

## Alness & District Allotments Society

In early 2006 some of the residents in the Milnafua area of Alness suggested that the Milnafua Residents Association (MRA) speak to The Highland Council about allocating some land for the creation of allotments. Highland Council responded positively and a paper was prepared for Council. The Councillors agreed to the allocation of land to the north of Milnafua an area of some 0.66 acres. All was proceeding a pace until the person leading the project from MRA left the area. The project lay in abeyance for some months until it was suggested that the local development officer, Helen Houston, pick up the project on behalf of the wider community and seek to determine the interest across the town.

With support from Carol Elliot, TPO at the Highland Council and Marie Mackay, Community Learning Worker, Highland Council a public meeting was called to invite interested people to come and hear about the proposed allotment project. At this first meeting everyone who attended was given a free box of vegetables, sufficient to make a pot of soup.

There was a good turn out at this meeting and a steering group was set up. The steering group working with Helen, Carol and Marie created draft constitution, tenancy agreement, plot layout and rental fee. At the same time the group had been trying to persuade Highland Council to put in the water to the site, this has not yet been achieved.

After speaking to some possible funding sources Highland Council has been asked to provide a lease for twelve years as without this period of time the funders will not support the project. The Highland Council had offered a lease for ten years.

Once the steering group were happy with the draft papers a public meeting was called to coincide with National Allotment Week – thanks to Carol for spotting this significant week. A press release was written by Carol and the media picked up on the story. At the inaugural meeting on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August thirty one people attended. What was so exciting was that the twelve new committee members were appointed without any arm twisting!!! People even stepped up to become office bearers. It was a really positive meeting.

With support from Helen the committee will now raise the £36,000 to create the allotments. It is hoped to create a site with twenty six allotments, 24 @ 6m x 12m and 2 @ 8.5m x 12m, which will be fenced and each allotment will have a shed. The rent for the smaller plots will be £50 and for the two bigger plots £60.

We hope that the new allotments will be ready to be occupied in the Spring 2008.