

Y Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, Amgylchedd a Materion Gwledig | Climate Change,
Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Ymchwiliad Rhandiroedd | Allotments Inquiry
Ymateb gan : Global Gardens Project
Evidence from : Global Gardens Project

About us

Global Gardens is a community-growing project in Cardiff. We have a growing site at Flaxland Allotment, Gabalfa where we have weekly community garden sessions on a Saturday (2pm-5pm) and Wednesday (10am-3pm). We also have a monthly community supper at Cathays Community Centre on the last Monday of every month. Along with these sessions and suppers, we offer a programme of community-based workshops on gardening, cooking and creative learning.

Our aim is to support inter-cultural communication and understanding through the shared activities of gardening, cooking and learning. We want to celebrate social and ecological diversity through growing crops from around the world and using them to cook global cuisine.

We work closely with the Trinity Project and Oasis, as well as Cardiff University and New Link Wales. Volunteers at the site include refugees, asylum seekers, students and people from the local community. We are working with Allensbank Primary School to set up an after-school weekly gardening club. We also hold regular ecotherapy sessions in collaboration with New Link Wales for those in recovery.

In 2018, over 300 people participated in Global Gardens activities, including 71 garden sessions, 12 workshops, 11 suppers and three field trips. In June 2018, we were awarded the People's Project, which is enabling us to deepen the work we do and develop some important infrastructure at the growing site.

We believe community allotment sites are a valuable resource for a range of groups including: young people and students; newcomers to the city; those seeking sanctuary, including refugees and asylum seekers; families; unemployed people; those facing social isolation and loneliness; people interested in learning about gardening; and, growers currently lacking access to a growing space.

The community-based approach of our project particularly benefits those people who are unable to commit to a full allotment plot yet have a keen interest in learning more about and getting involved in gardening and growing food. We offer the Cardiff community opportunities for community-based learning around organic gardening techniques, healthy cooking and creativity.

Challenges

We face a number of challenges as a community-growing project based on an allotment:

1. We **do not have security of tenure** and, as with other allotment holders, have an annual renewal of our plots. This can feel precarious for community projects investing significantly in a site.

2. Currently we have to pay **full allotment fees** for the plot of land. Full allotment fees make it harder for community groups to survive and thrive in the long-run. We work with a lot of people who are unemployed, including refugees and asylum seekers. Many of the people we work with would not be expected to pay full fees in normal allotment rental agreements and/or may be unable to get an allotment plot themselves. Many refugees and asylum seekers for example do not have a permanent address so cannot register for an allotment plot themselves.

3. Although we are paying full fees, our allotment site **does not have full facilities**. For example, there are **no toilet or handwashing facilities** and some water troughs that are not linked to the mains. A toilet and hand-washing facilities would make the site more welcoming and accessible to a wider group of people, including women, older people and young families.

Opportunities

We believe community growing projects on allotment offer opportunities for generating **grant income** and **community-based action**, resulting in investment and renewal of the site.

1. When we took on the site in August 2016, the site was overgrown with brambles, littered and included a concrete apron filled with garbage. Since then, we have filled 4 skips to clear some of the unrecyclable waste (spending an estimated £735 on skip hire).

2. With permission from Cardiff Council and support from the Welsh School of Architecture and Awards for All, we have built a **community greenhouse** and a **polytunnel**. The space is used for propagating, shelter and community learning about gardening techniques such as seed-saving, composting and organic gardening.

3. We have also received funding from the People's Project to install a **compost toilet** accessible for the wider allotment site community and **community learning space**.

Conclusion

As a community growing project we are creating a valuable space in the city for people to learn more about growing, make friends and feel healthier and happier.

Further support from the Welsh Government and local authorities for community allotment projects across Wales in the form of more **secure tenure; reduced allotment fees; investment in site infrastructure and facilities** (such as toilets, hand washing facilities, running water) would enable community allotment projects in Wales to become **more accessible to a wider group of people**, including women, older people and young families, support **community-based learning about horticulture and sustainability** and, in turn, support the **health and well-being of present and future generations**.