What does ‘regeneration’ mean to you?

1. Regeneration is tackling areas of blight both physical and communities to improve the infrastructure and rebuild community action. Allotments can provide a hub through the common tasks of caring for the site, the plot-holders and engaging with the local community. In Glasgow an allotment was moved in a regeneration project in Oatlands. If the original design had kept the existing site and developed the adjoining church as a community centre the potential for empowering the local plot-holders and local community would have greater. Wellhouse Development Trust has a successful small site in Easterhouse and the potential for community empowerment through allotments is very great.

2. The European allotment association Jardins Familiaux (www.jardins-familiaux.org) states the benefits of allotments are:

   **Community**
   - a better quality of urban life through the reduction of noise and pollution, the establishment of green areas and more open spaces;
   - The conservation of biodiversity and species, the creation of linked green networks.

   **Families**
   - a meaningful leisure activity;
   - a means of growing of healthy vegetables and fruit;
   - the experience of sowing, growing, cultivating and harvesting together;
   - a counterweight to life in high-rise towers and the concrete jungle;
   - the furtherance of harmony and fellowship;
   - direct contact with Nature.

   **Children and Young People**
   - a place to play and communicate;
   - a place to discover Nature and its wonders;
   - practical lessons in biology.

   **Working people**
   - relaxation through a healthy activity from the stress of work;
   - an ideal alternative to the working day.

   **Unemployed**
   - the feeling of being useful and not excluded;
   - a means to combat forced idleness;
   - a supply of fresh vegetables at minimum cost

   **Immigrant families and asylum seekers**
   - a possibility of communication and better integration in their host country.

   **Special Needs**
   - a place allowing them to participate in community life and establish contacts
   - the experience of sowing, planting and harvesting.

   **Senior Citizens**
   - a meeting place with others having the same interests;
   - contacts that have grown over years;
   - an opportunity of self-fulfilment and an activity
The regeneration strategy, resources and funding

3. Allotment Associations are small groups of people who often do not have the capacity to seek funding. Several successful funding applications have been made in small towns and rural areas but groups seeking funding for new sites has been very low in the cities despite large waiting lists and a need particularly in deprived areas where there is a low provision of sites and many people do not have access to an area for growing. The reason may be that there is already a community in small settlements that provides a catalyst for emerging groups. There may also be the skills required to access funding. In cities the local authorities are expected to be pro-active however the officers are over stretched and often do not realise the funding available. If the Government wanted to realise the potential for people to grow their own food and realise the health and well-being benefits of connecting with the natural world they need to agree a support and education scheme with the local authorities, so officers are well informed and have the necessary skills to advise on, support and evaluate funding applications.

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

4. Allotment gardening has been shown to increase health and well being by providing continuing physical exercise, a supportive community and 'job satisfaction'. However an analysis using the SIMD shows that the most vulnerable people in our society often do not have access to an allotment near to their dwelling. Improvements in health would reduce the health spend. Allotments provide a green lung and people acquire 'growing skills' which can be used to enhance their neighbourhood. Flowers and trees enhance an area but need care and cultivation. Too many plantings have been 'minimum maintenance' that do not mirror the seasons or provide habitat for beneficial wildlife. People in richer areas have gardens they can cultivate, grow their own fruit and flowers and enjoy the natural environment. People in high rises lack this opportunity. An allotment provides an oasis where they can meet friends and enjoy the open air. Horticultural skills are sadly lacking and this is impacting on many areas of the economy. Cities such as Sydney are promoting their indigenous food. Scotland is doing the same but we need more market gardens and small horticultural businesses close to the restaurants. Allotments with community plots can disseminate information and good practice at a local level and enable people to gain confidence to take up employment in this area if they so wish and if the opportunities are found. Regeneration that looks at the land as a resource for growth instead if just concentrating on bricks and mortar could have an enormous effect on the local economy. The cost of an average allotment site is about £30k which could be funded and repaid through interest free loans and grants if there was adequate support in place for the small associations to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to undertake the projects.

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

5. Sustainable economic development depends on people in small communities developing the skills for survival. Craft skills have to be recognised as well as the knowledge skills required for global businesses. Allotments bring together people from all walks of life who respect the horticultural skills of their fellow plot-holders. Allotments provide a platform for the sharing and dissemination of knowledge at a local level. This respect, working together on a common task and developing communication channels enables the people to get to know each other, their strengths
and weaknesses that is the bed rock of successful local communities and enables them to thrive.

Community led regeneration and CPPs

6. Allotments contribute to regeneration in reducing blight and enabling communities to form and grow. Unfortunately CPPs have to wide a remit to encompass allotment representatives and it is difficult for the plot-holders to make the voice heard. SOA depend on input from the relevant Council departments and again allotments are submerged in other matters. The SOA is intended as a high level strategic document which sets out the over-arching priorities and outcomes for the authority and there are many other performance indicators. However the National purpose contains recommendations such as:

- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
- We live longer, healthier lives.
- We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

7. Allotments and allotment provision could clearly be used as indicators for this. But in the SOA document, all ownership for indicators, baselines and targets must be agreed, with clear responsibility set for meeting these targets. Unless in the relevant local authority Allotment Strategies specific baselines and targets have been identified and agreed between the lead partners to the strategy they cannot be included with other baseline information within the SOA document.

8. Perhaps more clarity for local authority officers writing the Strategies about how they could be used to further the national purpose would be useful?

Regeneration and climate change targets

9. Climate change targets depend on changing attitudes as much as implementing energy targets. Plot-holders recognise the value of local seasonal food, the virtuous circle of caring for the earth and composting together with the value of recycling. If allotment sites were included in all regeneration areas allowing every one who wishes the opportunity to have a plot within walking distance of their dwelling then, we believe the effects on the climate change targets would be significant.

10. The Low Carbon Route map for food from the Climate Challenge fund calculates that the produce from a standard allotment plot of 250 sq m would save around 1.16 tonnes of CO2 per year. Taking this together a change in attitude towards seasonal food and local food, a higher consumption of vegetables and the increased health benefits encouraging more allotments and community growing would have a significant effect on the Government’s targets.

Judy Wilkinson
on behalf of Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
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