



Newsletter November 2011  
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# Scottish Allotments Newsletter

## We need to fight for permanent allotment sites.

In September 2010 Greenspace Scotland published a report on *stalled spaces*. These are sites that are to be developed but, possibly because of economic problems, are to be left undeveloped for a period of several years. A stalled space may well become a local eyesore.

Creative uses for such spaces were proposed. These included their use as temporary community gardens or growing spaces. SAGS strongly supports such initiatives but wants to make it clear that such spaces are NOT allotments. Allotments are spaces where individuals can have a long term relationship with their plot.

SAGS members should be vigilant. Lobby to prevent your LA from counting such spaces as allotments.



## Scottish Allotments Conference, Victoria Halls, Dunblane, June 2011



*Sarah Boyack MSP (3rd from left) chairs the morning session with Ian Welsh, Jenny Mollison, Peter Wright from SAGS and Donna McDaid secretary of NSALG*

The Scottish Allotments Annual Plotolders' Conference held in Victoria Halls, Dunblane on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2011 was a well attended and very interesting day.

Sarah Boyack MSP chaired the morning session and also gave a report from parliament, advising that allotments now had cross party support in the Scottish Parliament. The next step was to work with local authorities to ensure they had good allotment policies in place and were implementing them.

Reports were then presented on the Grow Your Own Working Group, allotment development in the Highlands, in the Shetlands and the position of allotments in England. These reports were followed by a lively panel discussion on The Way Forward.

The afternoon session, was chaired by Patrick Harvie MSP and included reports from associations round Scotland, whose sites are in various stages of development. The conference broke up into workshops on a variety of topics. Judging by the final report back session these workshops were all very productive.

*Conference 2012 will be held on Saturday 16 June in the Victoria Halls, Dunblane. A date for your new diary!*

### On other pages:

- News from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Highland and Stirlingshire
- Edible Garden, Share and share alike, Froglife, History from the Glasgow Heritage project.
- Allotment Design Guide, Nourish Scotland, Resources

### Do you have time to help?

SAGS' work to reverse the long term decline of allotments in Scotland has raised the profile of allotments with politicians. It is important to keep up the pressure.

SAGS members man stalls at events round Scotland distributing leaflets. We monitor political activity, suggest parliamentary questions to our representatives and lobby to ensure that allotment provision is considered when government and councils write policy documents.

*If you have time to help in any way please contact the SAGS secretary. Email: [secretary@sags.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sags.org.uk)*

### New per plot subscription rates for allotment sites :

Fee SAGS only: £0.80  
Fee SAGS+NSALG: £2.00

This is a reduction of 20p per plot. It is possible because of savings achieved through use of email and the web site.

# Around Scotland.....

## Glasgow

### **Allotment Heritage Project nears its culmination**

*The Allotment Heritage Project in its current form is due to end on January 31st. A culmination event was held in the Pearce Institute, Govan on November 12th.*

At the event plot-holders from the twelve sites had stalls showing their pictures, documents, maps and recordings. Children from two schools and a group from the Playbusters were among the presenters in the formal programme.

Volunteers have produced 13 leaflets as a summary of their work. These will be available to download on the SAGS website. All the material collected so far will be saved and available to



view. The project is now moving into a final evaluation phase.

An unexpected outcome is a superb display of 6 panels with extracts from all the leaflets edited by Rona Wilkinson and designed by Emily Chappell, together with 12 portraits of plot-holders from

Carlo D'Alessandro. This has been exhibited in the Mitchell Library and is now available for allotment associations, community groups, libraries to borrow. For information about this or any aspect of the project please email- [judy@atlas.co.uk](mailto:judy@atlas.co.uk).

## Edinburgh

### **The second five year Edinburgh allotment strategy is living up to its promise to create new allotment sites to tackle the massive waiting list in the City.**

During 2011 three new permanent sites were opened. One is a traditional site on the grounds of a school which had closed. The other two are raised bed infill sites, one a bomb site and the other spare land by a tower block.

Consultations are starting for the 2012 site which will be in the Jocks Lodge area. The Strategy Steering Group have assessed about 40 potential sites and they have enough sites lined up for development to open a new site every year for the next ten.

**Another interesting activity** has been rewriting the allotment

regulations that accompany the Missive of Rent for an allotment. The Regulations were written in 1913 (possibly the first in Scotland), and last revised in 1924. One regulation that definitely needed updating was that you were forbidden to work your plot on a Sunday!!

The regulations have been approved for consultation and are with the plot holders for comments, it is hoped that they will become formalised by the New Year. If anyone is interested in looking at the draft, go to the CEC website under allotments. The web address is [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/a\\_to\\_z/service/905100/allotments](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/a_to_z/service/905100/allotments)

**Another initiative** the Steering Group are working on is to empower groups on the waiting list to form associations that could then have access to funding that

the CEC cannot access. The CEC would provide the land but all the work of setting up the site must be done by the waiting list plot holders.

**The Royal Edinburgh Community Gardens** set up in the grounds of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital has proved such a success that Lothian's NHS are looking to repeat the initiative at other NHS sites in Lothians. The project attracts community groups and individuals working together under the guidance of the Cyrenians.

**The FEDAGA AGM** took place on Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>. Long serving committee member George Sutherland decided to retire. For many years George has been the mainstay behind the trading scheme, providing cheap top quality seeds, potatoes, onion setts, and bulk fertilisers etc. for the FEDAGA members. Our thanks to him, he will be a hard act to follow

# .....successes and developments

## Stirlingshire

The Blane Valley Allotment Group are working towards creating a new vibrant allotment site & community garden in the Blane Valley. Funded by the CCF and the Leader Fund, this project seeks to lower the carbon footprint of the villages, promote healthy lifestyles, reduce food poverty and celebrate local produce.

The Duntreath Estate showed community spirit & generosity by offering a site in farmland along the old railway track. This allows the allotments to be sited within walking distance for all.

Throughout the project it is anticipated that the community will work together to overcome any issues that arise to ensure that this project is a success.

Blane Valley Allotment Group



Proposed Site Plan for Allotments

Details of the Planning Application can be viewed at:  
<http://pabs.stirling.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=neighbourComments&keyVal=LUV5UNPIDX000>

## Highland Council

Keith Walker, Highland Council's Policy Officer—Health Improvement attended the SAGS conference where he gave an interesting account of the solution to problems associated with developing allotments in a sparsely populated area.

Highland Region has only 8 people per km<sup>2</sup>, one of the lowest regional population densities in Europe. With more than half of this population clustered around the eastern seaboard, some parts of highland are incredibly sparse. This introduces a unique set of circumstances which demand a different approach to the provision of allotments.

In developing Highland Council's Allotments Policy, there was known demand for allotments in 26 distinct communities across

Highland and it was expected more communities would want allotments once awareness was raised. Highland Region wanted allotments which would be well-managed, sustainable and would meet the different needs of each community.

The resulting policy is to work with community groups and other organisations to enable them to establish and run allotments. The Council commits to an enabling role, facilitating the establishment of allotments groups, working with those groups to identify available land. It also commits to helping allotment associations secure funding and to actively promote the benefits of allotment gardening.

In addition to meeting these aims, this approach brings other benefits. Through self-management of allotment sites, there is more flexibility. Allot-

ment holders have a greater say in how their sites are run. Allotment associations have wider access to funding, which is expected to result in more sites being established than would be possible using Council resources alone.

### New Site Approved in Tain

A plan for a new allotment site in Tain in Easter Ross was approved by Highland Council on October 25. The Tain Allotment Group proposes to develop a piece of land off Scotsburn Road, known as Croft Arthur. They have been given permission to fence the land and divide it into 58 plots each with its own shed. They can also build a toilet block and create parking spaces and access paths. The group already has a list of 40 people interested in taking a plot - even though the work to create the site has not yet started.

# Campaigns and activities

## Edible Gardening Update

*The Edible Garden Project*, a joint venture between SAGS and the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, is approaching the end of its first year. Everyone agrees that it has been a huge success.

There is a regular programme of drop in events. At these events volunteers and the Community Gardener are on hand to help beginners and the more experienced. Topics over the next few weeks range from *Christmas Fun* through *Making Plans to Crops and Seeds*.

*The new poly tunnel* enables the project to 'bridge the hungry gap'. The project team spent the autumn sowing crops that will enable a range of salad leaves to be harvested right up to the point where the first crops become available on the out door plots.



*The Harvest Festival* was one highlight of the year. There were entries to the produce show from five Edinburgh community gardening groups,

RBGE volunteers and the edible gardening project. The show was expertly judged by Peter Wright and Andrew Reid, SAGS vice president and treasurer respectively. 629 people attended the event over two days and saw the fantastic display of fruit and vegetables all grown in Edinburgh. Hopefully they have gone away inspired as to what could be achieved in their own gardens. Chutney experts were on hand throughout the festival to explain how to use that welcome glut.

*The end of this pioneering* first year will be marked by an exhibition of photographs by Scottish photographer Carlo D'Alessandro. This celebrates people, communities and the productivity of allotment gardens across the central belt. This is part of the Scottish Festival of Science and Food to be held in the John Hope Gateway from 2nd February to 15 April 2012

## Share and Share Alike?.....

*Sharing seeds, swapping tips and raiding skips.*

*Anything short of actual theft is just good recycling to most allotmenters. We've always done it this way and it's catching on.*

Sharing in more ways than one was alive and well at the Broomridge Food Festival in Stirling on October the 2nd. Conceived by George and Malcolm Shaw from SAGS along with Ann Rogerson, Chair of the Broomridge Community Council the food festival was the culmination of a full programme of events and workshops around the theme of local food and carbon cutting.

Alison Swanson from SAGS and the Bridgehaugh allotment site took the theme one step further, sharing a stall in the community marquee with Phillippa Cochrane and Lisa McCrone of Gardenshare Stirling. The marquee was full of local growing, community and environmental organisations and "provided a good opportunity to promote allotments and growing generally" says Alison. "There was a lot of interest in allotments but sadly, like most areas of Scotland there aren't enough sites to satisfy demand so people keen to grow their own food spend years on waiting lists. I found myself taking names for our waiting list and then passing them on to Gardenshare to see if they could help in the meantime." According to Alison

sharing a garden isn't the complete answer to allotment waiting lists. "It does increase opportunities to participate in growing but it could result in increased demand for allotments as people get bitten by the bug and learn more about growing." One thing's for sure though, more and more people want to share in the grow your own movement.



*Alison Swanson, Phillippa Cochrane, Lisa McCrone man their shared stall at the food festival.*



## Nature's Natural Pest Control

**Froglife, a UK charity for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles believes SAGS members should support their native natural pest controllers.**

Froglife's project officer Eilidh Spence is encouraging people to make small areas of their gardens or allotments into wildlife friendly havens. The idea is to help urban populations of amphibians and reptiles that are struggling to cope with on going habitat destruction. "Simple measures such as creating a tub pond, log piles

or leaving small areas to become overgrown can encourage these animals to venture into gardens and make them home," adds Eilidh. "As a thank you, the animals will be more than willing to munch on the slugs and snails often seen by gardeners as the enemy!"

The humble common frog is a very welcome visitor in many gardens. It is often stumbled upon when completing routine garden work. However, frogs are only one of the species that Froglife are trying to conserve in the UK and that can provide much needed assistance with control of garden pests. Common toads, common lizards and slow-worms are also excellent helpers that gardeners and allotment holders should encourage.

For more information on amphibians and reptiles in Scotland, and how to make your allotment or garden more appealing to these creatures please visit the Froglife website- [www.froglife.org](http://www.froglife.org). Froglife also ask SAGS members to submit any records of amphibians or reptiles to their local biological records centre as currently amphibians and reptiles are under recorded in Scotland.

## History from the Glasgow Allotments Heritage Project.

**The first ever allotment site in Glasgow was established in Cowlands in 1858 by the Edinburgh and Glasgow railway for their workers.**

The earliest existing site that we know of is New Victoria Gardens, established in its present location in 1885 on land of the Maxwell estate.

Allotments in Glasgow have been established by employers, by enlightened land owners such as Sir John Stirling Maxwell and Sir Archibald Campbell and by the Council (particularly in the war years, during the depression of the thirties and now today). In 1932 the Scottish Allotment Scheme for the Unemployed (SASU) was formed by the Scottish National Union of Allotment Holders (which became SAGS in 1947) and the Society of Friends. SASU established at least four major allotment sites in the Glasgow area and at least two still exist. SASU continued its

work for over 70 years.

Allotments holders' demands for security of tenure are repeated down the years. In the early days the Department of Agriculture and the Government championed allotments with a reluctant Glasgow Council dragging its heels – in 1919 "After discussion the committee were generally of the opinion that it would not be in the interests of the existing plot-holders to put into operation the provisions of the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892".

In 1950 plot-holders were exultant about the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1950 only to have it trumped by the Housing Act and the consequent loss of many sites. Temporary sites of raised beds are currently being championed in the draft City Plans for Glasgow – the fight goes on to persuade Councils that only permanent sites are sustainable over time. One of the outcomes of this project has been overwhelming evidence for

this point of view. Some Council sites given permanence in the 1920's have continued to this day, demonstrating how well they are sustained by the plot-holders.

In 1974 Gert Lory from Kennyhill was given a trophy from SAGS 'for meritorious service' in saving half the Kennyhill site from being used as a construction yard for the M74. Gert's trophy and many other jewels (tangible objects and stories) have been found during the project.

Stories from the past, old pictures and detailed histories of individual allotment sites have been discovered during the course of the project. Many of these can be viewed on the Glasgow Allotment Heritage web site. To see them go to [www.sags.org.uk/GlasgowHeritage](http://www.sags.org.uk/GlasgowHeritage) and click on 'How to log in' in the main menu

# SAGS resources and partner organisations

## Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide

Some of the problems with setting up new allotments relate to the design of the whole site. New allotment groups are looking for help, Local Authority Planners wish to know what is recommended and the general public have a perception of allotments as an untidy eyesore which they do not want in their back yard.

With funding just received from The Scottish Government, Central Scotland Green Network, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission, we have commenced work on the long awaited design guide.

The guide will have the following main sections, Land, Plots, Community areas, Infrastructure, additional growing and bio-diversity areas.

Each section will be further broken down to detailed descriptions with drawings and recommended solutions to the many facets of allotment site design. Groups, Planners and Landscape Designers will be able to cherry pick a range of options to satisfy the most discerning of observers. With endorsement from a wide range of supportive bodies it is hoped that the completed guide will be the blue print for new allotment sites and the tool to improve existing ones.

### ***One of SAGS' most rewarding tasks is helping groups struggling to set up allotments.***

With this aim in view we are making a collection of photographs showing how attractive allotment sites can be. They will be loaned to groups to help with presentations to community councils, planners and other organisations. At present this collection is a 'work in progress'. However the panels created as a spin off from the Glasgow Heritage project are now available for any SAGS members to borrow. For further details email: [judy@atlas.co.uk](mailto:judy@atlas.co.uk)

## Nourish

*Nourish Scotland is an organisation that aims to connect producers, growers, retailers, consumers and all who care about local food in Scotland.*

Nourish Scotland have a web site, address <http://www.nourishscotland.org.uk/>

This is a networking site and anyone interested in the work of Nourish can register and join in blogs and forums. Nourish also support events such as the recent Tweedsmuir Sustainable Food event in association with Tweedgreen and The Borders Food Network. They are applying to fund a project, Edible Edinburgh to help Edinburgh become a sustainable food city.

## More Organisations

**The Allotment Regeneration Initiative** has one mentor in Scotland. Mentors can offer advice on the regeneration of allotment sites, setting up allotment associations and applying for funding.

*The one Scottish mentor* : Ian Welsh  
Tel. 0845 223 5443

[iwelsh.ari@googlemail.com](mailto:iwelsh.ari@googlemail.com)

*For details of other services provided by ARI*

<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari/>

**The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens** supports, promotes and represents community managed growing projects, [www.farmgarden.org.uk'](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/)

**Funding Scotland** is a new social enterprise organisation that aims to improve the process of identifying and communicating funding information in Scotland. Their web site records information about grants and funding programmes accessible to organisations operating in Scotland. <http://www.fundingscotland.com>

**The SAGS website** contains information and advice on a wide range of issues related to allotments, as well as back copies of the Newsletters. <http://www.sags.org.uk>

## About SAGS

SAGS is a voluntary organisation funded by the subscriptions of its members. We offer a forum through which plot holders can work together to make sure that allotment sites will flourish in Scotland in the next millennium. If you care about allotment provision in Scotland then join SAGS.

In particular we plan to:

- Work together to lobby Members of the Scottish Parliament for improved and increased allotment provision in Scotland.
- Maintain contact with the Parliament so that we can represent gardeners' interests during the consultative stages of legislation which may affect Sites.

SAGS provides an opportunity to:

- Share experiences to resist the takeover of Allotment Sites when these are threatened by building or other developments.
- Find examples from other sites on the best terms of let or lease when these are being negotiated for a Site
- Act as a forum for the exchange of information on Site Management experience giving advice on good practice in forming and preparing a suitable Constitution and formulating a missive-of-let

**Contact SAGS on:**

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Any items or correspondence for the next newsletter should be sent as an email to:

[webmaster@sags.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@sags.org.uk)