

Demand for national review of land for allotments while Edinburgh council create 200 more

Miles Briggs MSP has called for a National Allotment Viability Study to review potential land which could be developed for allotments and community growing spaces.

In a question at Holyrood, Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Environment and Land Reform, Mairi McAllan, if she would agree to his request to take forward a National Allotment Viability Study with all Government agencies and support his call for all public bodies to develop land for allotments and community growing spaces.

Mr Briggs said that the average wait in Edinburgh for people to access an allotment is over eight years with East Lothian standing at over 15 years, and that there are currently 4,259 people and families on waiting lists for an allotment in the capital.

Miles said: "Allotments and community growing spaces in the capital are in extremely high demand, with waiting times of eight years and over not unusual.

"Growing your own produce has huge benefits, including mental health and financial, as well as having healthy seasonal vegetables to cook with.

“Reducing the carbon foot print of the food that we all consume is in line with national goals of becoming carbon neutral.

“The demand for allotments spaces and community growing spaces is obviously there and a National Allotment Viability Study could go a long way to increasing capacity for people to grow their own produce.”

Minister for Environment and Land Reform, Mairi McAllan, said: “The Scottish government has allocated over £1.4 million to directly support and increase land available for community growing and, more widely, our £50 billion Vacant and Derelict Land Investment programme supports a variety of community regeneration projects, and our Scottish Land Fund with a budget of £10 million that supports communities to take ownership of land and buildings which can include the provision of allotments.

“I am aware of the concerns in Edinburgh. I know that there’s 1,900 allotment plots and 69 community growing projects managed already by The City of Edinburgh Council.

“I am also aware that the pandemic had the effect of both encouraging people to take up allotments, but equally making it a very crowded landscape.

“However, as I said in my initial answer and for more specificity on the point raised, I would direct the member to Edinburgh Council whose statutory responsibility, allotments in Edinburgh are.”

A City of Edinburgh Council spokesperson replied to our enquiry stating that many fewer allotments than people on the waiting list are planned. The spokesperson said: “Since lockdown, there has been increased demand for allotments and growing spaces in the city, and we have been actively working to increase allotment provision and the number of allotment plots in Edinburgh.

“In response to this our third allotment strategy aims to ensure adequate provision of allotments and other growing spaces by investigating potential new sites, encouraging people to directly establish and manage new allotments on Council-owned land, and the creation of new allotments as part of the planning process for new developments.

“We have already carried out a series of feasibility studies for allotment plots in Edinburgh. The most recent study, in partnership with the Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, identified six further sites as having greatest suitability for development as allotments and/or community gardens. Subject to consultation, it is anticipated that these sites have the potential to add an extra 200 allotment plots to the Council’s allotment provision.”



Allotments at Inverleith. Photo: © 2020, Martin P. McAdam
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