

Report by Alistair McKinnon, of Dunoon Allotments Association

The discussions with Argyll and Bute Council continue. The council still insists on following through on its policy:

- Argyll and Bute Council Accepted Policy Oct. 2007
The Council continues with their current commitment to the Allotment Association to facilitate the provision of allotments by way of giving professional and funding advice to them, enabling them to progress with forming a community trust and purchasing and developing a site on their own behalf.

Effectively this removes the Council from complying with COSLA guidelines or the Allotment legislation.

The Association is then hampered as the outside agencies we have discussed this with, eg Highlands and Islands Enterprise, refer to the law in that the council has responsibility in provision. The second issue that arises from this is that if we apply for funding for allotment provision the funding agencies also refer to the legislation and the council's primary responsibility. We tried working with HIE on the idea of a local community croft, but that is not possible.

Regardless we have continued to pressure the council on provision. We have received back up from SAGS and NSALG in finding a lawyer to communicate with the council. Through this we received maps of some of the council land holdings that we asked for three years ago.

With SAGS we then gave a presentation to the Area Business Meeting of the Council on the benefits of Allotments and how they are well placed in meeting the Single Outcome Agreements. Out of this a 'working group' was formed. The group met once and the meeting was not positive. There is no fixed date for the next meeting "at least three months away", no benchmarks, land the council will look at is already sold to a developer and it was stated that there was no real interest in allotments as could be seen by our falling numbers at meetings. We reminded the councillor that we have the support of the police, all GP surgeries and various local groups; it is not lack of interest but lack of provision that is the issue.

We contacted our MP, MSP's, Ministers, and government bodies again, but as this is a devolved local issue they could not really do anything. We even contacted Working Lunch after they aired a show on allotments. As a result of all this the Association has decided to take the Council before the ombudsman to get a decision.

In the near future the local newspaper will run another article to coincide with National Allotments Week and we hope to set up a stall at the next Kirn Gala as a fund-raiser.

In all of this the SAGS committee has been continually supportive and the Allotment Regeneration Initiative rep Ian Welsh has been a phenomenal help and encouragement. There has been a lot more movement than the summary above but without the support I don't think we would have kept going. Thanks to you all.

However... **when** we finally have a real allotment site, all plot holders are invited to the two parties. A 30 minute party for the officials and after they've been given their hats, the rest of the day for ourselves ;))