

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-09-10 : Paper 2 : 21st April 2010

Inquiry into the Provision of Allotments in Wales

Response from the Allotment Regeneration Initiative

Mike German, Assembly Member.
Chair, Sustainability Committee.
c/o Meriel Singleton.
National Assembly for Wales.
Ty Hwyl,
Cardiff Bay.
CF99 1NA.

8th April 2010

Dear Mr German

Thank you for inviting the Allotments Regeneration Initiative to make a submission to the above inquiry.

Please find enclosed the following information:

Our written submission to the inquiry

A full set of ARI publications to be read in conjunction with our submission

A copy of the Local Government Association (LGA) publication "Growing in the Community - A Good Practice Guide for the Management of Allotments", to be read as part of our submission. Two members of our Advisory Group wrote this publication.

A copy of the LGAs recently published "A Place to Grow" which serves as an addendum to "Growing in the Community - A Good Practice Guide for the Management of Allotments", to be read as part of our submission.

We have read your guidance regarding the dissemination of information submitted and confirm that we are happy for any of our submission to be shared.

We would also like to take this opportunity to confirm that Adrian Walsh, ARI Mentor for Wales, will attend your next inquiry hearing on 21st April to answer any questions the Committee wish to ask regarding the contents of our submission.

If anything in our submission requires clarification, or if we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to make contact.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Burn, Adrian Walsh,
ARI Project Manager, ARI Mentor for Wales.
Co-Author, Growing in the Community (2nd Edition).

On behalf of ARI Advisory Group.

Enc.:

Submission to Welsh Assembly "Inquiry into Allotment Provision" 8th April 2010

Contents

1. The Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)
2. Allotment Typologies
3. Evidence of the benefits of Allotments
4. The demand for allotment sites in Wales and available of sites (public and private)
5. Barriers/constraints (for users and providers)
6. Innovative approaches to the provision of land for allotments
7. The need for and suggested areas of intervention by the Welsh Government

1. The Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI) was launched by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) on behalf of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in 2002. This UK-wide project is currently funded by the Big Lottery Fund, DCLG in Westminster, and the USA-based Fund for the Environment and Urban Life.

Aims

Support and develop allotments regeneration and the creation of brand new allotment sites in the UK.

Gather and disseminate information about good practice in allotments management.

Maintain and develop profile of allotments with public and governments.

Encourage sustained devolved management by allotment associations as the primary volunteer and community-based actor in allotment regeneration.

Ethos

ARI has developed far beyond its original aspiration as a short term project to simply "get more people growing on allotments" and now has a clear and unique brand that is recognised by governments and public:

We work with anyone involved in allotments, anywhere in the UK.

Our services are free and are not membership-based.

We are impartial, independent and professional. Policy-makers and interpreters recognise us as a professional initiative that can be relied upon to deliver high quality technical information and publications.

We are experimental, flexible, responsive, and have an evolutionary style, which is user-led.

The project is "different" and has created vision and momentum in the allotments movement.

Who we work with

The project's users are the thousands of individuals, communities, local councils and other stakeholders involved with allotments. An eclectic mix of people and organisations encompassing:

Plotholders

Allotment associations and allotments societies

Horticultural societies

Local council allotments managers and elected members of councils and assemblies

Local community groups

Statutory organisations such as schools, NHS, SureStart, the probation service, police and fire service

NGOs and charities, such as Age Concern, BTCV, Friends of the Earth, Garden Organic, Groundwork Trusts, MIND, RSPCA and Wildlife Trusts

Voluntary and community agencies.

Potential plotholders, councils, private landowners, farmers, housing associations and developers wishing to create new allotment sites.

Governments and representative groups such as DCLG and the LGA.

Although not a membership organisation, since its inception ARI has collated a database of organisations interested in allotment regeneration and the creation of new allotment sites. To date over 4,000 entries have been registered representing the diverse organisations and individuals working toward a positive future for allotments in the UK. We estimate that over 150,000 allotments users have already benefited from the Allotments Regeneration Initiative. The users themselves have helped shape ARI's work programme, following research, feedback and suggestions. This way of working has helped the project to evolve into a format and service that reflects its users' needs. All database contacts receive regular mailings from ARI and access to a wide range of publications, invitations to events, and are encouraged to engage with ARI services on an ongoing basis to develop a supportive network.

We support a constituency that ranges greatly in size and location: from tiny 'pocket sites' with only two or three plots through to larger sites which may have upwards of 300 individual allotment plots; from entire council portfolios to existing and emerging local allotments Federations' portfolios. We work with anyone looking to create brand new allotment sites and have a proven track record in this emerging field. Examples of such can be found anywhere in the UK, from deprived inner-urban areas, to isolated rural communities - we work with all of them.

Governance

ARI is a UK-wide partnership project. The partners are the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) and the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG).

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) project manages the Allotments Regeneration Initiative project. FCFCG is a Charity managed by an elected Board of Trustees, is the legal recipient of ARI funds and is the accountable body for ARI's work. ARI is overseen by an Advisory Group of representatives from allotments organisations and independent advisers. Day-to-day governance lies with the FCFCG Chief Executive Officer, with overall responsibility lying with the FCFCG Board of Directors. All administrative and financial functions are provided by FCFCG.

Our work

We specialise in Allotments. The ARI front-line work programme consists of four main strands:

ARI Mentor Network

Information Service

Allotments Officers' Forums

Travel Bursary

At the vanguard of the ARI project is the ARI Mentor Network, launched in 2004 to give local help/support to anyone creating or regenerating allotments. We created the ARI Mentor Network following consultation with our users who said they would like to be able to call on local experts to help with their plans to create and regenerate allotments. We have one Mentor in each English Government Region, two Mentors in Scotland and one in Wales. Mentors are volunteers who have a specialised knowledge of allotments, they have vast experience of regenerating and creating new sites themselves. ARI has one volunteer Mentor for Wales, Adrian Walsh, based in Cardiff where he is also Chair of Pontcanna Allotments Society. Adrian has represented the ARI project at recent allotments meetings held by the Welsh Assembly.

The ARI Information Service consists of a website (www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari) which contains a Resource Library of allotments information; a series of thirteen factsheets and packs on typologies within allotments regeneration; a library of sample allotments management documents, and; a bespoke enquiry service. Publications include:

"Managing Non-Cultivation"

"Managing Waiting Lists"

"A Guide to Fundraising for Allotments Associations"

"Affordable Toilets for Allotments"

"Safe Sites - Tackling vandalism and other offences on allotments sites"

"Restore the Plot - Advice for ploholders and allotment managers on tackling derelict plots"

"Plotting the Future - Involving children, families and schools in allotments"

"Allotments for All - Improving access for people with disabilities and mental health needs"

"Project Allotment - A guide for groups and agencies working on allotments"

"Gardeners in Charge - A guide to devolved management for allotment associations"

"Promote the Plot - Promotional ideas for allotment associations"

"Health and Safety on Allotments - A management guide"

(A copy of each of these publications is included as part of our submission to the inquiry).

We are currently writing a new publication "Designing a New Allotment Site". We can also supply sample copies of management documents, for example, Tenancy Agreements, Leases, bonfire rules.

ARI events focus currently around Allotments Officers Forums (AOFs) which are free regional events for local council staff with responsibility for managing allotments. We have focused on this type of event because, whilst there is a growing public demand for more quality plots, there is a time-lag associated with Allotments Authorities' and their Agents abilities to provide accessible and appropriately equipped allotment sites that are managed in a sustainable manner. We also anticipate that demand will continue to increase, from people seeking to grow their own food. Allotments Officers Forums are for anyone who works for a local council and has "management and provision of allotments" in their remit (they may not actually be called the 'Allotments Officer'). Allotments Officers' Forums **aim** to bring allotments officers together to share good practice in allotments management and provision and to develop a supportive network for allotments officers.

The philosophy behind AOFs is to:

promote good practice in allotments management;

promote resources that can facilitate good practice;

develop models of good practice from the event;

facilitate the development of supportive networks;
signpost to organisations that can give help and support;
offer constructive and productive delivery.

ARI Travel Bursary

Our research has found that sometimes a visit to a successful allotment site is more useful for learning about regeneration than any fundraising course or factsheet. Plying the committee members with questions can provide answers to dilemmas or obstacles, as the chances are that they had to tackle them too. The ARI Site Visits Travel Bursary is open to any group of people engaged in regenerating and/or creating allotments that wishes to visit other allotment sites for the purpose of learning good practice. Up to £300 is available to applicants for the travel and associated expenses of up to six people to visit the allotment site(s) specified in the application form.

2. Allotment Typologies

The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term 'allotment garden' as:

"an allotment not exceeding forty poles* in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family"

This description remains important because it defines the permitted use of an allotment plot. Provided it is used mainly for growing vegetables or fruit, part of the plot can be used for growing flowers, as a leisure area or for keeping small livestock, and surplus produce can be shared with others.

Section 8 of the Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called statutory allotment sites, by the requirement for consent of the Secretary of State in the event of sale or disposal. However, land which was originally acquired for other purposes and which has been used for allotments in the interim (temporary allotments) is not protected in this way.

Private allotment sites have the same legal status as temporary allotments: plots originally provided for employees of the railways are a well-known example, however, private provision has increased in the past two years as private landowners and farmers respond to the current high demand for allotments.

A number of descriptive terms have emerged alongside the legal term "allotment garden" in recent years: 'community garden(s)' and 'community allotment(s)' and 'community plot(s)'. None of these terms are recognised in law and the interchangeable way in which they have been applied by providers has led to a great deal of confusion and legal disparity. In some cases there has been a deliberate stance by local councils to name new allotment sites 'community gardens' instead of 'allotment gardens' in order to avoid creating the legal protection allotments would have. In some cases, new allotment sites have found it easier to obtain funding by naming themselves 'community allotments' or 'community gardens' in spite of actually being allotment gardens.

Allotment gardens are, intrinsically, already a community of like minded people who come together through a shared love of gardening (or a desire to learn) and, as such, the use of other terms can lead to a negative perception of what allotment gardens actually are and what returns they can offer in terms of economic, social and environmental investment.

Where the term 'allotment' is used in this submission it refers to 'allotment garden' as defined by the Allotment Act of 1922. To avoid any confusion in this submission, we have applied the terminology 'collectively-worked' (instead of, for example, 'community plot') when referring to any typology that is not an 'allotment garden' in legal terms.

* 40 poles is equivalent to 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres (1 pole = 30.25 square yards; the terms 'rod', 'pole' and 'perch' are interchangeable)

3. Evidence of the Benefits of Allotments

There is no single source of robust evidence of the multiple benefits of allotments.

Some small scale, mostly NGO-based, research has focused on specific aspects of the benefits of allotments, most usually health benefits, or has had a remit to investigate a particular typology (such as horticultural therapy) which touches upon allotments. Below is a summary of such research:

Farmer, A (2006) "Allotments for Healthy Living." Published by Food Futures, Manchester, on behalf of the Joint Health Unit. (Copies available from ARI).

Sempik, J, Aldridge, J, Becker, S. (2005) "Health, Well-being and Social Inclusion" The Policy Press, Bristol.

"The True Value of Community Farms and Gardens"(2007) The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG).

Various peer-reviewed academic research papers and PhD theses also exist. We would suggest contacting Dr Richard Wiltshire, Senior Lecturer in Geography, Kings College London (richard.wiltshire@kcl.ac.uk) for list of relevant papers. Dr Wiltshire is an advisor on allotment matters to the Federation of City Farm and Community Gardens (FCFCG) Board of Directors and a member of the ARI Advisory Group.

A lack of evidence of the multiple benefits of allotments is a barrier to the provision, regeneration and ongoing management of allotments. Without clear evidence of benefits, policy makers and portfolio holders within statutory organisations such as councils, or NHS, are unable to allocate finances to the development of allotments within their portfolios. Additionally, many independent trusts and charities are also unable to make decisions to include allotments within their criteria to fund, because of lack of evidence. Although some independent trusts and charities will fund allotments, the majority do not fund allotments resulting in vast oversubscription to those that do.

Although it is not possible to put a financial figure on the amount of finance allotments are missing out on, as a result of a clear lack of evidence of their multitude benefits, we feel it is pertinent to say that the lack of evidence is one of the major barriers to the positive development of allotments.

Putting aside the lack of robust evidence of the multiple benefits of allotments, there are clear indications, via examples of good practice, that allotments provide a clear return on investment at social, economic, and environmental levels to their users, the environment, and wider society. An outline of these benefits, along with descriptions of relevant exemplars of good practice, can be found in "Growing in the Community - A Good Practice Guide for the Management of Allotments" - a copy of this book is enclosed with this submission for the Committees information, along with its addendum "A Place to Grow".

4. The demand for allotment site in Wales and availability of sites (public and private)

There is no formal evidence of how many allotment sites (private or council owned) there are in Wales, nor is there formal evidence of demand. No survey of the number of sites has been carried out. ARI and other organisations (eg FCFCG, NSALG and other NGO's whose work touches upon allotments) do, however, have anecdotal evidence that actual and latent demand for allotments in Wales exists and that it greatly exceeds supply.

We are able to state this for the following reasons: there has been a significant increase in demand for ARI's services in Wales from providers, managers and people on waiting lists. Our partners and reciprocal organisations report similar to us. In particular, demand for the services of ARI's Mentor for Wales has shown that there is a demand for allotments and a need for support throughout Wales. To cope with this demand we have joined forces with our partner FCFCG, so that the ARI Mentor for Wales can deliver workshops and 'allotment surgeries' at FCFCG Regional Gatherings. These events are primarily focused at the FCFCG's own members and do not focus specifically on allotments. The new allotment sessions on the programme have been oversubscribed and, from the questions asked and from the information we have been given by delegates, we are absolutely certain that actual demand far exceeds supply.

Media attention on the subject of demand and lack of availability of sites would indicate that there is demand for allotments and insufficient sites to cope with that demand.

Latent demand cannot, by its nature, be quantified. In our experience, as allotments specialists and from our local work in Wales, we are aware that public awareness of the very long time period one would expect to wait for a plot and/or the fact that there may be no sites at all in some council area results in people NOT joining waiting lists. Thus there is latent demand for allotments in Wales.

Despite a lack of actual survey evidence, ARI has evidence of existing allotments in Wales from our database records and enquiries we receive. Other NGO's whose work touches upon this field will also be aware. Councils in particular will be aware of their own allotment sites and we are confident that councils do keep good records of how sites they have. In the most general of terms it is common knowledge that the highest concentrations of actual allotment sites are in urban areas, such as Cardiff and Swansea.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative does not think it appropriate for the Welsh Government to conduct a survey of the location of allotments in Wales, as it will not actually assist in securing an expanded provision.

5. Barriers/constraints (for users and providers)

There are numerous interrelated barriers and constraints on both users and providers regarding allotment provision in Wales.

We have anecdotal evidence that some councils are unaware or unsure of the legislation regarding statutory provision of allotments and how it applies to them.

An historical legacy of outdated allotments management regimes and a traditional low priority for allotments within local council portfolios has resulted in a significant lack of local council skills base and knowledge of allotment law/provision requirements. Local council and their agents (volunteer-run local allotments associations) are unable to cope with the increased demand for allotment plots. This lack of capacity may prevent allotment associations from managing existing allotments themselves, and makes it difficult to create brand new sites. The recent increase in demand and waiting lists has meant that sites and waiting lists are usually full. Paradoxically this has led to some local councils and their agents ceasing promotional activities which could widen participation in allotment gardening. Hence excluded people and communities are not being given opportunities to become involved in allotment gardening and gain from its benefits. Thus increased demand is not being met and is in fact being stifled.

A lack of robust evidence of the multiple benefits of allotments (as outlined in 3) is a major barrier to provision of new allotment sites and regeneration of existing sites.

Negative perceptions of allotments exist and this is a major barrier. Some councils and members of the general public still think allotments can only ever resemble 'shanty towns' and are not a community garden in their own right. This is not the case and can lead to NIMBYISM from neighbours of potential new allotments sites and an unwillingness from councils to provide allotments. This issue

can be directly interlinked to that of 'allotment typologies' as there is also a common misconception that 'community gardens' and 'community allotments' and 'community plots' are more ascetically pleasing than allotment gardens. There is huge confusion over allotments typology (please see 2 for an overview) amongst councils, NGOs, users and potential users and this is a barrier in itself. This has further served to 'muddy the water' as to regards what allotments are (and are not) and what councils can and cannot provide and, has unfortunately led to some councils opting to provide 'community gardens' instead of allotments in order to evade their statutory duty to provide allotment gardens. We have anecdotal evidence of one new allotment site in Wales having to call itself something other than an 'allotment site' in order to obtain funding to set itself up as an actual 'allotment site'. We would add that throughout the UK there are examples of new and thriving allotment sites which are visually compatible with their local environment - ARI can provide examples, "A Place to Grow" also provides guidance on the issue of the physical appearance of allotment sites.

There is interest from private landowners, and farmers in particular, to provide allotments. A barrier to this development is a lack of guidance on planning law in general and a lack of information for farmers about how diversification into allotments may impact upon statutory payments they might otherwise receive from Welsh Government or the European Union.

Mixed and unclear messages from planning departments in councils is confusing for people and private providers wishing to create allotment sites. We would add, however, that clarification on allotment and planning law has now provided via "A Place to Grow". We have noted comments at the Committee's evidence hearing on 18th March that this guidance is not sufficiently clear and would agree with this remark in principle, however, in the absence of a legal challenge that would clarify matters, only precautionary advice can be given to councils. The fact that the duty to provide includes no time limit, combined with the fact that the power of compulsory lease or purchase does not come with resources attached, gives councils with concerns about the strength and durability of demand grounds to refrain from providing. Until a test case occurs or unless the Welsh Government is able to give firmer guidance on the law this barrier will remain. We would add, however, that in our opinion if the current demand were to decrease by, for example, half there would still be insufficient existing provision to cater for the remaining demand and new provision would still be required.

Some councils are taking positive action to deal with demand by reducing plot sizes on existing allotment sites when a vacancy occurs. The low number of existing allotments in Wales equates to this being an ineffective method of increasing provision to deal with ongoing demand and a lack of provision will continue to be a major barrier.

6. Innovative approaches to the provision of land for allotments

Although allotments have existed in the UK for over 100 years, their popularity waned somewhat in the latter years of the 20th Century, leading to large scale disposal of allotment sites for other uses. From approximately 2006, however, an increased demand for allotments could be seen throughout the UK. As a UK-wide project, ARI has been able to monitor responses to this new demand and gather examples of new models and exemplars in this field.

Throughout the UK there are replicable models of innovation from local councils, other statutory organisations and the private sector, in response to a high demand for allotments. We feel it is pertinent to bring examples from outside of Wales to this submission, to avoid a need to 'reinvent the wheel' whilst welcoming opportunities to embrace local diversity, specific to Wales and it's regions, in the manner in which these models could be replicated.

The most common new model is that which has been used by Parish Councils in rural areas of England (the equivalent to Community Councils in Wales): A farmer leases land to the Parish Council which then leases the land to an Allotments Association for use as allotments which the associations undertakes management responsibility for. This provides agricultural diversification for the farmer; the council is able to meet its statutory provision requirements, and; the allotments benefit from being managed by the gardeners themselves, thus, saving the Parish Council administration costs and bringing all of the recognised benefits of devolved management.

Some local councils have been able to locate and provide land from their own portfolio, rather than leasing land from a private provider. An example is New Mills, in Derbyshire, where there had been no allotments for over 40 years. An advert placed by New Mills Town Council in 2000, enabled those interested in setting up an allotment site to meet, form an allotment society and, in partnership with the council, identify suitable land that could be developed. A process of local consultation followed. By the end of 2004, planning permission had been granted on a tract of wasteland owned by the council and the creation of an allotment site could proceed. In just one year the society was able to transform 4,000 square metres into a credible allotment site of over 30 plots. The site was fenced and cleared by April 2005 and the first plots could then be let and cultivated. Mains water was connected and an access road was constructed and land drains were laid. This brought into use around one third of the site that would otherwise be waterlogged and unsustainable. All plots are taken and there is a waiting list. One plot is rented to a group working with people with a learning disability and is 'collectively-worked'. Funds were first raised from the Healthy Living Network and Derbyshire Community Foundation as well as from the council. Additional funds have been raised to create a pond and wildlife area. Plans are in place for further fundraising to improve access and construct a toilet and wheelchair accessible raised beds.

In some cases, however, the council has not been able to provide allotments and, rarely, new private allotment sites have been created as a result. Abbotsham is a small village in Devon, with a Parish Council. The nearest town is Barnstable 15 miles away. Local residents had approached the Parish Council to ask for allotments but with no success. The residents contacted their regional ARI Mentor who assisted them with becoming a fully constituted organisation. They chose to become an unincorporated Allotment Association which is a standard model within allotments. The allotment association contacted local landowners to search for suitable land. The allotment association explained to landowners that they planned to manage the allotments themselves, via Devolved Management, so that the landowner would have minimum management tasks. A local sheep farmer offered land with a 10 year lease. The site is now created with a total of 48 plots: 24 plots @ 250m² and 24 plots that are half this size. Rent is £20 per plot per year, paid directly to the allotment association. The rent the allotment association will pay to the farmer for the total land area will be £800 per year. As a gesture

of goodwill, however, the farmer waived the first year's rent so that the allotment association could use its first year's rent from the ploholders for its start-up costs. The lease includes a clause giving the farmer the right to give one year's notice to the allotment association to quit the land should he wish to change its land use. Although there is now an allotment site where there was non previously, the allotments association does not have any security of tenure other than a 10 year lease, with the landlord having the power to serve one year's notice within that period.

In urban areas, where pressure on land is often greater, some councils have carried out reviews to identify existing allotment sites which could be extended to accommodate new allotment plots and to identify council-owned land on which new allotment sites could be created. Leeds City Council has extended its Victory Gardens Allotments, a devolved managed allotment site, to create a further 30 allotment plots. The new plots have all been taken and the site does continue to have a waiting list. However, the pressure of the waiting list has been somewhat alleviated by the additional provision of a 'meanwhile' gardening alternative nearby: The Vicar of nearby St Peter's Church, offered the vicarage garden for people on the waiting list at Victory Garden Allotments. People on the waiting list are now offered small 'starter plots' at the church, which the Vicar arranges for them to take. They are small plots in relation to a full sized allotment plot. The starter plots were not 'cleared' in advance of the new gardeners arrival - they were given a area of lawn or border and asked to make their own plans and decisions. It is an informal arrangement, no rent is paid and no formal agreement is entered into. The meanwhile garden has been a great success. The model has received publicity within the church's own media network and we understand that other places of worship are planning to follow suit. The project has been running for 18mths and will continue until the vicarage is sold, probably in 3 - 4 years time. Meanwhile gardening typologies are, however, a very recent development and there is no case-law or specific regulations that apply in the case of disputes.

In Edinburgh, the NHS Lothian Trust, is in the process of making some of its hospitals grounds available to alleviate pressure of waiting lists for allotments. This model could be replicated elsewhere within the NHS, and other public sector organisations with land portfolios, and could become a significant provider of land for allotments. It should be noted, however, that although the Trust wanted to provide allotment 'style' plots, and to specifically assist in the alleviation of the City of Edinburgh's allotment waiting list, it has decided to call the plots 'community gardens' instead of allotments in order to avoid the legal ramifications of the term 'allotment garden', thus ploholders will not have the security of tenure they would have had were they called 'allotment gardens'.

In Northern Ireland, Ards Allotments have been created as a private enterprise by a farmer, Maurice Patton. Recognising a lack of allotments locally and high demand (along with a willingness to pay) the allotments were created as a response to a downturn in the agricultural profit following the Foot and Mouth crises of 2001. Former agricultural land was turned into allotments, 18m x 6m for a cost of £295 per plot per year in the first year and £220 in the second year. Demand has been very high and the site was filled quickly. There are plans to create more allotments.

From the work of the ARI Mentor Network throughout the UK, we have identified that, in general, most new allotment sites have an approx 80/20 ratio of allotment gardens and collectively-worked plots respectively. We have found that this new model usually reflects the aspirations and willingness of the new ploholders to have local groups and/or schools involved in their new site and a recognition of the benefits of allotments from those groups.

At a strategic level in Wales, Cardiff City Council undertook an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2009 in order to self-assess its own responses to demand and provision. The council is about to launch an Allotments Strategy and has also critically reviewed its waiting lists. This is a clear model of a council in Wales following the Local Government Association's good practice guidelines and taking a critical self-examination of its own allotments management procedures and its provision responses.

7. The need for and suggested areas of intervention by the Welsh Government

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has identified a need for and suggests the following interventions by the Welsh Government:

3. Welsh Government endorsement/recommendation of "Growing in the Community" and "A Place to Grow" for the management of existing allotment sites and for guidance on the creation of new allotment sites. These publications give the guidance that people and organisations involved in allotments in Wales are seeking: advice on planning and allotment law, examples of good practice, how to write an allotment strategy, how to design a new allotment site, contaminated land etc. It may be appropriate for the Welsh Government to liaise with LGA and Welsh LGA to make these publications available in Welsh Language.

4. Welsh Government issue policy note reminder to Chief Executives of councils reminding of statutory provision to provide and consent needed for disposal.

5. Welsh Government provide funding for research into multiple benefits of allotments. Proven benefits of allotment would enable budget allocation within councils, and other statutory organisations, directly to allotments and prove that allotments provide a calculable return on social, environmental and economic investment. A steering group will be required to take this forward, the Allotments Regeneration Initiative would be pleased to take part. Our partner, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has experience of managing such research.

6. Welsh Government provide funding for development of events aimed at skills sharing and gathering/dissemination of good practice for allotment providers and managers, eg local authorities, private providers and other organisations (charities, NGOs and organisations involved in allotments and hybrids). The Allotments Regeneration Initiative has a similar model in England called Allotments Officers' Forums which the project would be pleased to adapt and deliver throughout Wales. ARI is able to provide allotments experts from around the UK who have faced and overcome similar challenges in allotment regeneration and creation. These events would apply to anyone looking to create allotments, in the process of creating allotments, managing existing allotments and regenerating existing allotments.

7. Welsh Government clarifies planning guidance for farmers wishing to diversify from agriculture into allotments.
8. Welsh Government invites the National Farmers Union (NFU) and private landowners to future meetings of this committee and includes these bodies in future planning for the provision of allotments in Wales.