

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-09-10 : Paper 1 : 21 April 2010

Inquiry into the Provision of Allotments in Wales

Response from Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

Your considerations for the enquiry: -

1. The demand for allotment sites in Wales and availability of sites (public & private)

Throughout Wales there are demands for allotments, there are also vacant plots in certain areas.

We must therefore look at where the demand is to satisfy that as specified under the legislation 1908 section 23 allotment acts. Our concern is that there is too much emphasis on provision of other types of gardens that do not resolve the problem in that approximately 150,000 are on waiting lists for allotments in the UK. My understanding that in Cardiff there are over 800 on a waiting list yet there are sites which are in a derelict state, a site recently visited has a vast amount of land available to provide a substantial number of plots and community gardens within the protective bounds of legislation. Local Authorities should be aware of the demand and should provide a sufficient number where that demand exists. Within the allotment acts 1908 - 1950 it is the responsibility of local authorities to provide, whether this is land owned by them or not they can compulsory hire (min 14yrs max 35yrs) or compulsory purchase. What we have seen in the past is the sale of the family silver and the money spent on other amenities.

2. The Barriers/Constraints (for users & providers)

Lack of land & resources that's the general excuse, in Bridgend recently land was sold to Asda for development none of that money was made available for future provision, a waiting list of 120 and rising no foresight as to future demand. At the Government Select Committee in 1998 we made it clear that there was an increasing demand for allotments and were ignored. Consideration should be given to self managed sites good examples of this are Torfaen & Bridgend County Borough Councils. I feel the legislation highlights both Barriers and Constraints perhaps if these were complied with we would have no problem now.

3. Innovative approaches to the provision of allotment land

The allotment acts 1908 to 1950 are robust and covers all aspects of gardening including the forming of co-operatives. Is there a need for new ideas or changes we feel not. What is needed? clarification of the legislation and local authorities to carry out their responsibilities within the confines of that legislation. On this I draw your attention to the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 Section 106 where land can be made available for public open space Allotments when development is to take place. Also by virtue of Local Government (Wales) act 1994 obligation of providing and letting is on Community & County.

4. Evidence of the wider benefits allotment gardening and opportunities for allotment holder (e.g. health, environment, Community, bringing products to the market place).

We have witnessed the benefits from allotments by the fact that we provide fresh fruit and vegetables without the use of too many pesticides insecticides and other chemicals. There is evidence of biodiversity especially where there are hedgerows ponds and wildlife areas. Allotments are educational in that schools can use them within their curriculum. Lets be fair allotment holders have known this for centuries.

5. The need for and suggested areas of intervention from the Welsh Government

Legislation is in place but needs enforcing, any grants for land purchase or leasing from WAG local authorities should be consulted on the area of demand. Implementation of TCPA 1990 section 106 with a lower number of houses that are developed for the act to be implemented, I understand that at present it has to be over 25. When a section 8 application for change of use is implemented then the WAG should consider that part of the capital is used to upgrade existing sites and provide land within the development for future use. Other amenities are subsidised but generally the allotments are seen as the poor relation.

On another aspect in Wales there are two allotment sites that are private NSALG Ltd are in the process of trying to purchase as they are going up for sale. On asking local councillors what is their intention if the land is sold where would they relocate the plotholders if our bid was not accepted. Their response, on a community garden over a mile away, this would then cover them in that there is provision in the area. This is a typical opt out for local authorities and could be the end of allotments in the UK as we know them. From thirty years of experience within the allotment movement in the UK and twelve years internationally, local authorities have always been reluctant to provide allotments and the necessary infrastructure to keep them upgraded to a respectable standard.

At a recent meeting of the international allotment organisation in Luxembourg (membership is in excess of three million) we were given full support to retain the allotments in the UK as allotments and encourage all like minded gardeners to establish all gardening within the confines of allotment legislation.

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