

March and April 2015



New Allotment Legislation: The Final Hurdle is in Sight



The Community Empowerment Bill has passed the Committee Stage with 3 important provisions benefitting allotments included. They are:

- No-one should wait for more than 5 years to get an allotment plot;
- A 'Standard Allotment Plot' is defined as approximately 250 square metres in size although people will be free to opt for a smaller plot if they wish; and
- Rents should be calculated on a fair and transparent basis.

The next stage is for Parliament to decide upon the Bill. There is concern among campaigners that the Government may not be receptive. (Background information [here](#)).



Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society President Ian Welsh writes: The amendments on fair rent and waiting times are self –explanatory, and the amendment

on plot size has been worded so that as well as defining a standard plot as 250 square metres, it gives people the option to have a smaller plot (if that is what *they*, not the local authorities want), while ensuring that anyone fortunate enough to have a plot larger than 250 square metres isn't affected.

SAGS feel that with these amendments, the Allotments Section of the CEB as it currently stands gives an excellent legal framework going forward and will be an improvement on all of the old Allotments legislation that it will replace. However it is by no means certain that the final version of the Bill that will become law will include all of these amendments, as the Scottish Government may decide to remove some of them before bringing the Bill back to Parliament for the final debate. The date of the debate has not yet been announced, but is likely to be shortly after the general election.

We are asking that all our members and supporters contact their MSPs requesting that the essential amendments put forward by SAGS and agreed to by the Local government and Regeneration Committee are not removed from the Bill.

Speaking to your MSPs in person would be ideal, but if you prefer to write, this [link](#) contains details of how to easily contact all of your MSPs and the wording of the amendments we want kept in the Bill to which you can add personal comments to explain why you feel this is such an important issue.



Finally, SAGS has set up a Survey Monkey questionnaire to help it provide information to persuade politicians on the issue of plot size.

Over 600 responses have been received, but it's not too late to add your voice. It only takes a couple of minutes (honest!). You can find it [here](#).

Edinburgh Allotments: The Way Forward

A pat on the back to all who campaigned to prevent the allotment rent rise. We won! The plan was resoundingly ditched in large part due to the massive stushie it caused.

FEDAGA has written to the Council to remind them that the 2009 Agreement provides for a rent freeze from 2015 to 2020. We have also tabled the proposals that were put to last year's AGM, which include provision of more allotments to satisfy demand (and raise income), a nominal charge to join the waiting list and to rent a raised bed in a community garden (both currently free), developing "apprentice beds" to get people into allotments quicker and additional voluntary administrative support for the Allotment Officer.

The Council has countered with a proposal to review the rents, this time listening to the public during a 2 month consultation period. They hope to have a new rent in place for January 2016.

FEDAGA has asked if the Council is intending to operate the allotment service at a profit. There has not been a clear answer to this.

What *has* been revealed is that the overall cost of providing the service now is more complicated than previously thought. Some expenditure is to pay off borrowing incurred to develop small growing spaces that are not allotments and are rent-free. There is a concern our allotment rent money might be used for this purpose. FEDAGA intends to seek clarification and will report back to members.

The next Allotment Strategy Steering Group will meet on May 6th.



Opportunity for Keen Photographers



The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) is running its first ever photography competition featuring greenspaces in the Central Scotland Area. Greenspace can mean a lot of things. The parks that people play in, pathways that are used for cycling or walking to libraries and schools, the trees that are planted in the middle of a high street, or an allotment – that's just to name a few.

CSGN are looking for the best images of greenspace and green infrastructure that the CSGN area has to offer. There are three

categories. Winning entries in each category will receive £250 and up to 12 shortlisted entries will receive £50 each.

For full details of categories, entry deadlines, the precise area covered by CSGN and other terms and conditions of entry click [here](#).

Wouldn't it be nice if an allotment photograph was a winner? Good luck!

Rare Potato Club News

There are 41 members all with their rare varieties planted ready for a possible surprise if what they grow is more than just an old variety.

There are plans to arrange a visit to see SASA's potato fields later in the year.

Soil Contaminant Survey

To read more about how to participate in a soil contaminant survey click [here](#) and scroll down.

Ten Top Tips for Spring



1 - The ground is still quite cold, so warm things up a bit and kill off early annual weeds by covering earth with black plastic a few days before sowing seeds.

2 - Clean up any last leaf litter and plant debris from last year - they make great hiding places for slugs at the start of the season!

3 - Deadhead your daffodils and other spring flowers, but leave the green foliage to feed the bulb for next year.

- 4 - Make sure you have plenty of labels clean and ready to go for seed sowing.
- 5 - Sow successionally - sowing a particular seed variety over a few weeks rather than all at once - so that you get staggered crops later in the year.
- 6 - Set up a seed sowing diary so your group can keep a track of what has been sown when, and learn what works well for next year.
- 7 - Turn your compost regularly in the spring to deter mice from nesting in there. It's also a good source of mulch and plant food when planting out perennials and feeding rhubarb.
- 8 - Start weeding early! Nettles and other perennial weeds have started to pop up - getting them early can really help for the rest of the year.
- 9 - Now's a great time to sort out your shed and clean and sharpen any tools ready for the summer.
- 10 - Do you have a pond? Check for frogspawn!