

MSP plots a summit for more allotments

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A CONSERVATIVE MSP has called on the Scottish Government to help communities find more space for allotments to meet demand for space where people can grow their own food.

Dr Nanette Milne, who represents North East Scotland, has called on the Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham to set up a summit to look at why there is so little areas for people without their own gardens.

Scotland has 6,700 allotments, compared to 65,000 during the hobby's boom years in the 1940s.

With around 80 "grassroots" groups being started over the past five years, Dr Milne said it was important to bring together organisations such as the Scottish Allotments and

Gardens Society with local authorities in an attempt to solve the problem.

Ms Cunningham said that while it is up to local authorities to discuss the matter, she would like those interested to take part in "discussions about the future of derelict land".

She said: "We are aware that some 3000 people are on a nationwide allotments waiting list and that 70% of the currently allocated allotments are owned by local authorities.

"That leaves 30% that are not, so there is also capacity to grow - that's a bit of a pun, of course - the number of allotments outwith local authority land."

Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead said the National Food and Drink Policy recognised the



SUMMIT CALL: Conservative MSP Dr Nanette Milne.

contribution which "grow your own" activities can offer to the environment and health and well-being.

He added: "They also provide a vital role in helping us to appreciate where our food comes from, and how it grows. We are in discussions

with the Scottish Allotments and Gardening Society and other stakeholders to help unlock the potential that unused derelict land holds for community growing projects and allotments. We are also looking to make more land available."

In Edinburgh it has even been suggested that golf courses be turned into allotments to satisfy demand.

Ian Welsh, vice-chairman of the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society, said: "We know of dozens of groups which have formed over the past five years and are desperate for land to be made available.

"I think there is an increasing interest due to the economic climate but also people are becoming more interested in where their food comes from."