

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
All12
Ymateb gan : Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
Evidence from : Welsh Local Government Association

Introduction

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry into Allotments.

General comments

4. The report of the predecessor committee's inquiry into allotments highlighted sixteen recommendations the majority (11) of which were directly requiring action by Welsh Government the remainder were directed towards Local Authorities (2) the Minister, WLGA and National Trust
5. The Guidance Document for Traditional Allotments and Community Led Gardening Projects published in March 2016 is a useful guide which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders involved in the provision of allotments, the legislative basis for the establishment of allotments and is an essential reference source.
6. There is an acknowledgement that the overall responsibility for the provision of allotments lies with the Local Authorities.

QUESTION 1: The Welsh Government's strategic approach

7. The recommendation in the predecessor report for Welsh Government to actively promote the benefits of allotments and community growing as part of the wider health and well-being agenda is to be welcomed. There is a need however to 'have all the ducks in a row', the recommendations relating to availability and planning approvals need to be in place, appropriate management arrangement established to enable a response to requests. It cannot be expected that additional requirements and administrative burdens be placed upon Local Authorities without the necessary infrastructure of resources to support
8. The Welsh Government in working with key stakeholders in developing a suite of guidance and tools for community groups and individuals in starting and maintaining allotments and community growing spaces must give appropriate consideration as to who the stakeholders are. The need to have representation from Local Authorities is vital – considering that under present legislation they have the statutory obligation and responsibility for the provision of allotments.
9. The Welsh Government is charged with bringing forward new legislation for allotments to include a time limit for Local Authorities to consider written requests for new sites. Time is not the only resource that needs to be addressed, the need for resource capacity of funding, staff and available land must be considered together.

QUESTION 2: The approach taken by local authorities across Wales;

10. The majority of Local Authorities have details of allotment sites and management arrangements and appropriate contact details and application arrangements on their website
11. A minority of Local Authorities in Wales have retained the management of allotments.
12. The management of the allotment provision in many Local Authorities is now self-governed, management having been transferred over to allotment associations which have their own management committees to coordinate applications made.

13. Other authorities have a mixed provision of Council-run (including Local Authority run and Town & Community Council Run sites), self managed sites and privately owned sites.
14. There are signed agreements between the local authority and some of the allotment associations as to how the site should be run, with some private sites being owned and managed.

QUESTION 3: How we can maximise the health, community and environmental benefits of allotments and community growing.

15. The provision of allotments and community growing areas can have a significant benefit to health. There is a drive towards 'social prescribing' whereby patients can be provided with a prescription for activity in the open air or in green space. The presence of green infrastructure has been shown to have a positive impact upon mental health, depression, loneliness, physical fitness and community engagement. The office of the Future Generations Commissioner is researching into how this can be more widely used.
16. The community spirit and engagement and cultural well-being and diversity can be seen in the 'Vetch Veg' project, utilising the Vetch Field (the old home of Swansea City Football Club).
17. The causes of Climate change can be impacted upon through the provision of community growing, allotments and city farms, carbon sequestration, locally grown fruit and vegetables reducing transport costs and fuel usage.

For further information, please contact:

Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development

Welsh Local Government Association

Local Government House