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## **Allotments Annual Report 2024/25**

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**Report by Amy Alcorn, Greenspace Programme Officer**

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### **1 Introduction**

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 ("the Act") (Part 9), which came into force on 1 April 2018 encourages local authorities to develop existing allotment sites as well as support community growing spaces in many forms. The benefits of allotments and 'grow your own' initiatives for communities include improved health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation and improved access to local, sustainable and healthy food.

In March 2021 Scottish Borders Council ("the Council") approved the Community Food Growing Strategy, 'Cultivating Communities'. The development of the Strategy was informed by a public consultation exercise carried out in 2019 to identify the food growing needs of local communities across the Scottish Borders.

The Strategy aims to promote the wide-ranging health, social, environmental and community benefits associated with community food growing. This includes:

- highlighting the physical and mental health benefits of community growing, from accessing outdoor exercise and fresh local produce to engaging with nature
- using community gardening projects as a way of creating opportunities for social interaction
- tackling prominent environmental issues by creating opportunities for pollinator-friendly planting, as well as reducing food waste and food miles
- creating sustainable communities by benefitting the local economy, developing skills and utilising local goods and services
- promoting cost-effective ways for families and individuals to access fresh produce
- using food growing projects as an educational tool to encourage the sharing of skills and provide development opportunities to people of all ages across the region

## **2 Definition**

An allotment is defined in Part 9 of the Act as land that:

- is owned or leased by a local authority (or leased or intended for lease by a person from the authority);
- is used or intended for use wholly or mainly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers; and
- is used or is intended for use otherwise than with a view to making a profit

## **3 Scottish Borders Council Allotment Sites**

Scottish Borders Council directly manages six allotment sites - in Hawick, Innerleithen and Peebles and leases four allotment sites to Allotment Associations in Tweedbank, Galashiels and Eyemouth.

The Council has certain duties under the legislation relating to the management of Local Authority sites:

- Local Authorities are required to adopt Allotment Regulations for these sites – these were adopted by Scottish Borders Council in April 2021.
- The legislation requires councils to consider taking reasonable steps to ensure that the waiting list figures remain less than 50% of the total allotments on offer.
- The Council also has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that those on the waiting list do not remain on the list for a continuous period of more than 5 years.
- This annual Allotments Report is also a requirement of the legislation.

The Act indicates that the size of an allotment is to be 250 square metres in size but allows flexibility of plots to reflect local demand.

## 4 Waiting Lists

Currently the sites managed by Scottish Borders Council have 94 allotment plots and 71 people on the waiting list for an allotment, as broken down below:

**Table 1 - Scottish Borders Council managed sites**

Site Name	No. of Plots	No. of people on waiting list	Locality area	Wait list > 50% number of plots? Y/N
Gytes, Peebles	39	30	Tweeddale	Y
Burgh Hall, Peebles	5	5		
Moss Park, Peebles	7	6		
Miller Street, Innerleithen	6	13		
Guthrie Drive, Hawick	14	10	Teviot & Liddesdale	N
Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick	23	7		

The 4 sites privately managed by Allotment Associations on SBC land have provided the following information on their waiting lists:

**Table 2 - Allotment Association managed sites on Scottish Borders Council owned land**

Site Name	No. of Plots	No. of people on waiting list
Tweedbank Allotments, Tweedbank	13 plots (10m x 9m) and 8 raised beds (7m x 1.3m)	0
Mossilee, Galashiels	46	6
Lee Brae, Galashiels	15	0
Gunsgreen, Eyemouth	38	8

*Waiting List numbers as at 31.03.2025*

There are other independent allotment sites on private land; Scottish Borders Council seeks to promote these where possible and appropriate, but these are not counted under the requirements of Allotment reporting.

Table 1 illustrates that the waiting list numbers on SBC managed sites are above the 50% statutory ratio between allotment provision and waiting lists overall. As outlined above The Act requires councils to consider taking reasonable steps to ensure that the waiting list figures remain less than 50% of the total allotments on offer. To this end, we perform an annual review of our waiting list, which involves contacting each person and ensuring their interest in leasing an allotment remains active. This keeps the waiting list current and ensures that we have the most accurate and up to date information about waiting list figures.

To improve processes, the Council has amended letting procedures. This now includes a measure whereby if an interested party fails to show up at an agreed allotment plot viewing twice, this will result in removal from the waiting list. This is designed to minimise officer time being repeatedly lost with people not showing up to agreed appointments. The Council is also supporting and encouraging community growing projects across the whole of the Scottish Borders to allow potential allotment holders opportunities to participate in community growing, either instead of leasing an allotment, or whilst on the waiting list for an allotment.

## **5 Development**

In addition, as a means to incorporate community food growing needs into future land use planning, under the current proposed Local Development Plan the Council has adopted Planning Policy, EP17 which seeks to safeguard and promote use of land for food growing, including consideration given for new or extended food growing areas within new developments which meet community needs. This provides a basis for planning future food growing/allotment land supply to meet demand, where reasonably possible.

We have had requests from community groups to help find land for them to start their own allotments. We have connected these groups with a local landowner and they are currently negotiating land use. We also matched up a Council-owned walled garden with a community group who started leasing this from May 2024 and have created a new community garden with a focus on seed saving.

A considerable amount has been undertaken on clearing, re-fencing and removing dilapidated structures from one Council-managed site - Wilton Park Road, Hawick. The site had become untidy looking, and it was identified that with some remedial works this may support and encourage tenants to keep their plots in better order. We have recently reallocated 6 plots at this site so will be keen to see how the site is looking at the first round of inspections scheduled for July 2025. We have also written to all tenants to let them know that their plots will be inspected in July and that we will be expecting to see at least 50% of the plot area being used to cultivate food produce, in accordance with the rules and regulations.

The Council also has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that those on the waiting list do not remain on the list for a continuous period of more than 5 years. Currently no persons have been on the list for more than 5 years.

## 6 Scottish Borders Council Allotment Fees

All the Council managed allotment plots were charged at an annual rate of £52 from April to March (£47.50 in 23/24). There is a reduction of 50% for people who are in receipt of one (or more) of the following: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit.

## Privately Managed Allotments on Scottish Borders Council-owned Land

Each Allotment Association has their own pricing structure and these are set out in the table below which answers Part 9, Section 121 of the Act.

## 7 Annual Reporting Measures

Part 9, Section 121 of the Act sets out specific measures that are to be included in the Allotments

Annual Report:

Item	Requirement
a	the location and size of each allotment site
b	the number of allotments on each allotment site
c	where the whole of an allotment site is leased from the authority by one person, the proportion of land on the allotment site that is not subleased from the tenant of the allotment site
d	where allotments on an allotment site are leased from the authority by more than one person, the proportion of land on the allotment site that is not leased from the authority
e	where an allotment site is leased by the local authority (i) the period of the lease of each allotment site, and (ii) the rent payable under the lease by the authority
f	the period of any lease between the authority and the tenant of an allotment site
g	the rent payable under any lease between the authority and the tenant of an allotment site
h	the rent payable for each allotment in the area of the authority
i	how, in the opinion of the authority, such rents are decided by reference to the method of determining fair rent provided for in the regulations
j	the number of persons entered in the waiting list on the final day of the reporting year to which the report relates
k	the number of persons mentioned in paragraph (j) who, on the final day of the reporting year to which the report relates, have been entered in the list for a continuous period of more than 5 years
l	the reasonable steps taken by the authority to comply with the duty to provide allotments to ensure waiting list numbers are no more than 50% of total number of allotments available and that a person does not remain on list for more than 5 years
m	reasons for any failure to comply with that duty
n	the number of allotments on each allotment site that are accessible by a disabled person
o	the number of allotments on each allotment site adjusted by the authority during the reporting year to meet the needs of a tenant who is a disabled person
p	the number of persons entered in the waiting list during the reporting year who's needs include access or other adjustment to site or allotment
q	the income received, and expenditure incurred, by the authority in connection with allotment sites
r	such other information as may be prescribed

Table 3 is a summary of the information relating to the above annual reporting measures.

Item	Information required	Allotment Sites managed by Scottish Borders Council						Allotment Sites privately managed on SBC Land			
		The Gytes, Peebles	Burgh Hall, Peebles	Moss Park, Peebles	Miller Street, Innerleithen	Guthrie Drive, Hawick	Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick	Tweedbank Allotments, Tweedbank	Mossilee, Galashiels	Lee Brae, Galashiels	Gungreen, Eyemouth
a (i)	Site location	Walker's Haugh, Peebles	High Street, Peebles	Moss Park, Peebles	Miller Street, Innerleithen	Guthrie Drive, Hawick	Wilton Park Road, Hawick	Essenside Drive, Tweedbank	Mossilee Road, Galashiels	Wheatlands Road, Galashiels	Gungreenhill, Eyemouth
a (ii)	Site size (m <sup>2</sup> )	8,132	888	870	660	3,544	4,929	2,029	6,425	2,718	9,149
b	No. of allotments	39	5	7	6	14	24	13 (and 7 raised beds)	36	15	36
c	Percentage of the site not subleased (Leased out sites)	-	-	-	-	-	-	32.4	32.8	10	35.2
d	Percentage of the site not leased (SBC managed sites)	11.9	39.9	14	21.5	33.4	28.9	-	-	-	-
e	Sites leased by the Council (Nil)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
f	Lease period to tenant of site	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
g	Rent payable to SBC by tenant of site	-	-	-	-	-	-	£1	£10	£15	£1
h	Allotment rents (£)	£52, £26 Concession	£52, £26 Concession	£52, £26 Concession	£52, £26 Concession	£52, £26 Concession	£52, £26 Concession	£40.00 per plot, £30.00 per raised bed	£30 full, £15 half, £7 quarter	£30 full, £15 half, £7 quarter	£40 Full, £20 Half, £10 Quarter
i	How fair rents are decided	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions	Annually as part of budget setting process - costs of provision outweigh income - agreed to include concessions				
j	Waiting list numbers SBC list: 71 Total: 85	30	5	6	13	10	7	0	6	0	8
k	No. of people on waiting list for 5 or more years	0	0	0	0	0	0				
l	Steps taken by SBC to maintain waiting list to comply with the duty to provide allotments	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations	Regular inspections ensure plots are utilised. Unused plots reallocated according to allotment policy regulations				
m	Reasons for failure to comply with (l) above	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				
n	No. of allotments accessible by a disabled person (Assumed to be physical disability)	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.	Dependant on the disability. All plots could be accessible. None currently wheelchair accessible.				
o	No. of allotments adjusted by SBC to meet needs of a disabled person	0	0	0	0	0	0				
p	No. of people entered in waiting list who's needs include access or other adjustment to site or allotment	0	0	0	0	0	0				
q (i)	Income received (by SBC)	£1,872.00	£208.00	£416.00	£312.00	£598.00	£806.00	£0	£0	£0	£0
q (ii)	Expenditure incurred (by SBC)	£2,978.00	£0	£0	£0	£0	£4,074	£0	£0	£0	£0
r	AOI as prescribed by the Scottish Government	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A				