

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

Introduction

1. Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. It gives me a great deal of pleasure and pride to be here, at this event run by the Grow-Your-Own-Working-Group, the group I launched way back in 2009, when I was Minister for Environment & Climate Change.
2. You will agree, I'm sure, that much has changed since 2009. For example, I now stand in front of you as Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

3. And I really cannot tell you enough how pleased I was to learn that my new portfolio includes allotments and grow-your-own Policy. It has, and will always be something very close to my heart.

4. Of course, when you think about Grow-Your-Own, it was an obvious fit, given the environmental, climate change and indeed, land reform connections.

5. Other changes since 2009...Well, finally, we have updated legislation on allotments in the form of Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (the CEA), and proudly I can say that I voted in favour of this legislation on the day it was passed by Parliament in June of last year.

6. I'm glad to see, that in those 7 years since 2009, there has been at least one constant, and that is the commitment and dedication of our key grow-your-own stakeholders, some of whom are represented here today.

7. As Government, we're so aware that you commit countless hours, not just to your plots and in your gardens, but to advancing your cause and much of this on a voluntary basis.

8. It's good to see also, representatives from across our local authorities...my oh my, what a task you have ahead, but we *are* here to support you to deliver on your new duties and functions under Part 9.

REFLECTION – PART 9

9. This Government wants to improve people's access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food, the very essence of our vision of a Good Food Nation.
10. Part 9, for those of you who've been sleeping, updates and simplifies the legislation on allotments and contributes to the delivery of our wider aspirations for food and food-growing as we move forward.
11. It increases protection for allotments so that local authorities will be unable to dispose of, change the use of or renounce a lease on an allotment without Ministerial consent.
12. The duty on a local authority to provide allotments has been tightened and is now linked to demand, the number of allotments available and the length of time someone has to wait for an allotment.

13. The CEA brought forward a number of provisions that required secondary legislation and guidance to be made before Part 9 can be brought into force.
14. Secondary legislation relates to provisions for or in connection to compensation and transitional arrangements (going from old to new legislation, a process I'm given to understand has not been quite straight forward).
15. We have already conducted a public consultation on compensation and instructions are currently being considered by my officials.
16. We're also working with key stakeholders to develop guidance for local authorities in connection with their new duties and functions under Part 9.
17. The plan, all things going well, is to begin the process of commencement of Part 9 in spring next year.

FUNDING

18. Once in force, local authorities will be expected to start delivering on their new duties, one of which is the provision of allotments.
19. So where's the money coming from, I hear you ask.
20. I must be quite clear; the Scottish Government does not have a budget set aside for local authorities in order for them to specifically provide allotments in their areas.
21. However, there are existing funding pots that may be considered, for example, the Climate Challenge Fund, the Central Scotland Green Network Fund & the Community Food and Health Scotland Fund, to name but a few. These funds in 2016/17 alone are worth a total of £11M (million).

22. These are just three Scottish Government supported funds that have been used in the past to realize proposals such as the development of new allotment sites, community gardens and other food growing initiatives.

23. I'm sure that there will be further opportunities in the future, after all, the benefits of grow-your-own cuts right across so many priority areas.

UPDATE

24. Now for a bit of an update on the work around Part 9.

25. We have established a Tripartite-Group that will monitor the progress of implementing Part 9.

26. The group is accountable to me and consists of Scottish Government, local authorities and the Scottish Allotments & Garden Society.

27. At last year's Grow-Your-Own-Working-Group event, *An Introduction to the Community Empowerment Act*, there was a clear message that stakeholders wanted more involvement in developing our work around Part 9.

28. Toward that end, the Tripartite-Group is currently helping to shape a consultation on guidance for local authorities.

29. We appreciate that in some cases the relationship between those who want to grow food on allotments and those who are in a position to provide allotments may have been strained.

30. I hope that the Tripartite-Group goes some way to building some trust and understanding between growers, local Government and indeed the Scottish Government.

31. The reports I hear suggest that the experience has so far been very positive and I look forward to receiving further updates on their progress.

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

32. We're keen that policies across Scottish Government work in a complimentary fashion and that's why gardens and allotments are included within the definition of Green infrastructure within our national planning policy, now into its third evolution.

33. The National Planning Framework, or NPF3, aims to significantly enhance green infrastructure networks, particularly in and around our cities and towns.

Food Growing Strategy

34. Turning now to Section 119 of the Community Empowerment Act (the reason we are all here today), this section places a duty on local authorities to prepare and review a food-growing strategy for their area.

35. A food-growing strategy will demonstrate what local authorities are doing to provide a community with land for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers.

36. I see this work as being complimentary to Open Space Strategies. It has to be.

37. Whilst Open Space Strategies are about more than Grow-Your-Own, a food-growing strategy will be a document that specifically identifies land that an authority considers may be used for allotments sites or for other forms of community growing.

38. But hopefully the outcomes from today's workshops will help us all better understand what should be included in identifying land for food growing, the obstacles and indeed potential solutions.

39. It's good to see that today we have Peter Duncan's involvement. Peter was seconded to us from Fife Council to specifically take forward work around food growing strategies and we're really grateful to have him on board.

CLOSE

40. The measures within the Community Empowerment Act, not least Part 9, will result in more food-growing opportunities for our communities, where there is an identified need, and will improve people's access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food.

41. As Government, we will continue to work closely with local authorities, SAGS, the GYOWG and members of the growing community in order to implement Part 9 and to ensure that it is ready for commencement in a timely fashion and that it's fit for purpose.

42. We're well aware that the provisions in Part 9 relating to allotments will be difficult for some local authorities to deliver and we recognise that Scottish Government has a key role to play in helping share knowledge of best practise and supporting local authorities in delivering on their responsibilities.

43. Enjoy today and I look forward to hearing about the outcomes.

44. Thank you for listening.

END

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