

November 2014: The anti-rent rise campaign builds.



The campaign is gathering strength. Plotolders have been busy writing to Councillors and MSPs and attending meetings to ask for their support in stopping this unfair proposal.

The SNP and Conservative groups on the Council have undertaken to look at the proposal again. No similar commitments have been received from any other parties - yet. The case must continue to be made to raise political awareness of this issue and achieve a rejection of the rent rise.

The allotment community has the law on our side. The Allotments Act 1950 (para.10) states that "land let by a local authority under the Allotments (Scotland) Acts, 1892 to 1926, for use as an allotment shall be let at the fair rent for such use".

In 2009 the Council entered into an agreement with FEDAGA that raised the rent over a 5 year period and now holds it steady until 2020. Now that they have a level of income that allows allotments to no longer require subsidy they appear to want to forget their contractual obligations. By invoicing for and receiving the increasing rent since then they have entered into a legally binding contract.

The Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999 state "A contractual term which has not been individually negotiated shall be

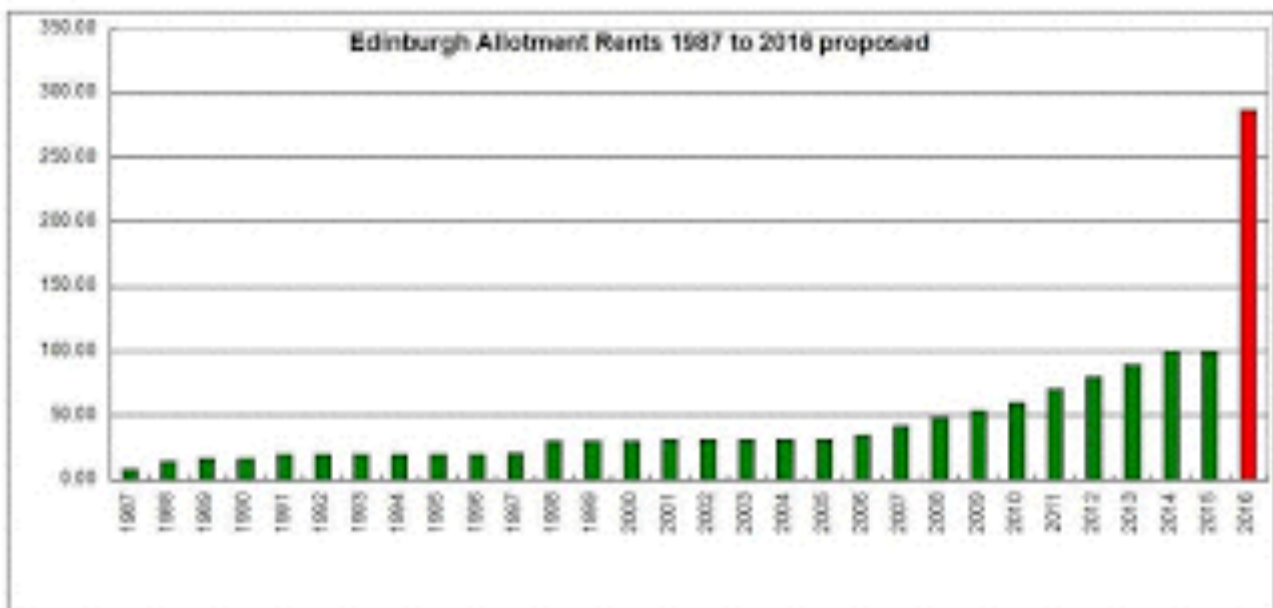
regarded as unfair if, contrary to the requirement of good faith, it causes a significant imbalance in the parties' rights and obligations arising under the contract, to the detriment of the consumer.” How can the Council’s legal department interpret that as consistent with the draft budget proposal? The short answer is: “they can’t”.

In addition to these rock-solid reasons, if the Council were to go ahead with their proposal they would be ripping up their commitments to sustainability, biodiversity and the Allotment Strategy.

The online petition is gaining momentum. The number of signatories is approaching 2000 which demonstrates huge support. It is estimated that around 20 people gain in some way from each allotment plot, either from food produced, or being able to visit and enjoy the space. If everyone who benefits in some way from allotments signs the petition it will demonstrate a wide support for the campaign. [Sign here](#). Please circulate it on facebook and twitter.

The ideas put to and endorsed by the AGM are generally to approach the issue positively. The bottom line is: No Rent Rise. To achieve this outcome it is recognised that Councillors must be encouraged to look elsewhere to rectify the financial deficit. Members are asked to “think outside the plot” and come up with creative ideas which would help to raise additional revenue from the allotment service without touching the rent agreement.

Imaginative solutions are more likely to get a favourable outcome than entrenched opposition. To take the campaign on to the next stage FEDAGA needs to hear your ideas. Write to idea@fedaga.org.uk



Potato and Onion Trading Scheme.

SEED POTATOES:

First Earlies: Casablanca, Duke of York, Red Duke of York, Lady Christl, Maris Bard, Sharpe's Express, Foremost.

Second Earlies: Kestrel, Nadine, Wilja, Maris Peer, Catriona, Vivaldi.

Main Crops: Cara, King Edward, Maris Piper, Sarpo Mira, Rooster, Picasso.

Salads: Pink Fir Apple, Charlotte, International Kidney.

All seed potatoes come in 2.5kg bags except for Vivaldi and Rooster which are 2kg.

All cost £3 which includes a site commission of 50p.

ONIONS: Sturon and Red Baron.

SHALLOTS: Gourmet and Red Sun.

Onions come in loose 250g bags and will cost £1. Shallots come in loose bags of 500g and will cost £2. Both prices include a site commission of 25p.

Site commissions are a good way for your site association to earn some funding. Buying from FEDAGA gives you the cheapest prices and helps your allotment site.

Further information on potato varieties [here](#).

Place your order with your Site Representative.

Closing date: 27th November 2014.

FEDAGA is inviting members to take advantage of a maiden whip bare root fruit tree offer of 50% off. Choose a tree from [Talatan Plants'](#) catalogue and if 25 or more are ordered we'll set a closing date and make arrangements for payment. Register your intent to buy [here](#).

Please note: These offers are only available to members of sites affiliated to FEDAGA.

Too many apples? Fancy turning them into juice or cider?



The apple press has moved on from Midmar and will be at: Claremont Park on Saturday 8th November (1 - 4pm) and Inverleith on Sunday 9th November (1 - 4pm).

Contact your site rep for more details. And remember to bring receptacles to take your juice away in.

The Midmar event proved extremely popular. It is likely, on the strength of this, that FEDAGA will be purchasing a press for use on sites next year. The feedback so far has been: don't leave it so late in the year next time.

It's Showtime!

Inverleith allotments are branching out into video production.

Click [here](#) and pick "Inverleith Allotments Show 2014" to see some fine exhibits. After the video has ended the screen gives you the option to view "Apprentice Raised Beds at Inverleith Allotments". Follow the transformation of the plot that has been converted into 12 raised beds for 6 aspirant ploholders at the top of the Waiting List.

Meanwhile, Claremont Park allotments were the location for a film crew shooting part of a promotional film for the Scottish Government.

Coming to a cinema near you...

New allotment laws coming.



The current Allotment Acts (Scotland) date back to 1892 when migration of workers from the countryside to the major industrial areas caused problems with the food supply. Allotments were seen as partly solving this problem. Two world wars highlighted the need for greater home food production and further allotment acts were brought in. However, 120 years on from the first major allotment act much remains on the statute book, some useful and some quite frankly ignored by the Local Authorities.

The [Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society](#) (SAGS) has lobbied the Scottish Government over the last 10 years to recognise the importance of allotments to the health and well being of the nation. The result of this lobbying is the inclusion of allotments within the Community Empowerment Bill (Scotland) (CEB - formerly known as CERB). After a lot of hard work, SAGS has been rewarded in being invited to contribute to give oral evidence at committee stage. The 5 Point Proposal, below, is to influence the MSPs' thoughts on the main areas of concern. All the supporting evidence has already been submitted.

The SAGS 5-Point Proposal.



Today there are about 300 allotment sites across Scotland with almost 8000 plots. The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society reckons that about 1 plot per 100 population is needed for the future and the Community Empowerment Bill could enable this to happen. In 10 years' time, we could have 50,000 plots and about 100,000 people actively engaged in sustaining the soil, themselves and the local community. To accomplish this only 1,000 hectares of land will be required over the whole of Scotland.

For this to happen we need defined amendments and additions to the Community Empowerment Bill:

* Define a Standard Plot as Normally of 250 sq.m. Unless it is defined as a reference standard in law, Local Authorities will reduce plot sizes to

reduce waiting lists. Although individual sites may offer, or people ask for, a fraction of this size, the standard 250 sq.m plot is necessary to be self-sufficient in good food or provide year round activity for the retired, a family and the unwaged.

* Duty to Provide Suitable Land and Infrastructure. We don't need much. Land can be leased or agreements made with a variety of land owners, public bodies, housing associations, churches, etc.

Basic infrastructure can include drainage, fencing, paths, etc. and must be provided as required.

* Retention of FAIR RENT clause. Rents should be set to enable those on low income to participate and not be excluded.

* Preserving Land. Land that is good for cultivation must be identified and must be conserved as green space in local development plans. Sustainable economic development must not supersede sustainable community development.

* Capacity Building and Addressing Skills Gap. Formation of local learning hubs to promote good horticultural, management and skills training. Enabling progression from local community gardens, allotments through to market gardens.

Allotments contribute to areas across the social and political agenda:

- to social justice, enabling all access to their own patch of earth;
- to redressing deprivation by enabling people to grow some of their own good food;
- to health in physical exercise and well-being in peaceful retreats, reducing the burden on the NHS;
- to social inclusion providing a meeting place that brings together cross-sections of the community;
- to climate change mitigation by caring for the soil and sharing knowledge of changes in growing;
- to community empowerment where people engage and learn to work together for the common good.

Contact SAGS [here](#).

Allotment Soil is Best: Official.



Soils under Britain's allotments are significantly healthier than intensively farmed soils, researchers have found. This is the first study to show that by growing at small-scale in urban areas, it is possible to produce food sustainably without damaging the soil.

As a result of the findings, published in the [Journal of Applied Ecology](#), planners and policy makers should increase the number of allotments available, the authors say.

One of the greatest challenges facing the growing human population is meeting rising demand for food without undermining the soils on which food production -- and other services such as carbon storage, flood mitigation and locking up pollutants -- depends.

Intensive farming often results in significant declines in soil organic carbon stocks, as well as reducing the ability of soils to store water and nutrients, and damaging soil structure, which can lead to soil erosion.

Working in Leicester, ecologist Dr Jill Edmondson from the University of Sheffield took soil samples from 27 plots on 15 allotment sites across the city. She also sampled soils from local parks, gardens and surrounding agricultural land.

She measured a range of soil properties, including soil organic carbon levels, total nitrogen, and the ratio between carbon and nitrogen (which are all directly related to the amount and quality of organic matter in the soil) as well as soil bulk density, an indicator of soil compaction.

Compared with local arable fields, the allotment soil was significantly healthier: allotment soil had 32% more organic carbon, 36% higher carbon to nitrogen ratios, 25% higher nitrogen and was significantly less compacted.

According to Edmondson: "We found remarkable differences in soil quality between allotments and arable fields. Our study shows how

effectively own-growers manage soils, and it demonstrates how much modern agricultural practices damage soils."

Allotment holders are able to produce good food yields without sacrificing soil quality because they use sustainable management techniques. For example, 95% of allotment holders compost their allotment waste, so they recycle nutrients and carbon back to their soil more effectively.

As well as being good news for urban soils, the results underline the value of allotments. "An estimated 800 million city dwellers across the world participate in urban food production, which makes a vital contribution to food security. Our results suggest that in order to protect our soils, planning and policy making should promote urban own-growing rather than further intensification of conventional agriculture as a more sustainable way of meeting increasing food demand," she says. There are around 330,000 allotment plots in the UK, covering more than 8000 hectares, and demand is growing, with more than 90,000 people currently on allotment waiting lists in the UK.

However, the heyday for allotments was during World War Two, when 10% of the UK's food came from less than 1% of its cultivated land thanks to the expansion of own growing under the Dig for Victory campaign. At that time, one in three households in Leicester had an allotment but following a national decline in demand, today Leicester's allotment plots number only 3200 and cover just 2% of urban green space although the city is the second highest provider of allotments nationwide.

As well as protecting soils and boosting food security, own growing offers other health benefits, says Edmondson: "Using urban land, including domestic gardens, allotments and community gardens for own-growing is an important and often overlooked way of increasing productivity whilst also reconnecting urban dwellers with food production."

"As well as improving food security, studies show that own-growing has direct physical and mental health benefits, and can provide access to sustainably produced fruit and vegetable crops without the associated food miles."

Free Money Available Here.



CSV's Action Earth campaign is helping to get people and communities busy outdoors. They have grants to give to groups of volunteers who are carrying out environmental projects in Scotland. The campaign runs until February 2015.

- Grants from £50 to £250 are available for practical activities that involve volunteers in improving outdoor spaces or creating habitats for wildlife. Grants can be used to purchase plants, tools and materials or to cover volunteer expenses.

- If your group is volunteering on a Local Nature Reserve they can give you up to £500 for practical work, wildlife recording or educational activities that encourage more people onto the reserve.

If you have any questions contact [Robert Henderson](#) or call 0131 222 9083 / 622 7766.

More information [here](#).

This project is supported by [Scottish Natural Heritage](#).

and Free Seeds Available Here.

Join one of the UK's biggest-ever seed sowing campaigns and help to create over one million square metres of wild flowers in spring 2015. Register today to receive wild flower seeds native to Scotland for you to share with people in your formal and informal group/s, including activity clubs, societies, work places, schools and neighbourhoods.

There are 120,000 free kits up for grabs and all you need to do to register on behalf of your group/s is fill in Grow Wild's simple two-minute form [here](#).