

November 2015 - A New Era?



The FEDAGA Apple Press on site at Restalrig. See story below.

There are gathering pressures which will change the way allotments are run in the city, originating in the UK Government's austerity measures and the effect this has on Local Authority finances - and also the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Act.

The Council wants to make savings and once again the allotment service is being looked at. If the Budget Proposals go through rent will rise, concessions will be tightened and services cut. Down the line, the Council is considering further reducing the services it provides and - against ploholders' stated wishes - is exploring devolution of management of sites.

FEDAGA negotiates with the City of Edinburgh Council on behalf of all affiliated Site Associations and has called a Special General Meeting at 7.15pm on Tuesday 10th November to be held in the Southside Community Centre so that the Site Associations can provide feedback and an agreed approach formulated.

A briefing note for plotholders has been prepared and can be read on the News page of the FEDAGA website [here](#).



Change is coming, whether we like it or not. It would seem that we can resist, fail to engage, and make the best of what happens. Or we can talk with officials and lobby councillors with the intention of arriving at the best possible deal. If the proposal goes through unamended we face a 10% hike in rent and a 20% cut in services, which is a 30% change in the wrong direction. Please attend Site Association meetings if you can, speak to your Site Representative or get in touch with FEDAGA [directly](#). Ensure your voice is heard at the Special General Meeting on 10th November.

Useful links:

Read the Plotholders Survey Results [here](#).

Read the Waiting List Survey Results [here](#).

Give the Council your response to their Budget proposals [here](#).

If you want to attend the Council's Budget Question Time event on 23rd November click [here](#).

Telferton Threat: Developer Makes Move.

Geoff Pearson of the Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council writes:

"I've just had a letter from Avant Homes announcing that they have submitted a planning application for 28 houses and 42 allotments at Telferton Allotments. It will appear on the weekly list next week

[commencing 2nd November] and then there will be a couple of weeks for objections."

42 allotments sounds good (more than the number of houses) but actually isn't that impressive. We're talking half plots here, so don't be taken in. And we're also talking about the loss of a large chunk of a near-100 year old site. You can read the letter Geoff refers to [here](#). There's ever so slight movement in the house/allotment ratio and the height of the development's been reduced. But it still represents a loss of allotment land in a city where the Council has a waiting list for allotments twice the number of existing plots. The Community Empowerment Act requires all Councils to keep the size of their waiting lists to half of the number of plots.

Objections to the planning department, please. If you haven't already, please join the near-2500 protestors who have signed the [petition](#). Visit the Telferton Facebook [page](#) to keep up to date. FEDAGA will join other objectors in addressing the Planning Committee later this month.

Potato and Onion Trading Scheme: Details



Brian Bleakley, FEDAGA Trading Secretary writes:

We are offering a wide selection of seed potatoes and onion sets at competitive prices - details below. Should a variety not be available I will substitute unless you tell me otherwise. All potatoes come in 2.5kg bags except for Bartletts Premium at 2kg. Onions and shallots are loose in 500g bags. All potatoes are priced at £3, onions at £1.50 and shallots

at £2. Hessian sacks are £1 each. The closing date for orders to reach me is 27th November.

Potatoes:

First early.

Duke of York. Oval and yellow and semi-waxy. Good flavour.

Red Duke of York. Good boiler and baker.

Lady Christl. Oval and recommended by the RHS.

Maris Bard. Easy to grow.

Foremost. Popular with good flavour.

Organic Colleen. New variety. Good all-rounder. Good disease resistance.

Second Early.

Kestrel. Long shaped with blue eyes. Good yield.

Nadine. White potato with good yield and eel worm resistant.

Wilja. Good all-rounder.

Catriona. Good tasty old favourite.

Vivaldi. Albert Bartlett premium. RHS recommended.

Divaa. New variety. White skinned good for mash, chips and roasts. Eel worm resistance.

Main Crops.

Cara. Resistant to scale, drought and oval with red eyes.

King Edward. Oval, floury with red eyes.

Sarpo Mira. Famous for its blight resistance.

Rooster. Albert Bartlett premium.

Mozart. New variety. Red skinned and high yield. Good disease resistance.

Salad Potatoes.

Pink Fir Apple. Distinctive flavour and recommended by the RHS.

Charlotte. Reliable and resistant to blight.

Nicola. Creamy firm flesh. Best steamed, boiled or roasted whole.

Onions:

Sturon. Traditional and reliable.

Red Baron. Attractive purple salad. Easy to grow and a RHS variety.

Shallots:

Golden Gourmet. Hardy and bolt resistant. RHS variety.

Red Sun. Red tinged, good yield and stores well.

Hessian sacks. Decent size and good value.

Your site representative should have details of how to order. Contact them and place your order with them. Cash preferred. If a cheque is necessary, make it out to the Site Representative as we'd like one cheque to FEDAGA to accompany the site order. Delivery in February.

The Apple Press - in action.



The Apple Press and Masher was in action across Edinburgh this autumn. It was at Midmar, Restalrig (pictured, and not the neighbouring Prospect Bank site as advertised), Saughton Mains and Inverleith. Gillian Nugent of Restalrig said "it's not that scary to use! We got nearly 8 litres of apple juice, which we're currently turning into cider." Next autumn, please bear in mind that the equipment is available to any affiliated site and get in touch to book it in good time.

Snippets and contributions...



...regarding the hot topic of the moment: the Future of Edinburgh Allotments.

Comments received so far include:

- 1) I am skeptical on the capability or desire of the Council to manage assets with environmental value (eg. Craighouse).
- 2) The Allotment Officer is a nice guy but does not make life easy for site associations or himself.
- 3) FEDAGA needs to change: less "old boy" mentality, less confrontation.
- 4) Plotolders have to realise their responsibilities and obligations to support their site community.
- 5) Personally a rent of £110 for my full plot is the bargain of the year.
- 6) It seems reasonable to have a concessionary rate in line with other council concessions.
- 7) Removal of site waste collection will be a stimulus for change - see 4) above - "I can just dump it without thinking".
- 8) Removal of pest control is removal of a non service (in my experience) and again challenges plotholder hygiene management.
- 9) Because rents are so cheap for many people, a proportion of plotholders get a plot and just hang on to it with minimum cultivation "for when I have more time" or something.



10) The Community Empowerment Act mandates Councils to only have a waiting list of 50% of the plots they have available. In Edinburgh's case they have around 1400 plots, so that means they should have a waiting list of under 700. In fact the list runs to 2800. For them to meet that target they would need to produce over 2000 plots giving a total number of plots as about 3500!! The Council couldn't manage that or anything like that under their present system. Hence the desire for "a new model" for allotments.

11) A strategy to fill the funding gap could be to create as many new plots as possible so that the extra income starts to close the deficit. After all, the Council can live with a deficit when it wants to as in Edinburgh Leisure and also the running of the Trams - and maybe some that we don't know about.



**Notice of FEDAGA Special General Meeting
to be held at 7.15pm on Tuesday 10th November 2015
at Southside Community Centre**

The above mentioned meeting will be held at the premises of the City of Edinburgh Council:

- Allotment Strategy for 2016 – 2020
- Proposed Rent Rise and Reduction of Services
- Planning for New Allotment Sites
- Results of Allotment Holders' and Waiting List Surveys
- New Regulations and the Community Empowerment Act
- The Future of Allotments: Devolution of Management?

The agenda of the annual Board Meeting of the Allotment Holders' Group was:

[Link to agenda of annual board meeting of SEEDS Allotment Association in 2015](#)

and the Waiting List Survey was:

[Link to survey of allotment holders' and waiting list survey in 2014](#)

The agenda of the meeting of the Council's Budget Committee and special for the future of allotments was:

[Link to agenda of budget committee](#)

Delegations to various fundations and individual members are encouraged to discuss the agenda of the meeting and to bring forward any proposals. HH215 will be representing allotment holders' interests and on these topics over the evening meeting.

It is vital that you vote for your