Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Regeneration Inquiry

Additional Submission from Scottish Allotments and Garden Society

Further suggestions for Government action for allotments:

Following our initial submission of evidence to the Local Government and Regeneration committee and also our response to the Consultation on the Legislative Framework Governing Allotments, SAGS would like to make some further suggestions for possible Government action in this area.

1. Publicity
We have found that many people, professional and lay, do not realize the potential of allotments to contribute across the range of Council activities. **Suggestion:** Scottish Government produces a policy document that raises awareness of what allotments can provide and what support could be offered. Although allotments are supported by the Food and Drink Policy Unit, if input is requested from the health & well being, education and justice sector then public bodies for example the NHS and organisations such as housing associations would become aware of the relevance to their activities. Allotments and community gardens should be an integral part of any regeneration master plan and community empowerment strategy.

2. Land
At the moment about 1 in 700 people across Scotland have access to an allotment plot. To provide an allotment plot for 1 in 100 people requires in the region of 44,500 new plots. If we assume a mixture of standard plots (250 sq m) and half plots then this would require about 600 ha (equivalent land area to roughly 8.5 golf courses). Ideally everyone should have access to a plot within walking distance of their dwelling but in some regeneration areas the potential land may be contaminated. The Cabinet Secretary Nicola Sturgeon reported at the SURF conference on May 29th that as part of the latest funding 200ha of land had been remediated. Glasgow needs about 50ha to fulfill the aim of 1 plot per 100 people so even if all these were provided on contaminated land, the area required is still only a quarter of what has been reclaimed already. **Suggestion:** An estimate is made of the access to land that may need remediation to be suitable for growing and that is included in the Infrastructure budget.

3. Funding
Once allotment sites have been set up they can be self-sustaining and do not need additional resources. They can cover maintenance etc through open days with plant and vegetable sales. The cost to the Council of creating a new site varies, depending on the infrastructure that is offered. It could be zero if plot-holders are just leased the land to £1,500 per plot for a very well serviced site. If an interest free loan system is set up with payback over 25 years then new site associations could decide what they required for their site. **Suggestion:** Given the contribution allotments make to the health, education,
community and other budgets and also the skills that could be gained in creating a site there should be a number of funding streams that could support an interest free loan scheme for new sites.

4. Forming and developing Allotment Associations.
Members of new sites often have no experience in setting up an association, management techniques and conflict avoidance. Professionals in housing and health organizations as well as the Community Learning Development Service have access to these skills.

**Suggestion** Scottish Government uses the SOA to encourage Councils to set up local learning hubs in anchor organisations (development trusts, housing associations etc) that would support new groups together with a network of the allotments associations to share expertise and good practice.

5. Raise Horticultural Skills.
It has been found that new plot-holders often do not have the requisite gardening skills and are discouraged in their first year. To remedy this situation, Glasgow plot-holders offer initial training courses in the Bellahouston Demonstration Gardens. Continuing this into the professional area, the Royal Horticultural Society has identified a lack of horticultural skills and training where 70% of horticultural businesses cannot fill their vacancies. [www.rhs.org.uk/News/Horticulture-Matters](http://www.rhs.org.uk/News/Horticulture-Matters). Allotments, especially those with school and community plots provide an introduction to gardening and could be used to encourage young people to enter the horticultural profession.

**Suggestion:** The Scottish Government produces a policy to encourage the growth of horticultural awareness and skills. There should be a pipeline of courses and practical guidance from allotments through the college system to support the horticultural economy (£9 Billion in the UK) and also disseminate awareness of the pests and diseases.

Judy Wilkinson
On behalf of the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
[www.sags.org.uk](http://www.sags.org.uk)