

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

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

Ymchwiliad Rhandiroedd | Allotments Inquiry

Ymateb gan : Cyngor Tref Penarth

Evidence from : Penarth Town Council

Under increasing financial pressures, Town and Community Councils have had to face losing community growing space, or look at other ways that they can be made sustainable for both current and future generations. As a Town Council with 3 allotment sites and a Community Garden to oversee and manage, we are pleased that the Welsh Government is looking into ways to ensure that these growing spaces meet the challenges of the future.

With regards to waiting lists for allotment spaces, we believe that the issue has less to do with poor administrative practices, or knowledge surrounding the management of allotments, and more to do with the consistent high levels of demand for the space seen year on year. Our own waiting list is at well over 100 people, with only 60 plots on site, all of which are currently tenanted.

This is for a number of reasons; local factors such as an older demographic are likely to play their part, as well as a generally increasing lifespan meaning that people hold onto plots for longer.

The idea of an agreed period of tenure for a plot should be explored. In areas where the waiting list is long in comparison to the plots available, there should also be a minimum wait time before previous holders can be put onto the waiting list again. This would ensure that more members of the community get a chance to use and cultivate a plot.

It should also be noted that allotments and community growing spaces, whilst often considered the purview of the older generations, elevate the lifestyles of all members of the community, no matter what their age. As such, they should not only be made aware of these opportunities, but also be able to access them, regardless of their background or circumstances.

To increase the number of available community growing opportunities, more work should be done to determine a recommended plot size for people in 2019. Having a minimum recommended plot size that reflects the space needed to grow fruit and vegetables for a modern sized household would ensure that allotments would still be of benefit to the cultivators in question. Not having a maximum size would also allow those responsible to split plots as they prefer, taking into account this new minimum. This means area where plots have a different size or shape due to factors such as an unusual shape of the land could continue.

Whilst Penarth Town Council commends the idea of providing information and guidance to Town and Community Councils, a more pressing requirement is ongoing financial support for those responsible for allotment sites. Much of the costs incurred by Penarth Town

Council are related to ongoing maintenance of our sites, and payment of the staff that do this on a regular basis.

The Community Infrastructure Levy could be one source of the monies for this support, as well as contributing towards initial set up costs.

Additionally, Penarth Town Council believes that any new developments made of over 100 houses should have land set aside on an equitable formula basis specifically for allotments and community growing spaces.

Similarly, providing a recognised standard with regards to information contained within waiting lists would be somewhat useful for smaller organisations and community groups. However, this shouldn't be done through locking Town and Community Councils and community groups into using specific bespoke software to achieve this, like some other aspects of Town Council services, as this is both expensive and restrictive.

As the landscape of the community has changed significantly since the inception of allotments, Penarth Town Council believes that providing spaces for community growing spaces could be more inclusive and conducive to community activities than increasing the provision of allotments. Reducing current, disused allotment space and using it for a community gardening space could be one way to address demand.

Giving communities the proper support to be able to set up community growing spaces, and ensuring that they are set up to be a long term and sustainable success is vital to enabling Welsh people from all walks of life to have a healthier lifestyle.

By supporting existing allotment structures and their management hierarchy, helping communities to create and maintain community growing space, and fostering these spaces with the appropriate aftercare will ensure that community growing remains at the heart of the community and contributes to an overall healthier and more robust Wales.