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

We acknowledge that waiting lists cannot be taken to represent the total demand for allotments in Glasgow. Latent demand is also a factor to be considered. Though we share the view taken by the City of Edinburgh Council, that any formal exercise to quantify latent demand is academic and prohibitively costly at a time when proven demand cannot be met, we commit to working with Council colleagues and the voluntary sector to investigate and identify those areas of the

city, or initiatives, with the greatest need for allotment provision. We refer more specifically to inclusiveness in key commitment 5.5.3.

The need for more allotments has been taken up by the Scottish Government and by Glasgow City Council.

5.4.5 CREATING MORE ALLOTMENTS

We will:

- **Seek to identify and secure land to create or expand allotments**
- **Seek to secure agreement from DRS to adopt as good practice an 'Early Warning Scheme' to advise LES of any planning applications potentially impacting on allotment sites**
- **Promote growing opportunities to city employers as a resource for employees**
- **Encourage private provision of allotments**
- **Develop partnerships to support the provision of allotments**

With current demand double the current plot capacity, there is a proven need to create more allotment sites.

Earlier in our strategy, we outlined the existing obligations we have for the repair and upkeep of our current allotment sites, and the costs of doing so. Faced with a need to provide additional allotment space, and potentially prohibitive costs for acquiring new land, we remain committed to fully exploring the possibilities of developing allotment sites on existing council grounds and common lands.

Through closer partnership working with the Council's Development and Regeneration Services (D.R.S.), we will investigate opportunities to create or expand allotments:

- on brown-field and registered derelict land owned by Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow Housing Association or other housing associations
- on brown-field or registered derelict land in private ownership (where agreements can be reached with the land owners for use of the land for a fixed term)
- within new developments and re-development projects
- through planning agreement, in certain circumstances, by exchanging an

- existing site for a larger or better one, as close to the site of the original as possible
- on land released as a result of the Council's green space audit
 - on land released as a result of the recent initiative to make land managed on behalf of the Scottish Government available for allotments (hospital grounds etc – see below *)
 - on our managed public open space
 - within parkland

*The Scottish Government is seeking to facilitate increased allotment provision through an initiative launched in October 2008, by making unused public land available for allotments. The initiative arose from public consultation on the National Food and Drink Policy, which highlighted the dramatic rise in demand for allotments in recent years. The Scottish Government and other public bodies are to explore how surplus land could be made available to local authorities to increase the number of allotments in Scotland. COSLA will work in partnership with the Scottish Government to consider how best this can be achieved.

Our draft strategy proposal to consider using park land for new or extended allotment sites proved particularly contentious. Though this would not be our preferred course of action, we believe there is merit in retaining it as an option. Any review of parkland or amenity green space for allotments would be subject to local consultation and other environmental considerations. We are mindful of the common good status of park land.

As well as capitalising on opportunities afforded by the City Plan, joint working with D.R.S. will also identify any planning applications potentially impacting on allotment sites, through the adoption of an 'Early Warning Scheme', as advocated by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

Although temporary allotments are not ideal, respondents to the draft strategy have told us that a few growing seasons are preferable to years of sitting on a waiting list. Temporary allotments also help to prevent unused land from becoming neglected, unsightly and unsafe dumping grounds. It is noted that, within objective 4 of the Council Plan, is a reduction in the level of vacant derelict land in the city.

Opportunities may arise also from Glasgow City Council's participation in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership programme, which seeks to ensure that green spaces are central to development plans throughout the city region. The Partnership notes that "the provision of quality green spaces has the potential to revitalise some of our most deprived communities and help people across the region to enjoy more active lifestyles and thus contribute to the raising

of the shockingly low levels of life expectancy in the area".

The Council believes that an integrated approach to development will support Glasgow's growth and urban regeneration, but also protect and enhance our green spaces.

Growing opportunities for city workers

Within our draft strategy, we indicated our intention to encourage major employers in the city to consider providing their workforce with land and opportunities to garden for their recreation and well-being. Produce grown could be used in staff canteens, shared amongst employees or with the local community. The additional greenspace would also make a positive contribution to the environment.

We propose to work with our 'Allotment Champions' strategic group, G.A.F., and other greenspace organisations to promote this idea to local, national and international organisations, including the sizeable tertiary education sector, based in the city.

This proposal follows past practice in Glasgow. Around the turn of the last century, some employers actively promoted allotment gardening as a means of self-improvement for their workers, by providing them with surplus land for cultivation. Amongst them was the North British Railway Company, whose lands in Springburn are still used for allotments today.

Private provision of allotments

To supplement the Council's efforts to meet demand for allotments within the city, we will actively encourage the provision of allotments, and other facilities for communal growing and gardening, on private land.

Our plans to develop a strategy by which to promote the benefits of investment in allotments are outlined within key commitment 5.5.4: 'Advocating for Allotments - Our Promotional Strategy'.

We believe it is right that the Council and G.A.F. provide guidance and support to new and prospective allotment providers.

Since the draft allotments strategy was published, it is heartening to note that a number of new initiatives have begun. These include new allotments on housing association land, and within church grounds. Over 200 churches now participate in the 'Eco-Congregation Scotland' ecumenical programme, which helps congregations understand environmental issues and initiate environmental projects.

The community organisation 'Playbusters', based in the east end of Glasgow, brings together families, children and the wider community through a variety of activities and educational opportunities. Amongst the organisation's objectives are to advance education and promote or provide training in skills of all kinds for east end residents, particularly children, young people and the unemployed.

Playbusters are involved with eco-schools, community clean-ups, and park Friends and Young Friends groups. They currently have a plot on our Westthorn allotment site, and have further plans to create a rooftop garden and a community garden.

Creating allotments through partnership working

Opportunities for partnership working must be fully explored, in order to identify potential stakeholders with land or financial resources whose clients or 'causes' (for example, community sustainability) would gain from the provision of allotments or similar growing opportunities.

Issues such as occupational therapy, recuperation, healthy living and green gym initiatives suggest mutually productive partnerships with the NHS, as well as certain Charitable Trusts and Foundations.

The use of land within schools, hospitals and other institutions may be developed either solely for, or in partnership with, the established users of those sites. The allotment site may be managed by the stakeholder, by the City Council or jointly, as appropriate.

We will take a pro-active approach to identifying potential partners and promoting the benefits of allotments. Details are given within key commitment 5: 'Developing our allotment sites to their full potential'.

Recent economic developments

The final edit of this document is being carried out in March 2009, in an economic recession, when Council Services across the UK are being asked to review their expenditure.

Whilst the implications for funding for allotments from Glasgow City Council are yet unknown, the current economic constraints have created a more positive outcome in terms of land availability.

Glasgow City Council has acknowledged that, although there is a substantial amount of new development activity underway in the city, the current financial downturn will put a number of planned projects on temporary hold.

As developments slow down, there is strong political support for the land to be used as temporary growing spaces. The City Plan 2 also encourages the use of vacant and derelict land as temporary greenspace.

D.R.S. have been tasked with co-ordinating and developing gap sites as temporary growing spaces, to augment opportunities for gardening and growing throughout the city.

The Children's Garden, on a 3/4 acre site within the Botanic Gardens, is already running a small pilot with 'Wee Gardens' and 'Wee Allotments' in barrels, which have proven easy to work in, easy to manage and highly popular. The organisers are considering how to roll this out to children city wide. They also point out that container gardening gets round issues relating to any possible land contamination.

The G.C.V. Green Network Partnership has started work on a project to create sustainable allotments in tenement backcourts.

The role of community gardens & orchards

Community gardens and orchards play an important role in the greenspace and growing space of the city, not only to supplement allotment provision, but also to meet the demands of different target groups.

Communal gardens help to build community cohesion and tackle social exclusion. In key commitment 5.5.3, we cover our aims for inclusiveness on our sites, and the contributions that allotments and other growing spaces, such as communal gardens, can make to community and personal development.

In final summary of this key commitment, we stress the need to augment current allotment provision and further, for stakeholders in allotments, community gardens, moveable greenspace and market gardens to work in partnership in order to fully explore options, co-ordinate activities and maximise opportunities.

Key Commitment Five:

DEVELOPING OUR ALLOTMENT SITES TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

"A key factor in gathering more support for allotments in our communities will be the encouragement given to wider sections of the community to take part. Local authorities need to promote allotment gardening and allotment associations and plot holders need to promote their activities by inviting the community to participate in them". **Growing in the community: a good practice guide for the management of allotments.**

We believe allotment sites should be:

- open and welcoming to all
- part of their local communities
- expanding partnership working

5.5.1 The benefits of allotments

In a submission to the Consultative Draft of the Council's City Plan 2, allotments were described as "open air community centres, which cater for people from all walks of life".

Allotment gardening is a great leveller, bringing people of all ages and a wide variety of social backgrounds together in a common interest. It promotes social interaction and co-operation, through shared knowledge, practical assistance and produce. Many allotment sites have meeting huts and areas for communal activities such as barbeques.

We believe that community engagement and social inclusion are key to allotment sites fulfilling their true potential.

In recent years, thanks to initiatives between the Council, community development agencies, and the efforts of allotment associations, allotment sites in Glasgow have become more outward looking, welcoming school projects and client groups from other agencies such as Social Work Services and the Restorative Justice Service; Community Food Initiatives; and charitable organisations working with the homeless and disadvantaged.

5.5.2 Becoming part of the local community (community engagement)

We will:

- **Encourage allotment associations to be pro-active in developing links with their local communities**

Becoming a key part of local healthy living and community wellbeing activities can help allotment sites attract increased local support, protection and, potentially, funding and other resources.

Encouraging community support and involvement starts with allotment sites being 'good neighbours' and showing consideration for the people living and working alongside them. As we stated in key commitment 1, we plan to work with allotment associations to ensure that the exteriors of our sites are properly maintained, and that nuisance from parking, rubbish collections, bonfires etc is kept to a minimum.

Each plot holder and allotment association has a role to play in building and maintaining good community relations.

Some respondents to the draft strategy point out that allotments, with their locked gates and high fences, are hard to visit if you don't know someone with a plot. To counter this, a number of respondents stressed the importance of having site open days and guided tours, interpretation boards in local venues, and participating in local events, so as to promote allotments, fundraise, and educate the public.

Holmlea Gardens Allotments Association in Glasgow took a pro-active approach by securing a Scottish Community Research Fund (SCARF) grant to consult with their local community. They focussed on making best use of the allotments and on increasing opportunities for people to garden locally, through the development of both the site and the organisation. As a result, the allotments are now seen as an integral part of the community and a valuable community resource.

At Kennyhill Community Allotments in Glasgow, the cabin provided by Social Work Services for the client group on its plot, is to be made available for all plot holders, and for other local groups outwith the allotments, to use as a meeting space.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative's website cites examples of plot holders and allotment associations taking allotment gardening out into the community through, for example, participating in their town's entry for the 'Britain in Bloom' competition.

The A.R.I. also promotes accessibility by encouraging allotment sites to set up their own websites.

One of the main goals of the president of the Soil Association, Monty Don, is to inspire communities to come together and start growing – for health, environmental, social bonding, and economic reasons. He maintains that the biggest challenge is to convince people to "give it a go". Through being open and inclusive, allotment sites and allotment gardeners can help this be achieved by inspiring other people to start growing.

5.5.3 Inclusiveness

We will:

- **Actively promote a policy of inclusiveness on our allotment sites within our promotional strategy for allotments**

Achieving inclusiveness means attracting people of all backgrounds onto allotment sites.

To support inclusiveness, we acknowledge the need to reach those communities or groups within Glasgow who are currently under-represented on allotment sites. They may include people with disabilities or special needs; ethnic minority communities; and refugees and asylum seekers, for whom allotment gardening has proven successful as a therapy and pastime in other parts of the United Kingdom.

We are also aiming to involve members of the community who, for whatever reason, would traditionally be unlikely to view allotment gardening as a potential interest or diversion.

As we stated in our draft consultative strategy, our commitment to promote allotments is given with a clear understanding that, at present, it would be counter-productive to create demand that cannot be fulfilled, and merely adds names to waiting lists for an indeterminate period.

We also wish to clarify that it is not our intention to deviate from the present system of waiting lists in order to accommodate under-represented groups.

Respondents to the consultation strategy point out that special interest groups currently sit on waiting lists until their turn for a plot comes up, and indications are that any change from this 'first come, first served' basis could well lead to ill feeling.

We believe that allotment sites, and the communities around them, prosper through inclusiveness and we plan to address this as part of a co-ordinated campaign to promote the benefits of allotments over the 5 year period of the strategy - details are given later within key commitment 5.5.4, under the heading 'Promoting Allotments'.

Fundamentally, additional demand for allotments serves as an incentive to drive forward the provision of more allotments, and other opportunities for communal gardening and growing.

5.5.4 Fulfilling Potential

The main purpose of an allotment is to provide land for growing produce but increasingly, allotments are being recognised for the contribution they can make to other agenda.

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society is developing a vision for 'Karas' (a community space for cultivation, be it an allotment, community garden or orchard, in Scotland), which incorporates as its key criteria:

- **Health** – diet, exercise, stress reduction, fresh air / nature, sociability, personal development / sense of achievement
- **Enterprise** – training, local producers, farmers' markets, market gardens, links to nurseries and garden centres
- **Eco Schools** – curriculum skills, teamwork
- **Arts / Culture** – gardens, plants, flowers, herbs, sculpture, art, competitions, events, cultural traditions of growing & socialising
- **Biodiversity** – conserving soil, maintaining eco-systems, creating habitats
- **Food** – healthy produce, organic growing, preparing & cooking, community cafes
- **Climate Change** – local leisure, fewer food miles, less packaging, composting
- **Communities** – meeting, sense of belonging, sharing skills, changing attitudes, local food initiatives, sharing surplus produce , community empowerment / capacity building

These key criteria accord with the philosophy of our own strategy.

Facilitating projects that add value to places and organisations should be a key component of any strategy for the development of both communities and local green space.

We are aiming to ensure that our allotment sites provide maximum benefit to as many of Glasgow's citizens as possible, by improving the quality of life of individuals, of the communities around allotment sites, and of the city overall.

Details of our aims and objectives, and of some of the projects already in action on our sites, which link to these criteria, are listed below.

Educational links

We will:

- **Encourage each allotment site in Glasgow to be twinned with a local school (or schools)**
- **Continue to support growing initiatives for schools through the Schools Allotments Working Group**
- **Develop projects which inform and educate the wider public about the benefits of allotment gardening**
- **Facilitate schools and further education establishments to use allotments and community gardens to deliver key parts of the curriculum and prepare students for the workplace environment**

Schools' involvement with allotments supports both the 5-14 national curriculum and the Curriculum for Excellence, as well as the ECO Schools environmental programme (ECO Schools is an international project which encourages schools to take action to protect the environment).

Allotments have proven popular and effective as outdoor classrooms, teaching children not only about the environment and healthy living, but also about life skills such as citizenship, teamwork, project planning, and entrepreneurship (through fundraising for tools and seeds, for example) and in specific subject areas like mathematics, science and geography. In addition, schools' links with local allotment associations and plot holders has the benefit of fostering contact between generations.

Two recent studies into children's eating habits and lifestyles emphasise the need to teach children about where food comes from, and the value of fruit and vegetables, plus fresh air and exercise, for their health and well-being.

A 2008 poll, carried out for the canned and frozen vegetable firm Green Giant, indicates that, overall, only 1 in 5 families ensure their children eat the

recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day. 1 in 20 children have diets totally free of fruit and vegetables. 15% of parents did not think it was their job to teach their children about healthy eating, believing that it was better left to others, including teachers and celebrity chefs.

A study by the University of East Anglia and the Medical Research Council, reported in the journal BMC Public Health, also found that neither parents nor children knew what constituted a healthy diet.

Projects linking schools with allotment sites offer ideal opportunities to educate children - and adults. Food growing can also be linked to cooking within the school curriculum, and research shows that the knowledge and skills gained tend to be shared with other family members, friends and neighbours.

In Glasgow, successful nursery and school projects can be found on our Merrylee, Hamiltonhill and Balornock allotment sites.

Balornock's BUGS project has 2 plots specially modified for pupils from Balornock Primary School and Wellfield Nursery. Since the project's inception in 2004, it has attracted multi-agency support and, crucially, on-going guidance and practical assistance from other plot holders.

Benefits from the BUGS project now extend to a popular 'after school' allotment club, and children also garden at home, sometimes growing in pots and window boxes on the balconies of their high rise flats. Pupils share their produce with the local community, and even share their gardening experiences over the internet with a partner school in Ohio.

We will encourage each allotment site in Glasgow to be twinned with a local school (or schools).

We will also support opportunities for creating and extending gardening within school grounds (an initiative becoming known as "edible playgrounds"). Each school in Glasgow has been provided with a 'Food Growing Pack', launched in the autumn of 2008, providing information, contacts and training options.

Progress has also been made since we wrote our draft strategy, with the setting up of a Schools Allotments Working Group, supported by a number of agencies and organisations, including LES, to create a network for children's allotments and growing initiatives in Glasgow. This group is open to all allotment associations in Glasgow.

Health and well-being links

Glasgow City Council notes that access to good quality green space provides an effective strategy for the promotion of good health, well-being and quality of life for people of all ages.

World Health Organisation research has highlighted the low life expectancy rates for people born into some of the region's most deprived areas.

Recent studies by Glasgow University indicate that the difference in life expectancy between rich and poor shrinks among those who live in an environment with green space and trees.

The implications of the study are that environments that promote good health might be crucial in the fight to reduce health inequalities.

Allotments provide positive health opportunities in a safe environment. Many groups and individuals with allotment plots have health and well-being as their key objective.

Allotments link with healthy lifestyle and active recreation objectives, attracting people from all age groups and crucially, of all physical abilities. It is noteworthy that allotments attract people who may not participate in any other active sport.

In its 'Guidance Notes on Allotments' for local authorities, COSLA notes that, 'while the demographic of allotment gardens will undoubtedly change with the influx of more, younger, health and environmentally conscious people, allotment gardening continues to be dominated by 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 our older people active for longer'.

Horticulture has long been used as a therapy in both physical and mental illness and in rehabilitation. Amongst the key findings of The House of Commons Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs, which met in 1998 to examine the future for allotments, was that "Health authorities should recognise and exploit the therapeutic potential of allotments for people with mental or physical health problems".

Allotment gardening is a means to provide occupational therapy, and to teach work-related and social skills, through hands-on learning and instruction. For some client groups, projects on allotment sites enable members to be assisted and informally assessed outside of an institutional setting, at low cost. Project members have themselves identified improvements in their communication and practical skills, self-confidence, and ability to concentrate, as a result of their participation in allotment gardening.

Linking to other agenda

We will:

- **Promote and develop partnership working to facilitate opportunities for organisations and client groups to benefit from allotment gardening**

Similar outcomes are being replicated within a range of projects now accommodated on Glasgow's allotment sites and community gardens. These provide opportunities for people from a variety of backgrounds - examples include people moving on from homelessness; people tackling addictions; and young offenders making good on restorative justice projects - who are often gardening for the first time.

Allotment gardening promotes social interaction, and can be effective for people who feel isolated from the wider community (perhaps culturally, or due to health problems).

Caring for plants and wildlife can instil a sense of responsibility, a sense of purpose, and a sense of achievement.

We asked project organisers and participants involved on Glasgow's allotment sites to tell, in their own words, about the impact allotment gardening is having on their lives. They are quoted throughout this document, on the pages dividing each section of our strategy.

Projects on allotment sites can act as stepping stones to future opportunities, empowering people to change their lives for the better.

We know that a number of groups and organisations currently sit on waiting lists for an allotment. We are also mindful of latent demand, and the anecdotal evidence that many organisations believe it would be pointless to even apply for a plot when sites are fully occupied.

Through our allotments strategy, we aim to increase opportunities for organisations and client groups to benefit from allotments and community gardens across the city, by promoting and developing partnership working to facilitate this.

The evidence that allotments connect with so many strategic policy agendas promotes the need to increase allotment provision.

For the sustainability and future development of allotments, and to maximise the contribution they can make within our society, we believe it is key to raise awareness of the benefits that allotment sites and allotment gardening offer,

particularly amongst individuals and organisations who can offer support through their influence and resources.

We believe that the members of the 'allotments champions' strategic group, G.A.F. and S.A.G.S., will be influential in this regard.

As we outline below, we will develop a co-ordinated strategy to promote the benefits of allotments, to be carried out over the 5 year period of this strategy.

Advocating for allotments - our promotional strategy

We will:

- **Develop a promotional strategy for allotments**

The key aim of our promotional strategy is to secure additional allotment provision in Glasgow by raising awareness of:

- the benefits offered by allotment sites and allotment gardening
- the current levels of demand for allotments
- the need for additional allotment provision
- the benefits of investing in allotments
- the opportunities for partnership working in allotments

The promotional strategy shall be directed in a number of ways, and will work alongside our commitment to improve communications with our current and potential plot holders, and the general public (as outlined within key commitments 1 and 3).

Our key objectives are:

- To raise political support for allotments
- To target potential allotment providers or partners
- To link with organisations with similar aims
- To contribute to local community engagement
- To target under-represented sections of the community

- To raise the profile of allotments with the media and the general public
- To promote new allotment sites as they come on stream.

Forming links – a partnership approach

The commitment to expand partnership working, which came from Land Services' Strategic Best Value Review of Parks and Open Spaces, has strongly influenced our allotments strategy.

Although this strategy covers the 5 year period to 2013, we are mindful of the need to look further ahead, so as to maintain interest and demand for allotments well beyond the current generation of plot holders.

We will undertake periodic research into allotment users and non-users, to monitor the effectiveness of social inclusion initiatives, register awareness in the wider community and gauge latent demand.

To develop allotments to their full potential in the ways our strategy advocates, it is essential that they are integrated into a broad range of sustainable development strategies. This approach offers valuable opportunities for developing mutually productive partnerships.

Respondents to the draft strategy advocate forming alliances with community garden and other green network organisations. Some of these groups share similar practices and objectives, and working in partnership could help achieve economies of scale, and increase the political bargaining power of the sector. Similarly, forming partnerships with community development and social enterprise organisations could help integrate and strengthen the political lobbying power of the combined sector.

We believe that a partnership approach to increasing and improving allotment provision in Glasgow helps make best use of our resources.

For example, as we outlined earlier, a key factor in attracting more support for allotments will be the encouragement given to wider sections of the community to participate. We will reach under-represented groups more successfully (and cost effectively) by working with the local agencies already involved with them, rather than initiating an independent promotional campaign.

Our 5 year Action Plan will incorporate the initial elements of our promotional strategy. We expect the detail to be influenced by partner organisations as they come on board.

Monitoring the effectiveness of our promotional strategy will be included in the monitoring procedures for the strategy overall, as outlined in Section 6 at the end of the strategy document: Monitoring, Implementation and Review.

Key Commitment Six:

PRIORITISE BIODIVERSITY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY and RECYCLING ON ALLOTMENT SITES

Biodiversity

"Biodiversity is the variety of living things on earth, from the smallest insect to the largest mammal and tree. It encompasses the variation within a species and the complex ecosystems or habitats where they are found. It is not just restricted to rare species or threatened wildlife sites, but includes the whole of the natural world". (Glasgow's Local Biodiversity Action Plan).

Local Authorities in Scotland have a legal duty to further the cause of biodiversity in carrying out their functions, through the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

5.6.1 Biodiversity on allotment sites

We will:

- **Favour the use of perimeter hedging wherever practicable**
- **Actively promote biodiversity on allotment sites**
- **Consider requests to keep bees on our sites, subject to certain conditions**

Allotment sites are vital wildlife habitats. By providing food, shelter and breeding sites, as well as 'green wedges' and 'stepping stones' to aid species migration, allotments contribute to the biodiversity of their local area, and to the city's network of green corridors.

Feedback to the draft strategy confirms strong support for our proposals to raise awareness of biodiversity, and to increase and enhance wildlife habitats on Glasgow's allotment sites. Glasgow's Local Biodiversity Action Plan highlights habitats and species of particular importance in the city. Allotment sites can help deliver actions for a range of key habitats and species, including ponds, hedgerows, and amphibians.

Many plot holders are already environmentally aware, and garden sustainably. For most of them, being able to grow organically is one of the main benefits of having an allotment, and the function of nature and wildlife in that process, particularly of birds and insects which act as pollinators and pest controllers, is widely recognised.

Many allotment associations are actively supporting biodiversity by installing additional features, such as wildlife ponds, nest boxes, butterfly gardens and bat boxes, to supplement the natural habitats on sites.

Perimeter hedging

Several respondents to the draft strategy have advocated widespread use of hedging, particularly native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose, around the perimeter of allotment sites, as a means to improve site security (either in conjunction with chain link fencing or in place of fencing) and to support biodiversity by providing food and shelter for wildlife.

A city wide survey is currently in progress to assess the status of hedgerows in Glasgow. The data collected will be used in providing recommendations for hedgerow management.

Perimeter hedging offers added advantages by lessening traffic noise, and acting as a windbreak; as well as by enhancing the appearance of site exteriors (our previous commitments 1 and 5 refer). This is a view also supported by the Allotments Regeneration Initiative. Accordingly, it is our intention to favour the use of hedging wherever possible.

Promoting biodiversity

Some of Glasgow's allotment sites are in, or near, designated wildlife sites. These allotments have greater potential to be biodiversity rich.

We propose to raise awareness of biodiversity, and actively encourage conservation on allotment sites, by liaising with L.E.S. Biodiversity Officers to provide information for the Good Practice Guides for allotment gardeners and for allotment site management. The information will outline how allotment site management and the cultivation of individual plots can make a positive contribution to the enhancement of biodiversity and, equally important, will flag up any practices that may impact negatively.

We will also incorporate ideas from, and promote, the 'Allotments and Biodiversity' booklet, produced jointly by G.A.F., S.A.G.S. and Glasgow City Council. The booklet brings together many ideas for enriching biodiversity on allotment sites, without changing the essential purpose of an allotment garden as a plot of land to be cultivated for the production of vegetables, flowers and fruit. We would stress that allotment sites do not have to become wildernesses to attract wildlife.

LES Biodiversity Officers are available to give advice on better management of existing natural features and the creation of new wildlife habitats.

Working with our colleagues in LES Biodiversity, we also propose to:

- Identify exemplar plots / sites for biodiversity for other sites to aspire to / emulate
- Establish a benchmark award for best practice for biodiversity in allotment sites
- Identify opportunities for joint working on allotment sites with biodiversity officers, volunteers and sponsors

Advice and proposed actions will be incorporated into the 5 year action plan accompanying the strategy.

Bee-keeping

Several respondents to the draft strategy voiced their concern about the dramatic decline of the bee population in the U.K., and the impact on plant pollination. It is estimated that 1 in 3 bee colonies in Britain have been wiped out within the last 2 years due to disease and bad summer weather. Studies indicate that many bee species are declining or have become extinct, and researchers are now spotting declines in the wildflower species that require insects for pollination.

Our Biodiversity colleagues are working to identify and implement measures to help bees in Glasgow, such as creating and enhancing wildflower meadows.

We are willing to consider requests for keeping bees on our allotment sites. Currently, bees may not be kept on our allotment sites without our specific agreement. Each application will be considered on an individual basis, based on the proposed location of the hives, the proposed number of hives, and the accredited training and experience of the applicant. Permission would also be subject to agreement by the allotment site association.

Successful applicants would require to have insurance cover, and would be encouraged to join the British Beekeepers' Association, in accordance with A.R.I. guidelines.

5.6.2 Environmental Sustainability

Allotments make a positive contribution to Glasgow's green space provision, and the sustainability of our urban systems.

Glasgow City Council recognises that green space can help to tackle the effects of climate change, and help to alleviate the risk of flooding in a warmer, wetter Scotland.

Growing fruit, vegetables and flowers on an allotment, rather than buying imported produce, helps people actively embrace a 'greener', more sustainable lifestyle, by addressing issues such as 'food miles' (the distance travelled by produce from where it was grown), and 'carbon footprints' at an individual level.

Allotment gardeners can help conserve varieties of vegetables and soft fruits which are not favoured by commercial growers and are in decline.

At a national level, local food production reduces transport costs and emissions, which contribute towards the commitments made by all Scottish Councils under Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, and towards targets to reduce emissions set out in the U.K.

Improvements on our allotment sites

We will:

- **Provide advice and assistance to our allotment site associations to adopt best practice for environmental sustainability, recycling, and waste management**
- **Investigate opportunities to create community composting partnerships**

Environmental sustainability is a key objective of Glasgow City Council, and of Land Services' Strategic Best Value Review and Implementation Plan. We will actively encourage and assist our allotment sites to develop as models of good practice for the enhancement of environmental sustainability.

The improvements we are seeking to make on our allotment sites include:

- **reducing the amount of green waste going into skips and on into landfill**, by advocating composting; better management of skips and improved waste disposal
- **reducing the amount of mains water used on sites**, by advocating use of water butts to collect rainwater, mulching to conserve water in the soil, and recycling grey water
- **maximising soil efficiency**, by better understanding of biodiversity, and use of compost and other natural soil enhancers
- **reducing the use of chemicals and pesticides**, by advocating the principles and practices of organic gardening and companion planting

- **reducing the use of peat products**, (since peat bogs are now some of the most threatened natural habitats in Scotland, and almost 70% of peat sold is used by gardeners), by advocating composting and natural soil enhancers
- **advocating use of local wood** from sustainably managed (FCS standard) sources, reusing timber and treating wood, if necessary, with natural wood preservatives
- **promoting and facilitating the use of sustainable or 'green' technology** when designing and building facilities on existing or new allotment sites
- **increasing the re-use and recycling of materials** from Parks Operations and other reputable sources – tools and equipment; surplus bulbs and other plant material; leaf-fall and horse manure
- **better waste management procedures** – improved opportunities for recycling materials such as stone, metals, plastic etc
- **forming links with community composting** and other recycling initiatives in Glasgow
- **sharing facilities** with parks, community gardens / moveable growing space initiatives, and the community local to the allotment site

A suggestion to the draft strategy consultation is to investigate the viability of harnessing wind power on some allotment sites, which could provide power to individual huts or to a central location.

We would like to investigate the viability of bore holes on some allotment sites. We are looking to finance a feasibility study from sustainable development and climate change funding, in partnership with G.A.F.

Information and training

Allotmenting attracts many environmentally enthused people, but they can have different views on what constitutes best practice.

We plan to supplement the information we will provide in our Good Practice Guides about biodiversity and environmental sustainability with training workshops and mentoring. We will organise this in conjunction with GAF, and give independent sites the option to participate also.

5.6.3 Recycling and waste management

Re-using materials is a long-established tradition on allotment sites, which continues to this day (plot holders have used empty plastic bottles in the construction of greenhouses, for example).

However, recycling on sites largely depends on the attitudes and commitment of individual plot holders and site associations. We will set out a more cohesive and committed policy for recycling on our sites.

Use of skips

Generally, skips are used more frequently on Council sites than on independent sites. We have recurring problems with misuse of skips, where articles are being brought on to allotment sites from elsewhere and dumped in skips. We detailed the financial impact of current levels of skip hire, and disposal charges, on the allotments budget within section 3.2: Current Financial Resources.

As we identified within key commitment 2, we believe there are opportunities for cost savings by actively promoting recycling on our sites, so as to reduce dependence on skips. This supports the Council's commitment to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. We will provide clarification as to what should, and should not, go into skips on allotment sites.

In the main, respondents to the draft strategy agreed that more can be achieved, particularly to tackle the amount of green waste going from skips into landfill.

We also plan to provide practical support, as well as advice, when it comes to ensuring best practice in recycling, composting and waste management.

Waste management

A number of respondents to the draft strategy highlight the need for waste management systems to be put in place on sites.

Suggestions included were space permits, building communal composting and recycling facilities. Respondents proposed having dedicated areas for different classes of non-compostable waste material, made ready for periodic uplift by the Council. This would keep sites tidier and safer.

Council support

Currently, Parks Operations provide allotment sites with access to Council shredders and operatives; and with leaf-fall and horses manure for soil improvement. Until now, this has been on an ad-hoc basis.

At present, they are also trialling collecting green waste in link tips on two allotment sites, which will then go to parks for composting along with their own material.

We will investigate ways to roll out these services on a more regular basis.

Respondents asked if the Council could assist with the bulk purchase of items such as water butts and compost bins, so as to pass on discounted costs to plot holders. We will liaise with LES colleagues in Parks Operations and Procurement to identify ways in which we can implement these suggestions.

Community composting projects

Respondents welcomed our intention to investigate the feasibility of forming partnerships with Social Enterprise Organisations, to set up composting projects for recycling green waste from allotment sites and parks. We envisage setting up pilot projects initially, with a view to establishing a network of projects on or near to allotment sites throughout the city.

Consultation responses indicate that a number of independent sites would also welcome taking part in recycling initiatives.

The proposed partnership projects would help to develop employability, social renewal and training opportunities and, through time, could be extended to incorporate community gardens, 'moveable growing spaces' etc as these come on stream.

6.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

This Allotments Strategy will be at the heart of LES' work to improve allotments over the 5 year period from 2009 – 2013.

6.1 Actions for continuous improvement

The actions identified throughout the strategy have been brought together and further developed within the Action Plan which accompanies this document.

The time required to finalise the strategy, submit it for approval by Glasgow City Council's Executive Committee, and subsequently print, launch and distribute the document, mean that we have revised the dates given in the draft consultative strategy. The action plan now covers the 5 year period from 2009 until 2013.

6.2 Reviewing and updating the action plan

We will:

- **Review and update the Action Plan on a regular basis**
- **Monitor progress within LES Parks Development and through formal Service monitoring procedures**
- **Involve representatives from allotment site associations in monitoring performance**
- **Involve the 'Allotments Champions' mentoring group in reviewing progress**
- **Provide regular updates to our tenants, and to the wider allotments community through G.A.F.**

The Action Plan is a working document. For that reason, it will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, to establish whether actions are being delivered on time, and to ensure that any new opportunities or challenges for allotments are identified and addressed.

As we have already emphasised, the success of the strategy depends on allotment stakeholders supporting it and working in partnership to deliver it. Therefore, we shall consult with key allotment stakeholders, including GAF, on an ongoing basis over the period of the strategy, to assess how they think the service is performing, share progress reports and jointly consider future actions and priorities.

We intend to carry out this consultation in accordance with national standards for community engagement. We also plan to utilise the tools provided by the 'Greenspace LEAP Framework', which encourages joint responsibility amongst stakeholders for planning and evaluating greenspace related work.

It is envisaged that the allotments management team within LES Parks Development will evaluate the Action Plan every 6 months to assess progress, take account of stakeholder feedback, and review targets for the next 6 months, so as to ensure continuous improvement.

In addition, as we outlined within key commitment 2, we are seeking to form a 'mentoring' group ('allotments champions') whose role is envisaged as monitoring and advising on the strategy's development and implementation at a strategic level. Further details will be communicated to stakeholders as this group comes together.

6.3 Formal monitoring and review

The Action Plan shall provide the basis by which our progress in improving the allotment service will be formally monitored and reviewed.

Agreed works will be monitored, to ensure they are carried out within the time periods allocated, through the Council's grounds maintenance reporting system.

We plan to follow Birmingham City Council's policy of involving site associations in monitoring performance. To do so, we will ask for a representative from each site association to complete a questionnaire at the end of the summer and winter maintenance periods. The questionnaire will ask whether work was carried out on time and in a satisfactory manner, and will ask for any other comments (our key commitment 1 refers).

Quality is an essential element of LES' commitment to service delivery and achieving Best Value (Best Value is a government initiative for improving public services which involves a system of service planning, evaluation and continuous improvement).

LES is accredited in ISO 9000 Quality Management, incorporating ISO 14001 Environmental Management and OHSAS 18000 Health and Safety Management.

LES has a performance monitoring system, with a quality audit team to carry out a rolling programme of inspections of processes and procedures throughout the Service. LES quarterly monitoring reports are available to the general public on the Council website. It is our intention to include allotments in the quarterly monitoring schedule.

LES Parks Operations are currently participating in a Land Audit Management System (LAMS) pilot project with South Lanarkshire Council. The system encourages continuous improvement through self-assessment and through cross-authority assessment, which facilitates benchmarking. Communal areas of our allotment sites may be included, should the pilot project prove successful. Over the period of the strategy, it may become appropriate to augment monitoring procedures by adopting specific performance indicators for allotments (Performance indicators are pre-determined measures used to evaluate the performance of a particular aspect of local authority service provision).

Indicators would be chosen in accordance with the aims of the allotments strategy, to be meaningful and easily measurable, so that they can be linked to performance targets. Examples could include the percentage of allotment sites with designated facilities; the average time between application and issuing of tenancy; or the amount of subsidy per tenant.

Indicators may link to policies at national or local levels, such as future Single Outcome Agreements (Section 2: Key Policies and Legislation gives more details).

6.4 Ongoing communication with stakeholders

Within key commitments 1, 3 and 5 of the strategy, we outline our commitment to two-way communication with our tenants, and with allotment stakeholders throughout the city.

Progress reports on the Action Plan will continue to be presented to the Glasgow Allotments Forum, and information will be made available on a regular basis to plot holders and the wider community through newsletters and the allotments website.

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APPENDIX 1

ALLOTMENTS IN SCOTLAND: GUIDANCE NOTES FOR SCOTTISH COUNCILS [COSLA, with support from the City of Edinburgh Council]

Role of Councils/Legislative Background

The powers and obligations vested in a council are to be found in the Allotments (Scotland) Acts of 1892, 1922 and 1950 and the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act 1919.

Councils are required to:

- 1 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.
- 2 Acquire any suitable land that may be available to be let as allotments to local residents where either through representations by the public or through other means a council concludes there is a demand for allotments. Such land may be within or outwith the council's boundary.
- 3 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.
- 4 Keep a register available for public inspection showing the details of (i) the tenancy acreage and rent of each allotment, and (ii) any unlet allotments.
- 5 Provide an annual statement of accounts in respect of the council's allotment provision.

Councils have powers to:

- 1 Acquire land through purchase or lease and to do so by agreement or through compulsory measure.
- 2 Improve the land acquired for allotments. This may be by enclosing the land, draining it, dividing it into allotments, or creating approaches or roads.
- 3 Make regulations as they consider appropriate to regulate the letting of allotments. This covers matters such as 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.

Councils should also give consideration to using other legislative tools such as the Power to Advance Wellbeing as a means to furthering allotment provision'.