

**GROW YOUR OWN WORKING GROUP EVENT: FOOD
GROWING STRATEGIES – 22 SEPTEMBER 2016
Q&A SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE CABINET SECRETARY**

LOCAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- Scotland's local authorities are made up of a mix of rural and urban areas. In urban authorities the land suitable for growing could be very limited due to either availability, contamination or competing priorities. Rural authorities may have other issues more specific to them!

- Therefore, Glasgow would look to be more “creative” around the food growing agenda and in the development of its food growing strategy. This could mean that, in addition to considering the role of allotments and community gardens, Glasgow would also like to consider the potential of non-traditional growing methods such as hydroponics/aquaponics or non-traditional settings such as green roof or walls.
- Could the minister, therefore, advise whether the food growing strategy guidance template will recognise this broad range of available resources within Scotland’s various local authorities and, in particular, support and encourage non-traditional opportunities such as those mentioned above?

Answer 1:

- I think that, as populations expand and the demand for space becomes ever more competitive, there will become much more emphasis on us all to think outside the box when it comes to providing for our communities, including the provision of food-growing opportunities.
- What Glasgow City Council describes, to me, and if relevant to that local authority, should very much form part of the authority's thinking around its particular food-growing strategy.

Question 2:

- This local authority welcomes the opportunity to develop a food growing strategy in line with Part 9 section 119 of the Act.

- As subsection 3b requires a local authority to identify “other areas of land” in its area that could be used by the community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs, this would raise a two part question on which this local authority would request that the Minister provides clarification.
- Firstly we would seek to understand if these “other areas of land ” were used by the community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs, if this would be considered by the Minister as a local authority taking reasonable steps in meeting their Duty to provide allotments.

- Secondly if this is not the case would the Minister consider that an unintended consequence of such a decision could impact on communities who have no desire to grow within a traditional allotment format being disadvantaged by the implementation of the Act particularly in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

Answer 2:

- Let me answer the first part of this question and hopefully it will address the second...
- The duty to provide allotments in response to demand is quite clear. This duty will only be fulfilled by the provision of sites for those that specifically want these.

- Having said that, if someone who accepts the offer of a none-allotment growing space instead of remaining on a waiting list, then I would consider this as the local authority taking reasonable steps to fulfil its duty.

SCOTTISH ALLOTMENTS AND GARDEN SOCIETY QUESTIONS

Question 1:

- How does the Minister see the food growing strategy developing over the years? How will she evaluate it?

Answer 1:

- Under section 120 of the Community Empowerment Act, local authorities must review their food-growing strategies every 5 years.
- The evaluation of whether these strategies are working will be done by establishing whether a local authority is successfully providing allotment sites in its area.
- Namely:
 - Does the number of people on the waiting list equal more than half the total number of allotments owned and leased by the authority, and

- Has anyone on said list had to wait for a continuous period of more than 5 years?
- If the answer to either of these questions is yes then perhaps the related food growing strategy will require updating.

Question 2:

- 2. The Scottish Government has just signed up for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – from now until 2030. These will affect the National Planning Framework and Single Outcome Agreements. How does the Minister see these being incorporated into the Food Growing Strategy together with the other duties of section 9 (Allotments) of the CEA?

Answer 2:

- The planning system should support economically, environmentally and socially sustainable places. NPF3 sets out our ambition for Scotland as a whole. It highlights the distinctive opportunities for sustainable growth in our cities and towns, our rural areas and our coast and islands.
- The independent review of the planning system included several recommendations which could have implications for the role and scope of the National Planning Framework. We will need to reflect on the outcome of the Review before setting out a firm timeframe for NPF4 but currently expect work to commence in 2017.

- As the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 makes clear, the purpose of community planning is so public services work together and with communities to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities on locally agreed priorities.
- We in Scottish Government have no role to impose compulsory elements to these plans, whether on food or any other policy.

- Of course, food can contribute to outcomes which Community Planning Partnerships might identify as local priorities (e.g. supporting local economic development; promoting healthy lives and wellbeing; giving young people the best start in life). So I'd encourage people here to point out the contribution it can make in their dealing with local authorities, health boards and other community planning partners.

Question 3:

- Catalysts in the form of advocates, visits to sites in the region, events etc. are required to raise awareness of the benefits and possibilities of allotments so those in socio-economic disadvantaged areas can enter into the discussions as equal partners. This work is needed before the need for land can be properly assessed. SAGS members have a direct relationship with and represents plot holders and people wanting plots on the ground across Scotland in many of the disadvantaged areas. What direct support do you envisage offering us as an organisation to continue and expand on this work?

Answer 3:

- The Scottish Government recognises and values the important role that volunteers make to the lives of individuals and communities here in Scotland and indeed across the world.
- We will continue to support our communities in areas of socio-economic disadvantage through legislative solutions such as the Community Empowerment Act and through non-legislative measures such as supporting various Scottish Government funds that support organisations operating in these areas.

- Examples of such funds include our Fair Food Fund, The Good Food Nation Fund and the Central Scotland Green Network Fund. In 2016/17 alone, these three funds have committed a combined £1.75M to organisations, many carrying out vital work in our communities experiencing of socio-economic deprivation.
- If any organisation has specific work they are eager to carryout but lack the appropriate funds, I would strongly suggest that they look at what funds are already available out there, there really are a few.

Question 4:

- How will local authorities decide how much land may be needed in the future? How will the information on the suitability of land be gathered? Will suitable land in urban areas be preserved?
- How does the Minister see the Food Growing Strategy tying in with the Planning Framework?
- Scottish Government is promulgating the Place Standard as a tool for developers and for community consultations. Unfortunately this tool does not explicitly contain a section or questions on growing or on access to community gardens or allotments.

Answer 4:

- Scottish Planning Policy currently says local development plans should encourage opportunities for a range of community growing spaces. Our Planning Advice Note on planning and open space recognises the role of community involvement and users of open space/ interest groups in inputting to the open space audit and strategy process.
- NPF3 also recognises that land for food production within towns and cities will become increasingly important, given the need to support local food networks, build resilience and address climate change over the long term.

Question 5:

- 5. What models of local food provision will be used? Will exemplars from other countries be considered? The duty to provide allotments in response to demand is quite clear. This duty will only be fulfilled by the provision of sites for those that specifically want these.

Answer 5:

- Local authorities will have a good idea of where to begin with developing their food growing strategy as allotments and growing spaces are already included in their Open Space Strategies.

- However, looking at other models of food provision within communities, as well as from those abroad, to see what has worked and not worked can only add value to any authority's food growing strategy.
- As pointed-out within the last question, the duty to provide allotments in response to demand *is* quite clear and authorities will have to demonstrate what reasonable steps it is taking to meet that demand.

END

(Word Count: 762 Approx 5 minutes of Answers)