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Allotment Strategy – Cultivating Communities



Stuart McKenzie (FEDAGA President) writes: Edinburgh Council agreed the latest Allotment Strategy on 21st March. This will be the third strategy and this time covers ten years. It has four key objectives which I'll outline so you are aware of what is going on and whether it will affect you.



Objective 1 – Ensure an Adequate Provision of Allotments

Unfortunately, this doesn't mean that our ever-lengthening waiting lists will be resolved by new Council-funded sites being opened up. The Council simply has no money for new sites. However, this objective fits neatly with the Community Empowerment Bill which came into force in July 2015.

The Council has identified a list of twenty six potential sites which could become allotment sites. The allotment service will write to people on the allotment waiting list telling them of available land near to their home and offer their assistance to set up a constituted group which can then apply for grants to create and manage the new site. This will become the only method of new allotment provision. Basically: put in the work and, hopefully in a year or two, open up a new site run by local people all keen to make the site a success.

The prime motivator for this shift in allotment provision is of course money, or the lack of it in Council purses. The good news is that many grants for 'greening spaces' in Scotland exist but can only be applied for by local groups. The objective also recognises the value of allotments to biodiversity in Edinburgh.

FEDAGA and SAGS (Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society) have prepared design guides, model constitutions and have years of experience to assist any groups wanting to create their own sites in this way.



Objective 2 – Develop a Robust Management System for Allotments

This has come about as a direct result of feedback from plotholders concerned that the Council is not making best use of the current stock of allotments. The waiting lists are to be more actively managed so we know the true picture of demand for plots. For example - do people want a full plot, a half plot of something smaller?

Plot inspections will be carried out more frequently. The expectation is that the number of substandard plots will decline. Objective 4 regarding revised regulations will also formalise the inspection criteria.

More water harvesting will be encouraged. Sites that wish to take on more devolved management will be accommodated under the provision of the Community Empowerment Bill.



Objective 3 – Improve the Allotment Customer Experience

Site Associations and FEDAGA have always struggled to communicate effectively with all our members. Data Protection rules prevent their details being passed on by the Council. The new strategy will allow email groups to be established and used to improve communication, the application process will move online and more use will be made of the Internet to help plotholders get the best out of their plots.

More mentoring and training schemes will further improve the experience.



Objective 4 – Adoption of Revised Allotment Regulations

Our new regulations to replace the existing ones, last amended in 1924, will finally be approved by the Council and Scottish Parliament towards the end of 2018. You may remember being asked to comment during a previous public consultation. The new regulations will set out in more detail the cultivation standards for allotments and also finally change the law to allow for Sunday working of plots. Now there's progress.



The strategy is very much influenced by the Community Empowerment Bill. Whilst no funding is available to open new sites the Council must do more to manage existing waiting lists and ensure we make the best of the entire allotment stock. Future rents are not specifically stated but, again, Community Empowerment stipulates that 'a fair rent' be charged. The expectation is therefore for any increase to be broadly in line with increases in other Council services.

You can read the Allotment Strategy document in full by clicking [here](#).

Pollinator Day at the Zoo



Damien Hicks writes: "After five years we are still going on the plant and pollinator surveys, and thank you to all members who assisted with the transects on allotments.

"We are running a pollinator day at Edinburgh Zoo on 13th May, which should be fun!"

Click [here](#) for more information.

Our Golden Anniversary

This is issue number 50 of the electronic FEDAGA Newsletters. If you'd like to peruse the archive, click [here](#).



Scottish Allotments Conference 2017

Saturday, 17th June 9.30am -
3.00pm Victoria Halls, Dunblane

George Anderson - Beechgrove Garden presenter: Tales from 40 years of Allotmenting.

Andrew Lear and Margaret Lear: From Allotment Plot to Food Forest. An alternative way of getting more out of your plot.

Q&A panel sessions, reports from plots around the country, update on the political environment.

Workshops, networking, exhibitor stalls, plants, fertiliser on sale.

Put this date in your diary:

See www.sags.org.uk for more details.



Member Benefits

Members can benefit from a 45% discount on their online seed purchases courtesy of Kings Seeds. For information on how to register, click [here](#).

Caledonian Horticulture offer allotment holders £5 off an already competitively priced bulk bag of compost. Minimum purchase: 2 bags, costing £25 each. Contact details [here](#).

The FEDAGA Shop is closed for another year. Beat the rush and make sure your site representative/site committee has your order for seed potatoes, onion sets and shallots so you get a choice of the full range on offer. Unbeatable prices, and you support your allotment site and FEDAGA into the bargain. Remember to check the website or the Newsletter in the autumn.

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