



Newsletter

May 2013.



Deadline approaches for allotments bill consultation.



The deadline for responses to the Scottish Government's consultation on allotment law is fast approaching. It is important that a good number of us make a response. You have until Friday 24th May to have your say.

FEDAGA's President, Peter Wright, has prepared the following brief that can be used as a starting off point for your own thoughts.

THE DEFINITION OF AN ALLOTMENT.

Qn. 1a - How should the term "allotment" be defined?

The current Allotment Acts (Scotland) 1892, 1922, 1950 define allotments and allotment gardens as not exceeding one acre (4,000sq.m), 40 poles (1,000sq.m) and 20 poles (500sq.m).

A new definition is required which satisfies current aspirations and gives flexibility.

An Allotment of a standard size is 250sq.m of growing space. A group of standard allotments will comprise an allotment site. The majority of the allotments will be tended by individuals, or their families and friends and will be non commercial. Groupings of individuals and organisations may tend a standard allotments within the allotment site. Fractions of the standard allotment may be made available as required.

Qn. 1b - What potential impacts, either positive or negative, will the proposed change in definition have on different organisations and/or sectors of society?

The available land will be used more efficiently, a standard allotment allows an organic based 4 year crop rotation cycle enhancing the quality of the soil and good bacteria, minimising the build-up of pests and harmful bacteria. This ensures that the land and soil remains in good condition in perpetuity. A standard allotment is enough growing space to provide the annual basic fruit and vegetable requirements for a family.

The ability to keep livestock on an allotment will be reduced.

Qn. 1c - What potential impacts, either positive or negative, will the proposed change in definition have on the environment?

The more people that have an allotment the more their combined carbon footprint will be reduced. Less food packaging. Eating seasonal food. Increased bio-diversity. Greater opportunity for nectar for bees. More composting on allotment sites means less land fill. Allotments across Scotland allow a perfect means to learn about, promote and protect the optimum varieties for local conditions thereby improving food security.

Qn. 1d - What potential economic or regulatory impacts, either positive or negative, will the suggested change to the definition of allotments have?

Increases in the number of people growing will produce a healthier nation, less obesity, improved mental well-being, thus reducing NHS costs and releasing finance to grow the economy. Children on allotments, either with parents or with schools will learn about growing

food, healthy exercise, and respect for the environment, invaluable knowledge for the future. Allotment sites provide intergenerational inclusion. Allotments promote social inclusion at all levels age, gender, class, disability, etc. More standard allotments will boost the Scottish economy by the purchase of seeds, plants, fertilisers, tools, equipment, books, advice, etc.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

Current Powers and Duties.

Qn. 2 - What current duties and powers that Local Authorities have in relation to allotments should be changed and in what way?

a - Duties.

The current duties as defined by the current Allotment Acts (Scotland) should be enforced. All allotments should be protected from closure by Statute.

b - Powers.

The current powers as defined by the current Allotment Acts (Scotland) should be enforced. Including, among others, that a register be kept of all allotments within the Local Authority area, and that register be readily available and transparent.

Revised Powers and Duties.

A timeframe for gaining an allotment.

Qn. 3a - Should Local Authorities be required to provide individuals in their area with an allotment within a specified timeframe?

Yes. If 6 or more individuals, as a group, identify suitable land for an allotment site of standard allotments, then land should be made available within 2 years. That land should be within 1km of the centre of the group.

Qn. 3b - What potential impacts, either positive or negative, would such a duty have on different organisations and/or sectors of society?

It will reduce the delays in groups getting access to land. Reduce the waiting lists for allotments. Reduce areas of conflict and frustration within the community. Increase the production of grow your own food, with all the benefits that brings. Under-used land will be removed from the land stock for the benefit of the community.

Population size and the number of allotments.

Qn. 4a - What are your views on placing a duty on Local Authorities to provide a specific number of allotments in their area per head of population?

Suitable land should be preserved to allow 1 standard allotment per 100 of the population. This set aside land should be made available as

demand requires. The SIMD should be taken into account when releasing land and that the total demand is satisfied in these areas.

Allotments and planning.

Qn. 5a - Should Local Authorities be required by statute to develop and publish a strategic plan relating to land use for food growing purposes?

Yes. This strategic plan should specifically include the provision of standard allotments. The strategic plan should identify all potential food growing land within their area. Food growing spaces should be seen as an introduction to standard allotments, to act as a learning source, provide experience and skills. Also as individuals get older and cannot manage a standard plot then food growing spaces become a natural alternative.

Qn. 5b - What potential impacts, either positive or negative, would such a duty have on different organisations and/or sectors of society?

This would identify land as required under Qn. 4a.

UPDATING AND SIMPLIFYING THE LEGISLATION.

Qn. 6a - In what other ways, other than those already outlined in section 6 (of the consultation document), should the legislation relating to the provision of allotments be updated and, or simplified?

Current legislation on keeping registers of allotments should be enforced for both public and private allotments. See Qn. 2b above.

All other current legislation should be retained, but it does need updating and simplifying.

Qn. 6b - What potential impacts, either positive or negative, will the suggested legislative changes have on different organisations and/or sectors of society?

Simplifying and updating the current legislation will enable the law enforcers to ensure that the community needs are satisfied.

Further information and the links you will need to give your response can be found [here](#)

Council Allotment Report



The Allotment Officer gave the following report at the May meeting of the FEDAGA Management Committee:

All burst pipes have been repaired at a cost of £820. Sites affected were Stenhouse, Pilrig Park, Redhall, Craigentenny, Saughton Mains and Warriston.

The waste bin uplifts are now sorted out and proceeding well, with the exception of Restalrig, Prospect Bank and Saughton Mains which will be addressed.

At Saughton Mains the Scottish Power contractors are now running 3 months behind schedule. It is anticipated that the work will be completed by the end of May. The contractors will tarmac the main path.

The weekly inspection routine is working well. Sites that are improving due to enthusiastic new ploholders are Stenhouse, Bridgend, Claremont Park, Dumbryden and Midmar. Inverleith has deteriorated.

The new site at Kirkliston will be completed by the end of May. Work on the new site at Baronscourt will commence mid to late summer.

The path improvement work had been on a tight schedule. Pilrig Park was not completed and Warriston not commenced. There had been

criticism of the quality of the work. It was generally felt the whin dust could have been applied more generously, particularly at Restalrig where remedial work will be carried out. The new paths at Carrick Knowe and Stenhouse are considered to be satisfactory.

At Carrick Knowe the proposed soil bund to address the flooding problem has not been created. This is because the tram company will not allow access until the project is completed.

Tree pruning will be carried out at Craigentiny, Restalrig, Midmar and Bridgend.

£500 has been spent on pest control at Midmar and Bridgend.

£420 has been spent on plumbing repairs.

Some ploholders are bringing a lot of rubbish on to sites. They have been contacted to tell them to remove it. This problem appears to be particularly bad at Bridgend.

Polytunnels are becoming more common on sites. It was established that ploholders on Council sites must request permission to erect any structure other than a shed or tool store. The Council will try to work with FEDAGA to achieve a position on the use of polytunnels. Consideration will be given to polytunnels of around 8 by 10 or 10 by 10 feet. The matter may be covered by any future regulations when the CERB legislation is passed.

The FEDAGA Management Committee will discuss the matter fully at their June meeting. Points to be considered are how neighbouring plots would be affected, by shade and water run-off. The practical requirement of irrigating plants inside a hot polytunnel should also be considered by ploholders. Many polytunnels change the landscape and may cause objections. As things stand, permission to erect a polytunnel must be sought from the Allotment Officer and this will not be granted until the matter has been resolved. If a ploholder has erected an unauthorised polytunnel, they may be asked to take it down.

Comments on this report, please to committee@fedaga.org.uk

Agreed work to be completed on Council sites.



The FEDAGA Management Committee has decided the most important matter is site security, followed by the need to increase the number of plots. Bearing this in mind, the following items have so far been approved:

Bridgend - New noticeboard.

Cambridge Avenue - Additional security for main gates.

Carrick Knowe - Pruning overhanging trees; 10m of rabbit proof fencing; New noticeboard; Renew 1 water post.

Chesser Crescent - Renew 3 water posts.

Ferry Road - 30m of new fencing.

Inverleith - Remove non fruit trees.

Leith Links - Build raised beds.

Midmar - Repair fence to make it rabbit proof.

Restalrig - Upgrade single water taps to doubles.

Redhall - New noticeboard.

It was suggested that regular grass cutting at Bridgend could be tackled by ploholders themselves, as is done elsewhere.

Some items will require clarification before a decision can be reached.

The cost of improving the path at the west entrance to Inverleith should be met by the Parks Department. It should be determined what materials the Council will supply for the creation of raised beds at the part of Lady Road, adjacent to the Pow Burn, which regularly floods. The steep and unsafe paths at Midmar should be surveyed to see what the best solution is. Hand rails and rubber matting were suggested but the long term solution may be an extensive upgrade over a period of years.

Saughton Mains have been asked about what is expected for the proposed upgrade of side paths. At Warriston, it was felt the wall pointing should be paid for by the Highways Department and the 30m of fencing for the “lower fields” should be asked about as it is not clear exactly where this is.

The outstanding whin dust upgrade to paths at Pilrig Park and Warriston should not form part of this year’s spend as it was supposed to have been completed in the last Financial Year. The water tap concrete post at Carrick Knowe and Craigentenny should not be included in this year’s budget as they were paid for last year and not completed as the contractor ran out of supplies of concrete posts. The proposed concrete posts for water taps at Cambridge Avenue and Lady Road are not required. The cost of flood prevention measures and repairs to the perimeter fence at Carrick Knowe should be met by the Trams company.

Have You Got The Best Allotment Plot in Edinburgh?



Find out by entering FEDAGA's competition.

This year’s ‘Britain in Bloom’ theme is ‘Edible Britain’ and the Allotment Plot competition ties in nicely with this and forms an important element of Edinburgh’s ‘Britain in Bloom’ bid later in the year.

1st Prize: One year's free plot rental (up to £100)

2nd Prize: 50% reduction on plot rental (up to £50)

3rd Prize: £25 donated by FEDAGA.

Thanks to the City of Edinburgh Council for sponsoring the top two prizes.

To enter please email your:

- 1 Name and contact details;
- 2 plot number and site;
- 3 any other information you'd like the judges to consider; to

bloom@edinburgh.gov.uk or call 0131 469 5257.

Entry criteria can be found on the FEDAGA website or at edinburgh.gov.uk/bloom

Deadline for entries is Friday 7 June and judging will take place between 24 June and 31 July. The results will be announced shortly afterwards. Good luck!

The Alloted Month



With the return of warmer weather and longer days, May often presents us with some of the best growing conditions of the year. The fruit trees on my plot are all coming into bud and I hope for some decent fruiting this year, as last year's late frosts and damp weather were a disaster for fruit tree pollination. The late frosts killed off much of the fruit blossom before pollination could take place and a severe lack of pollinating insects added to the problem. Gardeners blame the farmers for this phenomenon with their widespread use of chemicals. Suffice to say it was not a bountiful year fruitwise.

Vegetables to sow outdoors now : beetroot, spinach, runner beans, spicy cabbage, peas (maincrop), purple sprouting broccoli, lettuces (in successive sowings), green beans, Florence fennel, carrots, courgettes and calabrese. Sow undercover : sweet and hot peppers, French and runner beans.

Planting outdoors now: Brussels sprouts, celeriac, celery, Jerusalem artichokes, courgettes, peppers and tomatoes.

Fruit: sow melon undercover, plant raspberries and strawberries outdoors. Prune figs and gooseberries before the buds break. Prune newly planted raspberry canes to encourage good bud establishment and strong new shoots.

Rhubarb can be forced to produce tender red shoots, however, force grown rhubarb will not fare well the next year as too much energy has been taken from the plant.

Strawberry plants will benefit from an application of nitrogen-rich fertilizer. Herbs : borage, coriander, dill, marjoram and pot marigold can all be sown outdoors now. Parsley and basil can be sown indoors now. Mint, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme and bay can all be planted outdoors now. Check mint clumps haven't spread outwith their designated zone as the roots are very invasive.

Tidying up: uproot old brassica stumps and dispose of them. Do not compost them as this increases the risk of spreading diseases such as clubroot around the garden.

Encourage pollinating insects to your plot by planting colourful sweet smelling flowering annuals and perennials. They will also cheer you up and brighten up the whole area.

Any seedlings raised in modules: leeks, broad beans, cauliflour, cabbage, can now be planted out to their final positions.

Dilemma : Buying plants or raising your own from seed ? that is the question. Whilst it is very satisfying to watch your trayful of carefully sown seed spring to life, it is equally annoying to watch another just sit there and do nothing. I have reasonable success with large seed but dismal results with those tiny ones. Ah well, you can't win them all !!!

Happy Gardening

J. Greenfingers

P.S. Does anyone think Chris Beardshaw fits in with the Beechgrove Garden team ??

Information from Friends of Warriston Cemetery.



Caroline Gerard writes:

I'm part of a nucleus of a Friends of Warriston Cemetery group, which will get going this summer.

You may be aware that, for a number of reasons, the older parts of Warriston are an unholy mess. These are the parts with lots and lots of Edinburgh heritage. Also the older parts of the Cemetery are now designated an Urban Wildlife Site, but they're horribly overgrown, with far too much ivy, for example. We feel that a balance can be struck between heritage and wildlife, so that both can be encouraged and enjoyed. At the moment, you can't even see some of the stones, let alone read them. We have negotiated with the City of Edinburgh Council and have consent to proceed. We'll be persuading the Council to improve the conditions of the paths, too.

We hope in time to have the Cemetery in such a state that the public, whether local or visiting, will not be deterred from venturing into the older parts, and so that we may conduct guided tours, and so on.

Warriston has a poor reputation, not necessarily justified, which puts people off. I don't enter the older sections alone – but that's in case of accidents. (Who'd find me?)

We will be publicising like mad, once we have a venue for our public meeting sorted out. So we're hoping that some of the allotment-holders in nearby sites would be willing to publicise and to help with clearing and, in due time, suitable planting. You'll have more idea than I do what

should be left and what should not! Our little nucleus is hot on heritage matters, and we're sure to recruit some members who are knowledgeable about native flora and fauna, what is suitable for the site, what is not, but the more the merrier. My contact at the Water of Leith Conservation Trust has been very helpful.

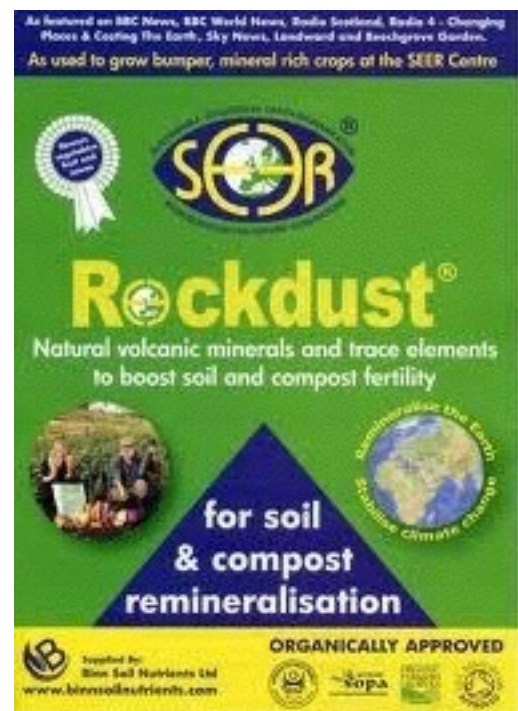
It seems to me that most allotment-holders these days favour organic methods, which is all to the good. Perhaps we can assist the bee population. Between chemicals and climate, many species of everything are taking a battering. Last year, for example, I noticed far fewer wasps – not that I missed them...

Also, one of my friends (Nick Cook) is an original member of the Dean Gallery Allotments, and he is happy for us to put up a poster in the Home Guard Hut. (I'm on the committee of the Dean Village Association, which instigated this site.)

Meanwhile one of our core group has attached a page to his own [website](#)

Incidentally, you may be interested to learn that a similar group for Newington Cemetery is likely to be set up soon too.

Rockdust - wholly recommended provider of nutrients.



This is not a commercial - really!! - maybe more of a public service announcement.

FEDAGA used to provide bulk items as part of our Trading Scheme. Allotment holders who know what they're talking about would purchase Rockdust as a slow-release nutrient. Now that this service has been discontinued, people ask how they can get their Rockdust supplies. There will be a stand at Gardening Scotland. Otherwise, B&Q at Newcraighall Retail Park supply it. Further details [here](#)

Time For Plan Bee.



The Edinburgh Council sites can't keep wildlife - and that unfortunately includes bees. Currently, the Council is looking at allowing bees, but the bar is high: anyone keeping bees would have to be registered with the local beekeepers association to make sure they're qualified and doing it correctly and all ploholders must agree, as there is a risk to people with allergies.

However, independently managed sites can decide for themselves, and some already have hives. They are helping the bee population and the bees are helping the allotment holders, with better pollination of some of their crops.

As reported in the media recently, the honeybee populations around the world are in serious decline and something needs to be done as soon as possible. Many of our food crops are pollinated by bees, so their survival is essential.

Perhaps surprisingly for the layperson, urban bees do very well, very often better than their rural cousins. This is primarily due to the diversity of plants in our gardens and parks. There are always flowers in bloom somewhere, from early spring until late in the autumn.

Many qualified beekeepers are struggling to find a suitable spot for a hive. To help match beekeepers with owners of suitable land, www.urbanhives.co.uk has been set up.

The main aim is to increase the number of urban hives, by linking beekeepers looking for space, with organisations and individuals who have space. Only a limited amount of information is uploaded to the site; no name or full address is given, only details of the nearest town. The site also gives information about the falling bee population, as well as tips on hive placement.

If an allotment holder is interested in having bees on his plot, without any financial outlay, this could be ideal. The beekeeper would keep most of the honey, but the gardener is rewarded with better crop pollination. By registering with Urban Hives and adding relevant details, it would be hoped that a local beekeeper looking for space would get in contact.

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society Annual Conference: 15th June.



The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society Annual Conference takes place on Saturday 15th June, 10 - 3 pm, at the Victoria Halls, Dunblane FK15 0AU (next to railway station).

The programme and registration form are available on the SAGS website or contact secretary@sags.org.uk

Guest speakers include Jim McColl with a Q and A session, and the launch of Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide with the Minister for Local Government and Planning, Derek Mackay MSP.

Free Plant Trays



Sofie Rogers, Sustainability and Environment Specialist at IKEA Edinburgh, writes:

At the store, we have a large number of plant trays which we can no longer use. We have them in various sizes and I was wondering if they would be of any use to you or your members?

Please feel free to contact me directly at 0131 440 6660 or by [e-mail](#).

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