



Grow Your Own Working Group

**Report on activities 2010-14
and new recommendations
2014-17**

Introduction

In June 2009, the Scottish Government published *Recipe for Success*, a national food and drink policy. The Grow Your Own Working Group (GYOWG) was formed later in 2009, to take forward two recommendations in *Recipe for Success* relating to growing your own food:

- Ensure that allotments and “grow your own” projects are strategically supported.
- Produce practical advice and best practice guidance that will appeal to public bodies, communities and individuals to help them develop local “grow your own” initiatives.

Growing fruit and vegetables in allotments, community gardens, community orchards and other types of community growing projects, on public, private, school, community and other types of land are all included in ‘Grow your Own’¹.



This report outlines the achievements of the GYOWG, from 2009-14, and sets out our ambitions for the next three years.

The GYOWG would like to thank the officers of the Scottish Government’s Food and Drink Division for their active support, advice and encouragement over the last five years.

¹ See greenspace scotland’s ‘Our Growing Community’ and the FCFCG’s webpage on ‘emerging trends’

History of the GYOWG 2009-2014

Early meetings and governance

The first informal meeting of the GYOWG took place in August 2009 and the first formal meeting in November of the same year. Membership of the GYOWG is open to any organisation interested in GYO with a national or regional remit, and the first action of the GYOWG was to ensure that all such organisations had been invited to join. Several meetings took place during 2010 under the aegis of the Scottish Government's Food and Drink Industry Division, and in May 2010 the Minister (Roseanna Cunningham) chaired a summit on Grow Your Own, which helped to raise the profile of the Group.

The GYOWG has an elected chair and secretary, as well as a Memorandum of Understanding and a Code of Conduct, but we are not constituted, nor do we have a bank account of our own. Instead, the Scottish Government provides funds for a secretariat (currently the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens), and members provide their own funding to take work forward.

Report and original recommendations (2011)

During 2010, members of the GYOWG discussed ways to fulfil the actions from *Recipe for Success*, and in February 2011 the GYOWG published a report², with 27 recommendations designed to make it easier for people in Scotland to grow their own food. The original recommendations were grouped under the headings of planning, legal, community land, skills, guidance, and funding, and backed up by papers included as appendices to the report.

² The full report can be found here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/917/0114173.pdf>

Membership of the GYOWG

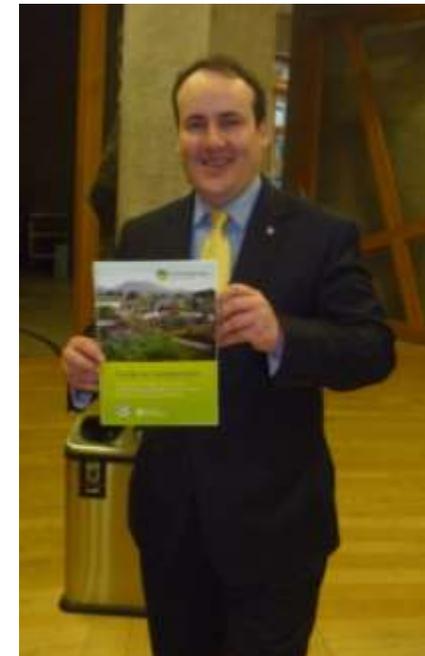
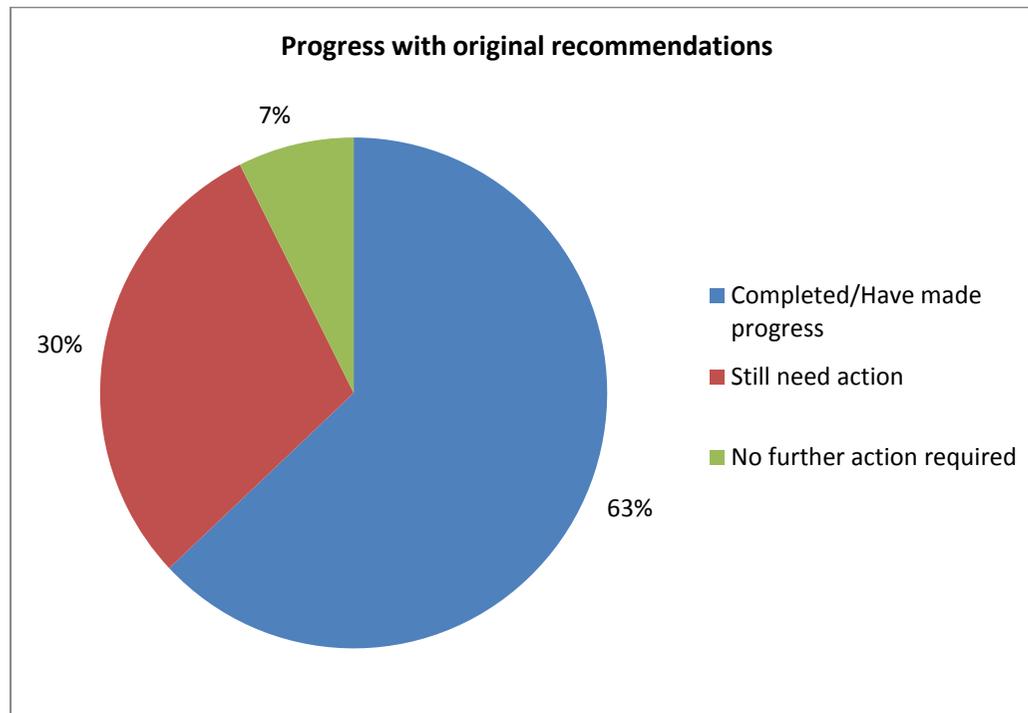
Membership of the Group has evolved over the course of the last six years, but all of the following organisations have been involved, as well as Scottish Government officers from the Food and Drink, and Planning divisions:

- Central Scotland Green Network Trust (formerly CSGN Support Unit)
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Climate Challenge Fund
- Community Food and Health (Scotland)
- Community Growing Solutions
- Community Land Advisory Service
- Edible Estates (Re-solution)
- Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust
- Elmwood College
- Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens
- Fife Council
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Greenbelt Group Ltd,
- greenspace scotland
- Growforth Ltd
- Horticultural Trades Association
- Landshare (Keofilms)
- National Farmers Union Scotland
- NHS Lothian
- Nourish
- Planning Aid Scotland
- Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society
- Scottish Land and Estates (formerly Scottish Rural Property and Business Association)
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Orchards
- Soil Association Scotland

Achievements of the GYOWG 2009-2014

Although the GYOWG was originally conceived in 2009, our work did not begin in earnest until 2011, when we published our report and recommendations. From 2011-14, with very little funding, the GYOWG has made very good progress. The chart below shows that we have completed or made significant progress with nearly two third (63%) of our recommendations, and that only 30% still need action. Most of the actions that still require work need the approval of the Scottish Parliament, or positive action from local authorities or the NHS, and working with such large public organisations can take time.

In addition to working on our 27 original recommendations, the GYOWG has also been flexible and responsive to new policy developments, especially the development of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CEA). We responded to consultations on the principles behind the CEA, and then the draft CEA itself. GYOWG members also galvanised their grassroots member projects to engage with the CEA consultation, to the extent that almost half of the respondents to the CEA consultation answered the questions relating to the section on allotments.



Paul Wheelhouse, MSP and Minister for the Environment, launching the Guide for Landowners, March 2013 (recommendation 19)

The following sections outline the achievements of the GYOWG, and work that still needs to be done, in more detail.

Completed GYOWG recommendations

Recommendation		Achievement
3	The Working Group and all members to feed into consultation on Permitted Development.	The GYOWG and individual members responded to this consultation, to suggest that developments such as polytunnels/sheds should be considered permitted developments on community gardens. Now that items related to sustainable energy are considered permitted development (eg: solar panels), we will continue to make the case that items related to sustainable food should also be included, as part of our new recommendations.
13	Bank of information and learning material to be held and managed by a central organisation linked to the web site.	Due to intellectual property rights, it has not been possible to put learning materials from colleges on the GYO Scotland website, but the website does contain lots of useful resources.
14	The establishment of a community land bank service developed to facilitate access to land for GYO initiatives and provide specialist support to landowners and food growers.	The Community Land Advisory Service was established by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens in 2011, and has so far advised 16 landowners and 98 community groups on land related issues.
17	Every local authority to produce a strategy for community growing that establishes policy and planning. They will address the need to meet demand with appropriate supply and agree land and management issues.	greenspace scotland added questions on community growing to their greenspace attitudes survey in 2011 which provided good evidence to demonstrate the demand for and need for GYO initiatives. We recommend that these questions are asked again, annually if possible, to allow data to be compared and progress to be monitored. The new Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which the GYOWG has influenced through our consultation responses, requires local authorities to produce a food growing strategy. Helping local authorities with, and monitoring the success of these food growing strategies is part of the GYOWG's new recommendations.
18	Produce guidance for allotment holders in Scotland	"Allotments, A Scottish Plotholders Guide" covers the basic culture of allotment gardening and allotment law, and was published in 2011 ³

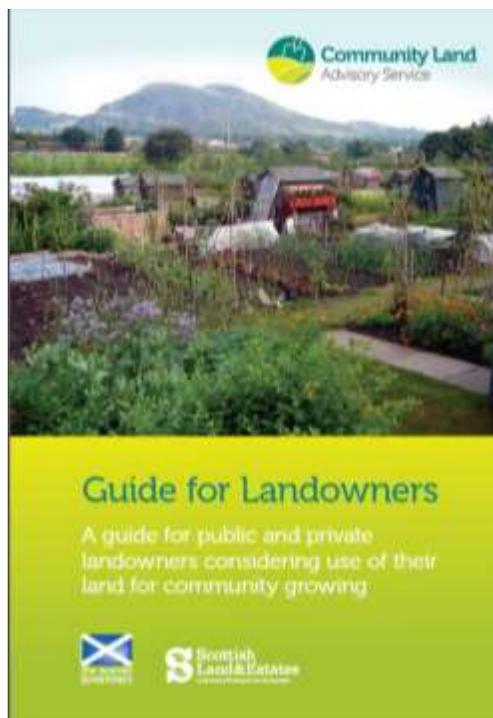
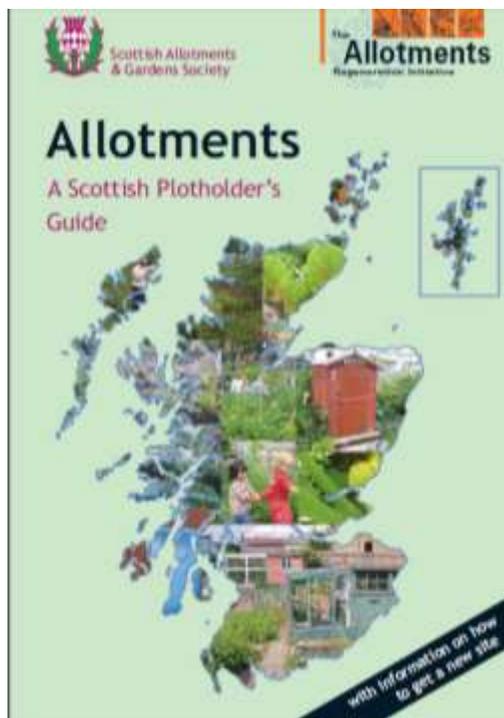
³ <http://www.sags.org.uk/docs/ScotPlotGuide.pdf>

19	Production of a landowners' and land users' guide, including development and template leases, collating those that are available.
20	Production of a users' and providers' good practice guide on design and development of new and existing allotment sites that links to the improved planning policies.
21	Production of guidance on understanding soil contamination and how to grow on contaminated land.

A Guide for Landowners⁴ was launched on March 7th 2013 by Paul Wheelhouse, MSP and Minister for the Environment, at Holyrood

Scotland's allotment site design guide⁵ was launched on June 15th 2013 at the SAGS conference

Our Guide for Growing on Land which may be Contaminated⁶ was launched in Oct 2014. A wide range of experts were consulted to make sure the information contained in the Guide is as accurate as possible.



⁴ [http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/sites/communitylandadvice.org.uk/files/FCFCG_CLAS_Guide_For_Landowners\[1\].pdf](http://www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/sites/communitylandadvice.org.uk/files/FCFCG_CLAS_Guide_For_Landowners[1].pdf)

⁵ <http://www.sags.org.uk/docs/ScotlandAllotmentDesignGuide.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.growyourownsotland.info/wp-content/uploads/images/Guide-for-growing-on-contaminated-land.pdf>

22	Encourage organisations to set up a central web site or develop existing site/s to collect and disseminate information to the community GYO sector.	www.growyourownsotland.info (GYO Scotland website) was launched in 2012. This website is regularly updated with case studies, new resources and relevant news. We will continue to promote it.
25	Continual mapping of funding streams to be available on a central site.	Funding information is provided on the GYO Scotland website
26	Request that the administrators of funds are trained and briefed on the needs and limitations of those applying for funds for GYO projects.	The GYOWG has discussed the issues around funding for GYO projects with the CSGN, the Climate Challenge Fund, and the Funders Forum



GYOWG recommendations where significant progress has been made

Recommendation		Progress so far	Further possible action
2	Identify best practice food growing policies and practice from local authority Open Space Strategies, and use this to encourage other local authorities to support the protection of existing and establishment of new allotments and community food growing projects.	greenspace Scotland have collated this data, but unfortunately do not have the resources to analyse it fully yet.	Promote good practice in food growing strategies as part of new GYOWG recommendations
7	An amendment to the Allotments Act that specifies a timescale for allotment provision and number of allotments per head of population.	This has been progressed by the development of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The GYOWG responded to the consultation behind the CEA, and a timescale for local authority allotment provision is included in Part 9 of the CEA.	Continue to offer support during the CEA implementation process.
11	Local Authorities should consider training needs as part of their Allotment/Growing Space Strategy.	We have suggested that this is included in the requirement to produce a food growing strategy given in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015	Supporting local authorities to write and implement food growing strategies, and monitoring their success is one of the GYOWG's new recommendations
15	Government to instruct its agencies, Local Authorities, Health Boards, government related organisations and other public sector bodies, to examine their land assets and determine what surplus land will be made available for local GYO initiatives and to publicise this information.	The GYOWG members included this request in their discussions and responses to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 consultation, and this message was picked up in the draft Bill through the local authority food growing strategy.	Continue to feed into CEA implementation process. Monitoring local authority compliance with the new Bill is one of the GYOWG's new recommendations
16	Public bodies to use the Forestry Commission Community Leasing Scheme as an example of long term leasing of public land and other land for establishing GYO projects.	Template leases, written by lawyers, for community growing on publicly owned land, are available on the GYO Scotland website	Add FCS case study to GYOS website

27	Request Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) management board to consider funding needed (via the CSGN development fund and any future funds) to deliver the CSGN target of a threefold increase in the area of growing spaces in the CSGN area.	GYOWG members met the chairman and CEO of CSGN in 2012 to make this point. CSGN Support Unit staff now attend GYOWG meetings	
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GYOWG recommendations still requiring action

The original 27 recommendations from the GYOWG were a mixture of strategic (ie: influencing policy) and practical (eg: developing guidance). We have been very successful with the practical actions, but many of the strategic recommendations still require work, as changing policy can take time. Therefore, the GYOWG has agreed to focus on a smaller number of strategic recommendations over the next three years.

Recommendation		Progress so far	Further possible action
1	A Planning Conference to be staged involving senior planners from Government, Local Authorities and Health Boards jointly with the professional bodies to produce improved policies and guidance for GYO initiatives	The GYOWG has tried to influence the Planning system at both a strategic and officer level. We have responded to NPF3 and SPP public consultations, had meetings with Scottish Government planning officials, and tried to arrange training events for planning officers. Unfortunately, these events (via the Improvement Service) have had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. We have also tried to present our case to the Heads of Planning Scotland, but have not had any success in gaining an invitation to one of their meetings.	Reconsider approach under new GYOWG recommendation
4	Promote the benefits of Grow Your Own to planning authorities, making them aware of the need to identify locations and encourage their establishment to meet community demand for growing spaces.		
5	On land scheduled for development but delayed, planning policies to dictate the “meanwhile use” of the land.		
6	Local Authorities to use Section 75 Planning Agreements to support GYO projects.		
23	A travelling seminar to raise awareness at local authority level to identify and promote the benefits of community growing.		
8	A change to Public Finance Manual Rules that allows the Scottish Government, its agencies, and government-related organisations to lease or sell land at less than market value for local GYO initiatives.	The GYOWG wrote to the Cabinet Secretary about this issue in 2011, and received a response from Richard Lochhead MSP, but it is unlikely that we will be able to affect any significant changes to the SPFM.	

9	GYO communities to make use of the Freedom of Information facility to ask Local Authorities how they are dealing with meeting the duties imposed on them by the Allotments (Scotland) Acts and disseminate this information.		Monitoring the extent to which local authorities are meeting their duties under the CE Bill is one of the GYOWG's new recommendations
24	Provision of a "Soft Loan" scheme such as a Community Credit Fund for GYO initiatives.	This suggestion was included in GYOWG members' responses to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 consultation	

GYOWG recommendations where no further action is required

Recommendation		Reason for no action required
12	To review commonality across education bodies to set standards and offer similar courses.	Standards for delivery across the range of horticulture based qualifications from SVQ, NCH and HNC/D are set by the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Landbased Studies, LANTRA. This is recognised across Scotland and across the UK with SQA, City and Guilds, Edexcel etc. Where possible, community groups and course providers should identify specific outcomes for their courses and see if they can be mapped against national standards at level 1 or 2 so that participants can use the knowledge as evidence towards further study/ training. Progression routes for professional qualifications are already identified across the various horticulture industries.
10	Training in horticultural skills should be recognised by an awarding body where appropriate and such training should be progressive i.e. each course is certified and builds to higher qualifications.	

Work still to be done by the GYOWG 2014-2017

Although the GYOWG has made great progress over the last five years, there is still much work to be done to make it easier for communities to grow their own food in Scotland. Over the next three years, the GYOWG has agreed to focus on work that is for:

- national/strategic level projects, rather than local level/practical projects
- work that isn't already being carried out by other organisations

Our specific recommendations for 2014-2017 are to:

1. Support the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 was passed by Parliament on 24 July 2015. We have been heavily involved in the consultation process for the Act, especially Part 9 which relates to allotments, and we hope that many of the measures in the Act (eg: the right to buy vacant and derelict land, the right to use public assets) will bring about large scale change for community growing groups. However, for this to happen, community groups and public landowners need to be made aware of the changes in legislation. Community groups are often very small and under-resourced, lacking technical expertise or relevant contacts in Government to find out about changes. Public landowners are often inclined to take the most risk averse interpretation of new regulations. Therefore, we recommend the following actions to help implement the new powers in the CE (Scotland) Act:

- 1.1. Help write guidance aimed at community groups
- 1.2. Help write guidance, aimed at local authorities/landowners
- 1.3. Develop and deliver a 'travelling seminar' to help local authorities carry out new duties placed on them by the Bill (eg: writing food growing strategies).
- 1.4. Monitor how local authorities are delivering new Allotments legislation, by collecting and analysing food growing strategies and annual allotment reports.

2. Promote GYO in disadvantaged areas

Anecdotal evidence, and initial results from the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society, suggests that people engage with 'grow your own' initiatives more in more affluent areas, and less in more disadvantaged areas. This could be for a variety of reasons, for example a lack of education about the benefits of GYO, a lack of access to suitable ground, or no training provision in how to actually go about growing fruit and vegetables, or a lack of capacity within the community to organise a growing group. We recommend exploring the relationship between GYO initiatives and disadvantaged areas, and, once more is known about this, taking steps to tackle barriers to GYO in these areas, so that everyone in Scotland can share the benefits to health, wellbeing, the environment, community and economy, of fresh, local produce. Our suggested actions in this area are:

- 2.1. Map the incidence of GYO initiatives in disadvantaged (SIMD) areas
- 2.2. Extend the existing Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society analysis of GYO and disadvantaged areas
- 2.3. Repeat the questions asked in the Greenspace Scotland survey 2011 on growing, annually if possible
- 2.4. Promote GYO activities in areas where there gaps are found, in partnership with others

3. Promote GYO to Community Planning Partnerships

Neighbourhood plans are mostly concerned with issues surrounding litter, parks, pavements, roads, dog fouling and local authority services. There is very little mention of local food, despite the many and varied benefits GYO could bring to local communities, in terms of improved health and wellbeing, better local environments, more robust local economies and more resilient communities. We will promote these benefits to Community Planning Partnerships, with the aim of GYO initiatives being incorporated into local plans and Single Outcome Agreements across Scotland.

4. Promote GYO to planners and other land professionals

As outlined in our last report, community growing projects often find the Planning system in Scotland, and dealing with other land professionals, challenging. This could be at a strategic level, for example, councils not having open space audits, adequately protecting greenfield sites or demanding greenspace as part of new developments. Or it could be at a more practical level, for example, receiving conflicting advice, or advice that makes a group's plans prohibitively complex or expensive, about whether planning permission is required to change the use of land, erect polytunnels/sheds or build car parking spaces. There is also a lack of consistency between local authority areas, with some promoting very good practice, and some being more risk averse.

The GYOWG recognises that it failed to make significant progress with its original Planning related recommendations. However, the GYOWG considers Planning to be of such importance that we once again make the following recommendations, to help make the planning system more favourable for community growing. We will seek to:

- 4.1. Promote the benefits of and good practice in GYO to planners and other land professionals at a strategic level (eg: Heads of Planning)
- 4.2. Promote the benefits of and good practice in GYO to planners and other land professionals at an officer level