

All the goodness of allotments but waiting lists outstrip supply

by Miles Briggs MSP for Lothian.

According to [new research](#) from Lancaster University, Britain could produce up to eight times its current levels of fruit and vegetable production if all available urban and under-used green space were made available for cultivation.

Allotments are a fantastic way of growing one's own fruit and vegetables and of retaining a regular supply of fresh produce. Furthermore, the environmental benefits of allotments are diverse. Not only do allotments allow wildlife to flourish with the biodiversity of the area, but they provide a welcome plot on which to recycle one's kitchen and allotment waste – surely welcome news to the SNP and its Green allies.

In February I asked for a [National Allotment Viability Study](#) to review potential land which could be developed for allotments and community growing spaces. I raised this issue in Holyrood as I know how important these issues are to the people living in Lothian. With an increase in food prices and the cost of living generally, the opportunity to grow food in

an allotment is increasingly attractive, as seen by the uptake in applications during the pandemic.

In Lothian, regrettably, the demand is far outstripping the supply.

There are an estimated 47 allotments in Edinburgh, with 30+ of those coming under the control of the council and at present the waiting times are unacceptable, with people being failed by their local council and funding not available to rectify the issue.

Concerningly, The City of Edinburgh Council manages 1,586 allotments in Edinburgh, but is required to provide 1,500 more sites to meet its legal obligations set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

The roles of the councils involved is to ensure that nobody remains on an allotment waiting list for longer than five years. At present, 615 people in Edinburgh have been waiting for longer than five years and there are waiting times of up to eight years in the City of Edinburgh, with East Lothian standing at an astonishing 15 years. Due to increasing demand, these issues will become exacerbated should cash-strapped councils not act accordingly, and it is only set to get worse with the SNP-Green government slashing funding to local councils.

A real and unavoidable consequence of the pandemic has been the rise in the cost of living, with greater numbers of people who will face a decline in living standards in the foreseeable future. Rather than relying on increasingly expensive supermarket items, the right to own a plot of land to grow fruit and vegetables of their own is something the people of Lothian deserve, and I intend to stand up for that right.



Miles Briggs