



# Newsletter

**June 2015**



## How To Plug The Funding Gap?



FEDAGA is currently considering how best to address the allotment funding gap that the City of Edinburgh Council wants to plug over the next couple of years.

We have been presented with varying amounts of costings for running the service over the last few years. Each time the price rises. We are currently looking at a figure of £101K which includes employee costs and overheads, repair and maintenance, refuse disposal, utilities and pest control. The Council have agreed with us that interest payments for capital borrowing to extend the allotment estate will not be included in the annual budget.

There is a shortfall of around £24K of expenditure over income. The Council wants to raise this amount and is talking to us on how best to do this.

FEDAGA's bottom line is that the 2009 agreement must be maintained. After the rents were raised from £60 to £100 (for a full plot with no concessions) there should be a period of no rent rise from 2015 to 2020. The Council says that this cannot be binding as they claim that circumstances can override such aspirations. The present funding crisis faced by all local authorities is such a circumstance.

In addition to a 10 Point Proposal which contains many ways the Council might better run allotment affairs and generate more income, FEDAGA has discussed two further areas.

One is to look again at the 50% concession and the second would be to encourage more DIY repair and maintenance on sites.



Concessions: Edinburgh's Council allotments have provided 50% reductions to all those over 60 and those in receipt of benefit. Few allotments elsewhere - and independently run allotments in the city - give such generous concessions. Indeed, many allotments (such as Dundee and Musselburgh) have no concessions. Concessions for most other leisure activities in the city are in the 10 to 25% area. Someone with a half plot and enjoying a concessionary rate pays about 50p a week. FEDAGA recognises that it is hard to successfully defend such a low rate. It may be necessary to look again at the current concession arrangements.



DIY: Many well-organised sites take care of a lot of repairs and maintenance themselves. It's often quicker than waiting for the bureaucracy to take effect. It's always cheaper. If a bill is generated the Council is required to use an approved contractor. That's how things cost so much. It makes sense for tasks that can be addressed locally and quickly by skilled ploholders to be done with as little fuss as possible. FEDAGA would like to encourage this across all sites. Over the next few months FEDAGA and the Council will be looking at how to take the allotment service forward in the next Cultivating Communities strategy document. This will be an important and all-encompassing framework that will define how our allotments will be run to 2020.

Any comments you have can be made directly to the Management Committee at

[committee@fedaga.org](mailto:committee@fedaga.org)

The AGM is coming up on 20th October so please put that date in your diary. And your local Site Association may be discussing it's position on these matters as well. Get involved.



For the 10 Point Plan - see the appendix to the [Minutes](#) of the June meeting of the Management Committee.

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## Gardening Scotland



Three things seen at this year's show...

Fife Council Allotment Service showed an innovative use for old skips in two displays. The first showed how the skip could be opened up to become a portable school vegetable patch. They plan to start using them in 2016 to deliver to a school who plant it up and look after it until the summer holidays. Then a lorry arrives and picks up the vegetable patch and takes it to an allotment site who will then look after it through the holidays. It is then returned in time for the school to enjoy their harvest.

The second display again involved an old skip but was converted into a greenhouse with wheel chair access. The actual beds were high enough to get a persons knees underneath whilst sitting in a wheelchair.

It was a refreshing change to see a local authority that enthused about it's communities growing fresh vegetables out in the fresh air.

Interesting to note that in Fife a full plot costs just £35 a year. This apparently gets you a freshly cleared and rotovated plot, rubbish disposal together with a shed complete with water collection.



Killandean Allotments, out near Livingston, was officially opened last month. The background is that the land has been leased by the association from West Lothian Council. It was the first new allotment site to be opened in Livingston for 30 years. It has created 35 plots which has doubled the allotment stock in Livingston. The actual creation of the allotment site including fencing, paths, sheds, community facilities, composting toilet, rainwater harvesting equipment

and composting facilities has been made possible by grants from the Climate Challenge Fund.



Wholesale Priced Compost to Allotment Associations. Dale Foot Composts would like to sell composts based on wool to site associations. See [www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk](http://www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk) for details. The price to the public is normally £10.99 a bag. Dale Foot are happy to supply allotment associations with a 65 bag pallet load at £4.20 a bag plus delivery (£43.20). This makes the price per bag less than £5. If you want to take advantage of this generous offer then give them a call on 01931 713281. They will supply a pallet with different types should you wish.

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## Scottish Allotments Conference

This year's Scottish Allotments Conference and Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society AGM will be held in the Victoria Halls, Dunblane on Saturday June 20. The conference will be introduced by SAGS

President, Ian Welsh. He will talk about the Society's activities this past year.

Dr Aileen McLeod, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform will address the conference on The Future of Allotments in Scotland.

Dr McLeod's presentation will be followed by presentations on Soil and Allotments by several experts on different aspects of soil health. There will then be a question and answer session on these topics.

After lunch Karen Kenny, president of NSALG, a UK-wide allotment organisation, will address the conference. This will be followed by a talk from Alex Rowley MSP on Allotments in Deprived Communities, then by presentations from allotment groups from all around Scotland and finally by workshops on a range of relevant issues.

Conference Agenda and Registration Form [here](#).

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## New Zealand Flatworm Survey

Click [here](#) for information about New Zealand Flatworms and an opportunity to participate in a survey on their spread with a view to finding out what influence they are having on the environment.

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## Trestle Table Offer

FEDAGA has been asked if allotment holders are interested in buying cheap second-hand trestle tables for £5 each. They're in Fife and transport may be required to get them, although it may be possible to bring some over to Edinburgh. If anyone is interested, [contact](#) us and we'll put you in touch with the seller.

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## The Power of Food Festival

Edible Edinburgh is supporting the [Power of Food Festival](#) over the weekend of 20th and 21st June involving 15 of the city's community gardens with highlights ranging from an insect safari to storytelling, birds, music and more. The festival has joined up with [Sustrans](#) to offer a guided cycle tour of the Festival as part of National Cycle Network week and [Edible Edinburgh](#) will be launching the Sustainable Food City Charter.