

GLASGOW ALLOTMENTS FORUM AGM 4th November 2009
ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY 2009-2013

Tommy McDonald, Assistant Director Land and Environmental Services, G.C.C.

Good evening, I would like to thank the Glasgow Allotments Forum for inviting me to come along tonight to speak at your AGM.

In recent years, allotments nationally have undergone a renaissance; recognised for their unique and crosscutting contribution to national and local policies promoting community sustainability, social inclusion, healthy living, lifelong learning, green space provision, biodiversity and recycling. The renewed popularity of allotments is evidenced by occupancy rates and waiting lists at their highest for more than half a century. Demand for allotments is greater than at any time since the 'Dig for Victory' campaign of World War Two.

We all know that allotments contribute hugely to Glasgow's cultural and environmental heritage in many ways – from providing a place to get away from it all, improving the quality of life for people, to enhancing biodiversity within the city – from promoting locally produced food to providing opportunities for physical exercise and socialising.

Allotments are classed as part of Glasgow's green space, along with parks, community gardens, play areas and football pitches and, as such, they are included in Glasgow's City Plan. The City Plan 2, which is scheduled for adoption around November 2009, proposes to protect existing allotment sites and, where possible, to expand allotment provision.

Glasgow has a long history of allotment gardening and Council records dating back from 1895 show allotment sites at New Victoria Gardens and on the Sir John Stirling Maxwell Gardens site within Pollok Estate.

In Glasgow, there are 24 allotment sites operating across the city and with a couple of exceptions, are at full capacity. There are a total of 1320 plots, and our records show that there are some 800 people currently on waiting lists. Glasgow has also seen an increase in the number of community allotment gardening projects being created in the City.

Our vision is for Glasgow to have an inclusive, vibrant community of allotments, contributing to the well being of our citizens and a greener future for our city. To achieve this aim, we have produced our Allotments Strategy 2009 - 2013. The Strategy and 5 year Action Plan was approved by Glasgow City Council's Executive Committee on 12th June 2009.

In developing the Strategy, we have drawn on an array of local and national policies, and we have looked at best practice in other UK authorities. We believe that what we have produced reflects that best practice. The strategy details the ways in which we will deliver improvements, by means of six key commitments, carried forward into a 5 year action plan. We want to be clear to people about what we aim to do, and how we plan to do it.

We must emphasise that this document identifies what the weaknesses have been in the past and builds a course for action in the future. It will involve a significant amount of additional funding – most of which will have to be found from external sources.

We know that this will be no easy task, and that we will have to build new and effective partnerships with other organisations to achieve our goals, but we believe that together – the Council, ploholders, allotment associations, GAF – all working in partnership, we can accomplish it.

We know that we have set ourselves ambitious challenges, ones which will not be easy to deliver without the support and involvement of every one of you here tonight – and we will need and rely on that involvement if we are to move forward together to create an allotments service we can all be proud of. However, having visited a number of our allotment sites and seen the great things that have been achieved, I am positive that together we can meet the challenge.

It remains our intention to produce a full colour version of the Allotments Strategy, however, in the meantime, it can be downloaded from Glasgow City Council website, anyone who does not have internet access can contact the Allotments Officer, who can provide you with a text copy.

If you have any questions on our service, I will be available to discuss these with you at the end of the meeting tonight.