



Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society

EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL'S REVIEW OF ALLOTMENT PROVISION: COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society represents allotments throughout Scotland. It has over 2,000 members including the Federations of Edinburgh and District Allotments and Gardens Association, Glasgow Allotments Forum, and the Dundee Federation as well as individual associations, including Musselburgh Allotments Association, and individual members. It is the Scottish wing of the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardens which gives it a platform to share information and benefits across the whole of the UK.

MUSSELBURGH ALLOTMENTS

There are 46 plots at Musselburgh (a combination of “whole” and “half” plots) with an annual turnover of about 5 plots a year. There is a waiting list of nearly 50. Some of the existing ploholders live outside Musselburgh. There have been a number of recent enquiries about the availability of allotments in East Lothian received through the SAGS website (www.sags.org.uk) which indicates that demand for allotments elsewhere in the county is similar to that in Musselburgh.

COSLA GUIDELINES

The COSLA guidelines (Allotments in Scotland: Guidance Notes for Scottish Councils), published in 2006, will help councils consider how promoting allotments can benefit their communities for years to come. They contain many recommendations of good practice and some interesting case studies, including the innovative Bridgend Allotments, Craigmillar, Edinburgh which is the first all-organic allotment site in Scotland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SAGS recommends that

- East Lothian Council should establish a clear point of officer contact for all enquiries relating to allotments
- Accurately assess the demand for allotments in East Lothian and, if as in Musselburgh, demand exceeds supply, prioritise the search for additional suitable land
- Recognise that land values in East Lothian make acquisition of sites for traditional allotments extremely costly, consider the provision of communal gardening opportunities and mini-allotments in new housing developments (such as at Letham Mains).
- East Lothian Council follows the recommendations of the new SPP11 document* in all planning matters pertaining to allotments.

BENEFITS OF ALLOTMENT GARDENING

The benefits of allotment gardening are not confined to the individual gardener, and East Lothian Council should be aware that the associated environmental and social effects can extend into the community, potentially supporting the Council's efforts towards sustainable development. They can contribute to biodiversity and sustainability, healthy living and social interaction. Areas for horticulture, such as allotments, can be of great value to the local community and offer benefits for the environment. They create an opportunity for local food production, encourage physical activity and healthy eating, offer a place to relax and to learn, and contribute to local biodiversity.

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society is represented on Edinburgh's Allotment Strategy Steering Group and, in a similar way, would be delighted to assist in the development of East Lothian's policy on allotments or in any way which might be helpful.

Jenny Mollison

On behalf of the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society

secretary@sags.org.uk

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