

Growing spaces summit

Ways of increasing the amount of land available for allotments in Scotland have been discussed at the first Growing Spaces summit.

✘ Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham chaired the discussion at Falkland House in Fife. The summit was set-up as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to provide more support for 'grow your own' initiatives as part of The National Food and Drink Policy.

Key experts from across the private and public sector also discussed legal and funding issues and looked at how communities could be helped to develop the skills needed to successfully work their own plots.

The Environment Minister said:-“The Scottish Government's National Food and Drink policy means that we're looking at ways of giving more Scots the chance to grow fresh, seasonal produce. Grow your own activities are great for our environment, health and wellbeing and they also help us appreciate where our food comes from and how it grows. We know that local authorities are struggling to meet a rise in demand for allotments and we're in discussions to make more land available for community growing projects. We're also publishing advice and guidance which will help public bodies, communities and individuals grow their own fruit and vegetables.”

£2 million has been invested in 34 allotment and community garden sites through the Climate Challenge Fund.

In December 2009, The Scottish Government has established the 'Grow Your Own Working Group' to look at the most effective ways to provide strategic support for grow your own initiatives. It is due to meet for a third time on 20 May 2010. There are around 3000 people on allotment waiting lists

in Scotland. 70 per cent of allotment sites are owned by local authorities.

Local authorities have a duty to provide allotments if there is a proven need, however there are inevitable resource and prioritisation issues when a council is providing sites. This is set out in a number of statutes. The principle one is the Allotments (Scotland) Act 1892, as amended by the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act 1919 and the Allotment (Scotland) Acts of 1922 and 1950. Allotment legislation in Scotland is different to that in England and does not give Ministers powers in relation to allotments and decisions of local authorities to close and dispose of sites in their ownership.

Key CoSLA representatives are on the Grow Your Own Working Group and an open dialogue is being maintained between CoSLA representatives and the Scottish Government on allotments provision.