
CONSULTATION - DRAFT FOOD GROWING STRATEGY

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

17 March 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the legislative requirements set out in Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, this report introduces Scottish Borders Council's first ever Food Growing Strategy – 'Cultivating Communities' and seeks approval for consultation on the draft. This report also sets out the process and next steps in delivering on the Strategy Action Plan, as well as associated changes to Allotment management as required by the legislation.**
- 1.2 The Food Growing Strategy supports the Locality Plans for the region and is itself supported with the proposed creation of new policy EP17 in the Local Development Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**
- a) Approves the Draft Strategy for Consultation.**
 - b) Approves the proposals for resourcing as set out in 8.1.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 updates and simplifies allotments legislation, bringing it together in a single instrument, introducing new duties on local authorities to increase transparency on the actions taken to provide allotments in their area and limit waiting times. Allotments are defined in Part 9 as land that is owned or leased by a local authority and used wholly or mainly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers and not for profit. A key requirement of the Legislation is for every local authority to develop a Food Growing Strategy under section 119 of the Act. Each authority must set out in its food-growing strategy how it will provide land to meet demand for food growing as allotments or other forms of cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers for community or individual growing.
- 3.2 While Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act came into effect in 2015, the detailed guidance on preparing the Food Growing Strategy was published in November 2018. Since then officers have been engaging with stakeholders and undertaking a review of Allotments and Community food growing in the Scottish Borders.

4 STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Stakeholders such as Community Planning Partners, local 3rd sector organisations, Allotment Associations/Societies and Community growing project managers have been consulted with through a series of meetings, gaining insight into current growing activities and needs for future capacity building.
- 4.2 A 12 week public consultation was launched on 24 July, following the format of similar consultations undertaken by Greenspace Scotland in other local authorities. The aim of this was to gain insight into current and potential local food growing activity, to guide the development of the Strategy.
- 4.3 The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 24 July to 16 October 2019 and was promoted to all Community Councils, In Bloom groups, 3rd sector organisations, publicly via a press release (30 July) and via website and social media. It had a good response, with 300 respondents. A summary of the consultation is included as an appendix to the Strategy.

5 STRATEGY

- 5.1 Following the above consultation, the Strategy has been developed based on the information gathered. The aim of this Strategy is to support and facilitate anyone who wants to get growing, through existing growing opportunities and new approaches to growing. The key objectives of the Food Growing Strategy are:
- To provide a central resource for community growing information
 - To raise awareness around community growing in the Scottish Borders
 - To show you how to get growing: where, how and who can help you/your community group
 - To help you get your community growing project off the ground
 - To help identify potential allotment sites and growing spaces

- 5.2 In developing a food growing strategy for the Scottish Borders the Council is committed to delivering the wider benefits associated with food growing including:
- Improving health and wellbeing outcomes
 - Promoting opportunities for social interaction
 - Environmental improvement including climate change and food waste
 - Skills development
 - Economic development and sustainability.

In delivering these benefits the Food Growing Strategy is supportive of the work of the Community Food Network, Locality Planning and Education & Lifelong Learning.

- 5.3 Survey responses identified a need for support to individuals and communities interested in food growing, broadly falling into three themes which form the structure of the strategy:

Getting started: how can I get growing?

Support for getting started - Skills and Advice; training, confidence and resources to get started.

Where can I grow?

Help to find space – existing sites and new growing spaces and getting the right permissions in place.

Where can I get support for my growing project/growing activities?

How to resource your project: Funding, networking and skills sharing.

- 5.4 The Strategy places emphasis on participation and self-mobilisation, supporting and facilitating the linking up of volunteers to projects, new growing aspirations to existing resources, and skills sharing across the Borders. Within the region there are a wealth of projects and growing groups who work collaboratively, sharing skills and volunteers. There are opportunities to work with local schools.
- 5.5 The Strategy also sets out new growing opportunities within the region, thinking creatively about how and where communities can get growing. The extensive network of amenity greenspace owned by Scottish Borders Council presents an opportunity for communities to 'adopt' areas for growing: former bedding plant areas and amenity grass areas may lend themselves to adoption for community food growing, and the strategy invites exploration of these opportunities within communities.
- 5.6 As part of the Strategy, information on all growing opportunities within the region – existing community growing sites, allotment sites and other growing sites - are listed and mapped to be made available online. If approved, it is proposed that the online mapping will be launched as a consultative draft at the same time as the Strategy.

6 ACTION PLAN AND RESOURCING

- 6.1 As well as supporting and facilitating self-deployment of individuals and community groups to get growing, the Strategy sets out the Council's commitments through the Action Plan:

Action	
1. Develop Policy	1.1. Investigate and explore opportunities to develop further policies in support of food growing and

Framework	community growing with Community Planning Partners
	1.2. Adopt new planning policy - EP17 Food Growing and Community Growing spaces – as part of the Local Development Plan, safeguarding food growing spaces and enabling increased provision.
	1.3. Review of corporate policies and strategies to support Food Growing and Community Food Growing.
2. Review provision and Management of Allotments	2.1. Co-ordinate waiting list information with appropriate Allotments Associations to ensure data collection is handled accurately and appropriately
	2.2. Investigate new allotment sites in areas of demand, working with community groups and private landowners where possible
	2.3. Review and implement new Allotment Regulations
	2.4. Prepare an Annual Allotment Report
3. Support the Community Growing Network	3.1. Develop networking event(s) for community growers and volunteers
	3.2. Explore the creation of 'Growing Ambassadors', as part of the #yourpart Corporate Programme
	3.3. Consolidate resources for food growing through the development of the Volunteer Coordinator role

6.2 Scottish Borders Council in partnership with Live Borders, has operated a community volunteering project at Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick since 2010. This provides opportunities for a wide range of volunteers and voluntary groups to access and gain support for skills development in food growing, under a supervised programme offered by the Council. During the last 10 years, the project has made a huge difference in terms of supporting volunteers with specific needs to get involved in community food growing. Action 3.3 above highlights the need for maximising existing resources through the development of the existing Volunteer Co-ordinator role based at Wilton Lodge Park Walled Garden. This post currently sits with LIVE Borders, having been transferred over in 2018. By bringing this resource back in house, the post can be aligned with the delivery of the Strategy outcomes, supporting volunteers and sharing skills across the region. To fully maximise the opportunity to support and promote Community growing and Education, replacement of the dilapidated Conservatory in the Walled Garden is also proposed (see section 8)

7 ALLOTMENTS

7.1 As outlined in Section 111 of the legislation, local authorities have a duty to maintain a waiting list. Scottish Borders Council currently

maintains a waiting list, but must make minor amendments to the way in which the data is held;

- Liaising with 3rd party allotment managers (such as Allotment Associations) of Council owned land, ensuring waiting list data is merged to ensure no 'double counting'.
- Collect data on allotment requirements: size/access requirements

- 7.2 Under the terms of section 112 of the legislation when certain trigger points of demand are reached, Local Authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure: (1) that the number of people on their waiting list for an allotment does not exceed half the total number of allotments owned and leased by the authority; and (2) that a person on the list does not wait more than five years for an allotment. The Action Plan sets out the next steps in ensuring that adequate provision of local authority allotments is assured throughout the Borders.
- 7.3 Authorities also have a duty to produce an annual Allotments Report. This is to include data such as demand, uptake and waiting list details.
- 7.4 Local Authorities are also required to develop Allotment Regulations in accordance with Section 115 of the legislation. These are subject to a separate report and once approved will be subject to statutory consultation and advertisement.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

- 8.1.1 The financial impact of transferring the Volunteer Co-ordinator post back from Live Borders to the Parks & Environment Service within Scottish Borders Council are set out below and will be met from the budget currently used to fund the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Live Borders and SBC - details of which are shown below;

Grade 6 SCP 043	
	25 hrs/wk
Gross	£17,141
NI	£1,514
Pension	£ 3,085
	£21,740

- 8.1.2 The capital expenditure to support the ongoing programme of volunteering and develop resources for Community Food Growing is focussed on the replacement of the existing conservatory within Wilton Lodge Park Walled Garden, for which costs are estimated at £100k. This will be funded from the Community Benefit derived from the Hawick Flood scheme and the Community Outdoor Facilities Block.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations

- 8.2.1 In order to meet the requirements of the legislation Scottish Borders Council has undertaken a consultation exercise and engaged with stakeholders, and their views have been taken into account in shaping the Strategy. The Action Plan aims to

ensure that the Strategy is implemented and mitigates potential risks to success.

8.2.2 The Action Plan requires resource to be implemented. There is a risk to delivery if insufficient resource is allocated to the Actions contained therein, e.g. supporting community growing, sourcing land and associated infrastructure for growing etc. There are various options available which will be explored further to mitigate against this this.

8.3 Equalities

It is anticipated that there are no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.

8.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no adverse direct economic, social or environmental issues identified within this report.

8.5 Carbon Management

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report; there may be net reduction in emissions related to reduced food miles and increased carbon capture.

8.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

8.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

None.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Monitoring and Chief Legal Officer, the Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and Communications and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted port and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by:

Martin Joyce

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference:

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Contact us at:

Contact- Jacqueline Whitelaw, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA, 01835-824000, ext. 5431.

APPENDIX – DRAFT FOOD GROWING STRATEGY