

November 2014: Extra edition.



Image by Bothy Threads (www.bothythreads.com)

Allotment law: Your chance to help.



You will be aware of the lengthy passage of the Community Empowerment Bill that has been progressing through the Scottish Parliament. This has been referred to in recent FEDAGA Newsletters. Many of you have participated in the consultation exercise. The Bill is now at the Committee stage where MSPs hear evidence from experts. In our case, the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Association is representing our cause.

Pressure is required so that MSPs understand that there is a real need to listen to what SAGS is saying. Your site representatives have been asked to persuade your local MSPs to be receptive to SAGS' argument. It would be great if every member could add their voice to the chorus. We don't want them to think they can ignore us. The essence of the case is in the 5 Point Proposal, published in the previous Newsletter. You can read it [here](#) (scroll down a wee bit).



SAGS President Ian Welsh writes:

Part of the Community Empowerment Bill updates and replaces all of the existing allotment legislation on the statute books.

In principle it is good news that the legislation surrounding allotments is getting updated and SAGS has been actively involved throughout the process to try and make sure your rights are protected. The Bill in its current form though does have a number of omissions that could have serious implications for allotment plot holders across Scotland.

In particular, the Bill as it stands does not stipulate how big an allotment plot should be, or include a clause about fair rent levels. We are already seeing local authorities halving plots as they become vacant in an attempt to reduce waiting lists on the cheap, and Edinburgh City Council is proposing a near trebling of rents (already among the highest in the country) to generate income to subsidise other council services. It may seem far fetched, but there is nothing in the bill as it stands, that would prevent a council in the future charging £100 a year for a 1 square metre raised bed and calling it an allotment.

Your help is needed. Please lobby your Constituency and your List MSPs to highlight the aspects of the Bill where amendments are required. Our 5 points proposition and background information is available [here](#) (scroll down). If you are emailing your MSP, please copy in the 5 point proposition.

This matter is of the utmost urgency, as amendments will need to be tabled in the next few weeks if there is to be any hope of getting them into the Bill as it progresses through Parliament.

We would also appreciate it if you could let us know which MSPs you have contacted, and most importantly, those who are sympathetic to the cause. E-mail [here](#).

Thank you in advance for your help.

The benefits of working together.



By working together we can help one another. FEDAGA runs an increasing number of Trading Schemes for members which allow allotment holders to make good savings on necessary purchases. The annual Seed Potato and Onion (and Shallot) Set Scheme is currently open for orders. See what's available [here](#) and get your order in to your site rep within the next week. The closing date is 27th November.

The Kings Seeds offer runs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 52 weeks every year. To register, all you need to know is your plot number and site name. Once registered, hold on to your password for future orders. Full instructions [here](#).

As an experiment, we are offering half price fruit trees from [Talatan Plants](#). We need to get 25 orders to qualify for the discount and are already in the teens. More are coming in on a regular basis and we anticipate that we will soon set a closing date and look for firm orders and payments. Details are [here](#).

At the beginning of November FEDAGA arranged to borrow the Portobello Transition Town (PEDAL) Apple Press and Masher and set up in 3 allotment sites. It proved to be popular and we will consider purchasing our own equipment for future use on more locations. Finally, a reminder that FEDAGA has negotiated a deal for allotment holders to purchase compost in bulk bags from [Forth Resource Management](#) - the people who process what goes out in the brown bins. If you make an order for 2 bags you will get them for £50, a discount of £10. Subsequent bags cost £25 each. Delivery is free. Call 0131 339 5554. Allotment deliveries are on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Rent Rise Campaign Gathers Momentum.



This story links in with the main article on the Community Empowerment Bill. One of the legal defences we have is that allotment legislation specifies a "fair rent". If the new Bill is passed it will sweep away all existing allotment laws. All allotment holders owe it to yourselves (and subsequent generations) to make sure allotments are affordable. We have to engage with Councillors and MSPs to tell them not to look upon us as a soft touch.

If you haven't already, write to your Councillor. If you've done that, write to your MSP and engage with the Council's on-line consultative exercise. You can read the Budget Proposals (allotments on page 81) and respond [here](#).

And you can sign the online petition against the proposal [here](#).

Further information (including a scary graphic image of the increase in historical perspective) [here](#). For the avoidance of doubt, this will not impact on the invoices going out in January. They should remain at this year's levels.

FEDAGA is looking for your ideas on how to encourage the Council to not impose the rise. Think creatively about how the Council could make money in other ways. (Such as developing new allotments so more rent can be taken.) Ideas [here](#), please.

Labour/ SNP coalition to make
£22 million of cuts

to our Council services

THIS IS NOT SOCIAL JUSTICE

Public Meeting

Thursday 27th November

7.00pm, Augustine United Church

41 George IV Bridge



Budget Question Time

7.00–8.00pm, Monday 1 December 2014

City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh

The City of Edinburgh Council would like to invite you to be part of their Budget Question Time event, giving members of the public the opportunity to quiz their panel of senior councillors on the Council's budget proposals for next year and beyond.

The proceedings will be chaired by Edinburgh Evening News Editor, Frank O'Donnell, and broadcast live via the Council website.

If you would like to put a question to the panel, or just come along and be part of the audience, please complete this short online [questionnaire](#) by Friday 21 November. Please note that places are limited.

This is a great opportunity to play your part in Edinburgh's budget challenge but you can also get involved before 19 December 2014 by:

- watching their short animated [film](#)
- taking the budget [challenge](#) with the online budget planner
- taking a look at the 2015/16 budget [proposals](#) overview, or download the full proposals.

Your feedback will help the Council to make its final budget decisions on 12 February 2015.

Juniper Green News

From Juniper Green Community Council:

1. Juniper Green Farmers' Market ... Saturday 22nd November from 9am-1pm in the Village Hall Community Garden And if the weather is bad, inside the Hall where it is warm. Come and give it your support. JG Village Hall is on the corner of Baberton Avenue and Juniper Park Road, just north of the tennis courts.

Tickets will be available from 10am for the "Meet Your Politicians" event (see below) and there will be a chance to set a question for the panel on the form available at the market, so just ask one of the stewards on duty for the form.

Following the successful feature over the last 2 months of a Fair Trade stall with ground coffee, tea, chocolate and other items: Russell is back

again with more goodies on display so do re-stock your supplies. A new stallholder for the next market is Belter and Cole chocolates who supply a range of hand made filled truffles and boxed chocolates, made in Tranent. Ruth will be joined by a colleague with some crafts and seasonal cards too to make use of the whole stall space this month. An additional feature for families for the pre-Christmas market is face painter Carlene Ritchie from Edinburgh, so bring the children along to enjoy the fun.

Other stalls this Saturday include:

Stortebaeker breads, pretzels, sweet and savoury continental baking. Cedar Cottage meats, pies, slices, sausages, poultry, bacon and eggs. Heavenly Homemade preserves, marmalades and chutneys

Scoff-it for a tasty snack with your coffee

MaRoberts spicy and fruity Tanzanian cooking sauces

The free community stall will be taken by Members of Juniper Green Parish Church. Minister Jim Dewar writes: "Members of Juniper Green Parish Church will be on the community stall this week. They will be selling a variety of goods from the Third World charity Tearcraft/Created including presents and Christmas Cards, do support this worthy cause. They will also be asking you what do you want of your local church?"

1. Meet Your Politicians for a Valley Question Time Monday 8 December, Gibson-Craig Hall 7.30pm

Your local elected politicians: Alistair Darling MP, Gordon MacDonald MSP, Councillors Dominic Heslop, Bill and Ricky Henderson have all agreed to attend a Question Time meeting in the Gibson-Craig Hall on Monday 8th December starting at 7.30pm. The invitation to join the panel, which comes from the 3 CCs of Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green, has been extended to List MSP Alison Johnstone of the Green Party who will add colour to the event!

If you have a question for the panel, please

email chair@junipergreencc.org.uk or write c/o 495 Lanark Road, Juniper Green, EH14 5DQ together with your contact details or use the form at this month's market.

Tickets essential, look out for the posters. We can promise you a good night, so don't miss it.

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