

Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Ymchwiliad Rhandiroedd | Allotments Inquiry

Ymateb gan : Un Llais Cymru

Evidence from : One Voice Wales

One Voice Wales is recognised by the Welsh Government as the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales. It represents the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council and over 80% of the 735 community and town councils are already in membership, with numbers growing year on year. As well as our representative role, we also provide support and advice to councils on an individual basis and have previously launched, with Welsh Government support, a modular training programme for councillors, which continues to be delivered effectively. We believe strongly that community and town councils are well-placed to develop the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas they serve and, as such, are active and proactive in debating key issues such as energy policies, sustainability, environmental issues and strategic planning. Our sector will always support and wish to encourage the development of local food production and we provide ongoing guidance and support to Councils who already provide allotments and community gardens for the benefit of their communities. Demand for allotments is increasing reflecting the approach of local residents to becoming more active and living healthier lifestyles. Allotments also provide an ideal opportunity for local communities to develop bio-diversity approaches on land that is used for local food production. This is very much in line with the bio-diversity duty contained in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. We will shortly be distributing guidance to our member councils as to how they can address this new duty and in particular how allotment sites can play a major part in developing such approaches.

In a survey undertaken by the Welsh Government in January 2018 'Management and Delivery of Services and Assets in Community and Town Councils: Research with the Sector' it was found that of the 254 Councils who responded to the survey some 35 of them were responsible for the provision of allotments. In some Councils it is possible that more than one allotment site is provided. With the growing trend of place based services being considered for transfer from principal councils to community and town councils it is likely that this number will increase.

One Voice Wales did work in partnership with the Federation of City Farms and Gardens some years ago and free training was provided by the organisation on our behalf which was quite well supported. It is considered that practical guidance and encouragement to community and town councils should be developed and an ongoing training programme be put in place to achieve the aim of increasing opportunities for local food production in Wales. This could be achieved through Welsh Government funding to support the development of a training module that could be delivered by One Voice Wales trainers who operate throughout Wales. One of the difficulties facing community and town councils in establishing new allotment sites is the capital cost involved in preparing land and associated amenities. The running costs of allotments once properly established should not act as a barrier as

plot rentals mostly cover such costs. It is suggested that the Welsh Government might consider introducing a funding incentive to generate greater interest in the development of new allotment sites where demand exists.

Practical guidance on the provision and management of allotment sites by community and town councils would be a useful resource and One Voice Wales can arrange circulation to all of its member councils. Furthermore, we are well placed to highlight the importance of allotments by featuring this subject at our Area Committees and at Conferences that we arrange on an annual basis.

One Voice Wales works closely with the WLGA on a range of subject areas and the addition of increasing opportunities for local food production could feature on our ongoing agenda.