

August 2015



Danish Allotments Talk

Judy Wilkinson writes: I think everyone who came to Birger Andersen's talk about Danish allotments were enthused by his description of his hut and the contribution the chalets make to health and well-being of the people in Denmark (40,000 allotments in a country with 5.5 million people).

There were many interesting questions for Scotland, particularly because Denmark has two kinds of sites - N/F which are like our traditional allotments and mainly used for growing produce with small huts and H/F which are like Birger's with tiny chalets on quite small plots that are used as summer residences. The Danish word for this lifestyle is hygge, which roughly means to be cozy and relaxed in warm surroundings with friends and family.



Birger said he was happy to send his slides and also answer questions if people email him at Birger.andersen@sonderport.dk.

There is an interesting description of allotments in Aarhus as part of the sustainable city programme [here](#).

Also, an article in Scotland on Sunday about the Nordic House exhibition this talk formed part of can be found [here](#).

In Scotland allotment huts are a joy and opportunity for great creativity but can be a cause of tension. Some people view them as 'shanty towns' and local authorities are now putting small sheds on new sites which are functional but all the same.

Hannah Baxter is a PhD student at Glasgow University and has a blog on the Glasgow [Allotments History site](#). She recently undertook a survey of the huts on Budhill and Springboig allotments in Glasgow which will become part of the archaeological records for Scotland. The report will be part of her thesis but she also plans to discuss her findings and show her photos at the Celebration of Glasgow's Allotments on October 3rd.



Finally, would you be interested in learning more about the diversity of huts on allotments in Scotland and also in Europe? We could perhaps discuss how about the different needs could be met and where the land could be found? There is also a possibility of an international gathering so if you would like to contribute to this discussion please keep in touch. (Email Judy at judy@atlas.co.uk).

Apple Press Ready for Action



FEDAGA has purchased its own apple press and masher after the enthusiastic reception to our apple press days last autumn. The equipment will be appearing at Midmar soon and is available to any affiliated site for the purpose of transforming excess apples into juice (or cider).

FEDAGA is looking for a volunteer to look after the equipment and make it available to sites. (It is stored in the FEDAGA Shop at Inverleith). If you want to use it or are interested in helping out please contact [Stuart McKenzie](#).

Scottish Horticultural Conference



Celebrating Horticulture in Scotland - from John Reid, Thomas Blaikie and David Douglas to Ian and Beryl McNaughton, Billy Carruthers and George Anderson brought together by the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society to celebrate its continuing goal of supporting and guiding individuals in the pursuit of growing plants.

Growing The Future - guest speakers include David Knott, Ken Cox, George Anderson, Grow and Learn Project participant, Expert Q&A session and Exhibitors. The conference takes place on 28th August, in St. Andrews.

Further details [here](#).

Midmar Open Day



Liz Grace writes: We would like to extend an invitation to you to attend our Open Day.

The date for your diary is Saturday 22nd August, between 2 and 5pm. If you have been before you'll know that we have a large and sloping site with extensive views over Edinburgh. Our allotment plot holders have diverse approaches to growing, some of which will be demonstrated. Also, we'll be conducting an tour of the site in which plant life other than edible crops(i.e. weeds) and their importance to biodiversity will be discussed.

We sell produce and flowers, jams, preserves, home baking etc. and serve refreshments at our Midmar Cafe in the centre of the site where you can relax and enjoy the view. All proceeds go towards providing communal equipment and services for our plot holders.

Here's hoping for dry if not sunny weather.

Allotment Walls - Latest



FEDAGA has been concerned at the state of some allotments walls. We have encouraged the Council to conduct a survey. We now have a reply from Contracts Manager Bob McAllister:

I can confirm no urgent problems arising from the Estate Surveyor's inspection. At Redhall, the high wall at the gate will need re-pointing soon. At Claremont Park some coping stones should be re-bedded. Plotolders are asked to not tug weeds from walls as this may cause damage. Plotolders are encouraged to report structural concerns to the [Allotment Officer](#) and this will be progressed by the Allotments Strategy Working Group.

Community Empowerment: The Next Steps



The Community Empowerment Bill received Royal Assent on 24th July and is now an Act. But it's not over yet! There's yet another round of consultation coming up on the secondary legislation (compensation, etc.) and statutory guidance that will need to be in place for the Act to be fully operational.

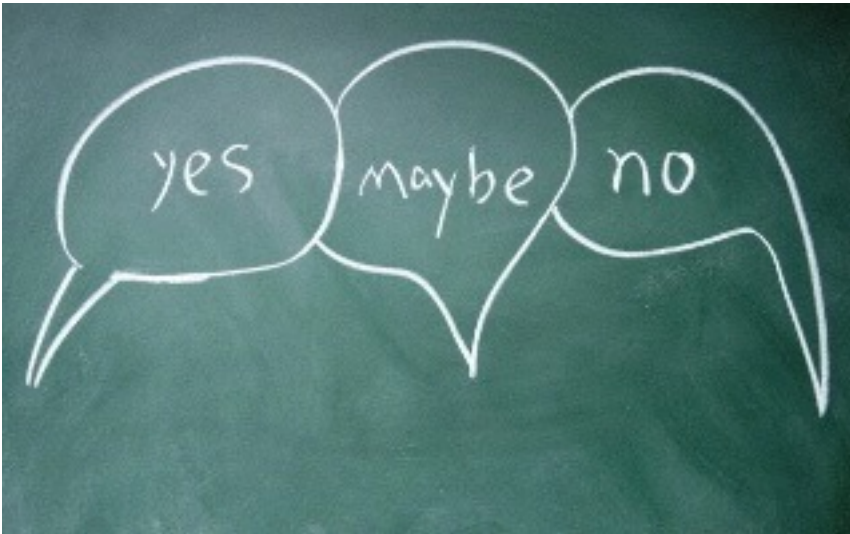
The Act will require local authorities to develop a Food Growing Strategy. The Scottish Government wants to work with allotments (through SAGS) to ensure the food-growing community is engaged in this work. Watch out for this in the new year.

There is provision for Compulsory Purchase powers for allotment provision which has human rights implications for those affected. Work is to be done with the allotment community on ascertaining how best to justify these powers.

It is proposed to form a Tripartite Group including local authorities and allotment groups to monitor implementation of the Act and encourage constructive talks between allotment providers and users. The first meeting of this group is expected in spring 2016.

FEDAGA no longer has direct representation on the SAGS committee and would welcome a volunteer who is interested in this kind of work and might want to become engaged in it. Please contact committee@fedaga.org.uk

Rent Rant



Regular readers of this Newsletter and the hard core who devour minutes of Management Committee meetings will be aware of the pressures the Council faces on allotment expenditure and FEDAGA's engagement with the process. Feedback from the wider membership generally has been positive about what has been proposed. However, our Secretary recently received one letter of opposition which strongly argued against the review of concessions and attacked FEDAGA for raising this. It might be useful to consider why this has come to pass. Firstly, the landlord, the Council, set the rents - and not FEDAGA. The Council owns and manages the sites. FEDAGA is merely a representative body that engages in activities that benefit plotholders. Our recent campaign to prevent the Council raising the rent by an enormous amount only last year was a complete success. What FEDAGA is trying to do now is communicate with members and tell them the position as it is stated by the Council.

No-one wants to pay any more for their allotment - or any service provided by the Council. What FEDAGA is working towards is the sustainability of good quality allotments. The Council, as everyone is aware, is in dire financial straits and intends to run the allotment service in future without suffering a loss. Currently the figures indicate that an extra £20,000 has to be raised annually. We can either be part of that debate or not. If we're not involved we pretty much have to accept what is imposed. In our discussions with Council officials the point has been made that other leisure activities are subsidised - and that should continue to include allotments. The problem here is that the level of concession for allotments is a lot more generous than for other leisure activities. Hence our proposal.

FEDAGA has designed a survey that it is hoped will soon be distributed by the Council to each allotment holder in the city which will engage with their concerns and establish what the majority would prefer. Members are encouraged to use that as a way of getting their point over. Otherwise, speak directly to Councillors as that is the most effective way of making your wishes plain.

It has been pointed out that there are many allotment sites where rents are much lower, such as Musselburgh and Wester Hailes. However, these are not comparable with Edinburgh Council sites as they are all entirely self managed. This involves an enormous amount of work for a small dedicated group of volunteers. Indeed, ploholders are expected to contribute time and effort in a collective manner as a condition their lease. The work includes collecting the rent, paying the landlord the rent, organising maintenance and repairs, plot inspection, evictions where required, administration of the waiting list and a lot else besides. Low rents are very nice, but they only come at the expense of those volunteers who very often get overloaded and burn out. The experience of self managed sites is often not a happy one and FEDAGA has detected zero enthusiasm for this in Edinburgh.

I hope this helps clarify matters a little. Our members' opinions matters very much to the Management Committee - to state the obvious. The FEDAGA AGM is on the evening of October 20th and all members are encouraged to attend and consider standing for office. Papers for the AGM are to be sent out to site reps this coming week. Currently a lot of work is being done by too few. With more support from members FEDAGA is stronger and more representative.

©2015 Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotment and Gardens Associations |
FEDAGA