



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

Public Petitions Committee
C/O Clerk to the Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

2nd November 2012

Dear Mr Stewart (Convener),

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE - CONSIDERATION OF PE1433 - QUESTIONS ARISING FROM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Thank you for your request to contribute our views on the following supplementary question:

The Committee would be interested to hear your views on what more could be done to move forward issues around bringing green spaces into productive use for local communities and others to provide local produce.

Our mission as a conservation organisation incorporates the conservation of Scotland's built and natural heritage, and the opportunities to access, enjoy and learn from this heritage.

We would question whether there is a distinction to be made between "green spaces" and "productive use." Natural environments (whether woodland, gardens or open areas) are of benefit to individuals and communities, meeting a range of recreational, social and emotional needs. A green space, even if not planted and managed to produce crops, is never unused.

We do agree that there are many benefits from individuals and communities being able to undertake gardening and the growing of fruit and vegetables. The National Trust for Scotland is fortunate in managing a number of sites on behalf of the nation where it is possible to use part of the area for community gardening.

Nationally, the challenge is to connect individuals and groups interested in gardening with suitable spaces, which may be green space, or brownfield or derelict land. Scotland is a heavily urbanised country with 70% of the population living in urban areas where land is typically in short supply, expensive to acquire and the subject of competing interests.

Greenspace Scotland's *Community Growing in Scotland* offers valuable advice and guidance on the setting up and maintenance of successful productive land use projects. The practical

experience and best practice examples offered by greenspace Scotland¹ should be considered by the Committee, including:

- The use of Community Planning Partnerships to coordinate efforts to identify suitable pockets of land, including private land;
- Using maps of local green space to identify potential sites and working with local authorities and private landowners to access these;
- Drawing on the experience of other partnerships, such as the Edinburgh Garden Share scheme, which brings together aspirant gardeners with elderly and disabled people who can benefit from their assistance;
- For new groups to draw on existing forums to discuss issues with those who have experience of delivering similar projects. Wider community schemes, such as Transition Towns, can be a source of such expertise.

The experience of public sector organisations, such as NHS Lothian², in supporting community gardening should also be drawn upon, illustrating how volunteer interest can be combined with institutional support.

Public sector bodies may also be best placed to address a number of identified barriers to communities undertaking gardening, including developing model leases and agreements for the temporary use of plots of land, advice on health and safety, and access to public and employer's liability insurance for site managers.

In the longer term government, both national and local, could give greater consideration to incorporating space for gardens and allotments into planning and housing strategies. It is notable that the Scottish Government's *Homes Fit for the 21st Century* (2011) strategy and action plan contains no mention of making provision for gardens or allotments. The current *Scottish Planning Policy* (2010) does contain a welcome commitment to the creation and management of open space, including allotments, and we would hope that this commitment is carried over into the next iteration of the policy.

A commitment to encourage the creation and management of urban green space suitable for gardening could also usefully form part of the Scottish Government's current review of the architecture and place-making policy.

Yours sincerely

Diarmid Hearn
Head of Policy
The National Trust for Scotland

¹ Greenspace Scotland (2010) *Community Growing in Scotland: towards a framework for action*

² www.farmgarden.org.uk/component/docman/doc_download/355-nhs-lothian-case-study