



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01433**

### **Name of petitioner**

John Hancox

### **Petition title**

Productive land for landless Scots to grow their own food

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to encourage public agencies such as Forestry Commission Scotland, Crown Estates, health boards, public trusts and landowners, public and private, rural and urban, to make land available for people to plant grow and harvest their own food.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

Though my work in terms of Orchards, and in developing the Children's Garden, I have supported a number of community groups seeking ground to grow food, fruit and for developing Community Greenspace.

I have inputted into many fora – including the Grow Your Own Working Group, I carried out a census of community growing projects in 2011, and have input into various studies such as the Sow and Grow Everywhere report. I have also had discussions with various businesses and landowners. While some of these discussions have led to positive outcomes – the observation is that landowners – public and private – have goodwill towards community growing projects. However it is not a high priority for them – and frequently it is slow and agreements made are tilted in favour of the landowners. It is on the basis of these various discussions that we believe some action to give local communities a stronger right of access to land is necessary.

There are positive examples where landowners have made land available, and we believe that some strategic leadership at Government level especially to public agencies and local authorities could lead to a cultural change which would make far more land available.

### **Petition background information**

We believe that much land is needlessly unproductive, and would urge the Scottish Government to encourage ways to allow people to use land more intelligently. We believe that making land available to poorer Scots offers them a way to grow healthy, accessible local food, and build skills and food security at a local level. While there may be a legal requirement to retain land in public ownership, we suggest that a presumption of a community right to use, land assets which are not used, should be considered.

During wartime – food growing was seen as a national necessity, and the food grown in gardens, spare ground, allotments, across the UK including Scotland was high quality, and healthy, and I'd argue that it was a factor in the fact that the population's nutrition was better during war time than at other times.

We are in times of economic downturn, and what Scotland does have in abundance is land. Both in our urban areas such as Glasgow there is a lot of land which is largely passive and unused, while in rural areas, patterns of land ownership which concentrate land into relatively few hands also mean that availability of land for ordinary people is scarce. Public agencies such as Forestry Commission, and others such as National Trust for Scotland, National Museum, and Scottish Natural Heritage, all manage large land holdings. Private landowners and forestry concerns, as well as a range of NGO's such as RSPB and others also have assets that potentially could be used more creatively.

Businesses – especially utility businesses such as Power companies, Scottish Water, and many others have land that could be used productively – and this could help them to address their Corporate Social Responsibility obligations.

What Scotland also has, and with economic conditions being as they are, will continue to have, is a lot of people who are unemployed, or who are under-employed – or are young and new to the labour market, and have never worked.

There are a lot of people who are also under-employed assets – who would love to have useful and worthwhile work, or volunteering opportunities.

Scotland historically (as is true of all industrialised countries) has gone from being a peasant economy with the bulk of people growing food locally, Scotland has gone through it's clearances, and rapid industrialisation, and now is into a post industrial period.

The question is what is going to happen next – and it seems not unnatural to expect that some return to a 21st century equivalent of the peasant economy – albeit very different in this internet age – will evolve. And a significant blockage with this, is access to suitable and affordable land. A model of land ownership which is successful in a country equivalent to Scotland is Norway, which has had a rather different history.

We believe that the current economic downturn is going to be long term and finding useful activities for people will have lots of benefits – self esteem, fitness, health, and being self sufficient will have huge benefits to us prospering into the future.

Access to land is absolutely key to this transformation.

#### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01433>

#### Related information for petition

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

**NO**

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

1

<b>Closing date for collecting signatures online</b>
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N/A
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<b>Comments to stimulate online discussion</b>
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