

WIRRAL COUNCIL

DEPARTMENT OF REGENERATION PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

ALLOTMENT STRATEGY 2007 – 2012



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Front Cover: Allotment at Love Lane

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1. INTRODUCTION

Wirral Council has produced this allotment strategy with the aim to provide strategic guidelines for the management, administration, promotion, development and funding of allotments in Wirral. It aims to raise the profile of allotments and to optimise their use for existing and potential tenants, suiting the needs of all sections of the community.

The strategy examines the way forward for the Council's allotments over the next five years. It identifies a number of prime objectives, describes the background and issues relevant to the provision of allotments and outlines appropriate courses of action and further developments to improve allotment sites.



Healthy crop at Dawson Allotments

2. LEGISLATION

Wirral Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments and recognises them as an important asset. There is a complex network of legislation relating to allotment administration, which is governed by statute and case law. The legal framework that has developed since 1908 has established a model for the administrative process. It is essential that as the allotment authority, the Council is aware of its duties and observes precedents that have been set. These will be reflected in the development proposals and action plan contained within the strategy.

The legislation which directly affects allotment administration and the development constraints on this strategy are contained within the following statutes:

The Small Holdings & Allotments Act 1908:

This consolidated all previous allotment legislation. It repeats the duty of local authorities to provide allotments.

Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1919:

This legislation amended the 1908 Act.

The Allotment Act 1922:

The act provides tenants with a measure of security of tenure. This act has since been amended by the Local Government Act 1972.

Allotment Act 1925:

Requires town-planning authorities to give special consideration to allotments when preparing their town planning and as a consequence is relevant to the Council's Unitary Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework.

Small Holding and Allotment Act 1926:

Made a number of improvements to the law mostly concerning smallholdings.

Agricultural Land (Utilisation) Act 1931:

This was passed at a time of economic depression and has little impact today.

Allotment Act 1950:

Strengthened the requirements on Councils to provide allotment gardens. Provisions relating to rents were also affected. This Act included issues relating to notices to quit and compensation.

Town and Country Planning Act 1971:

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004:

Have considerable influence on the forward planning of allotments and are relevant to the Council's Unitary Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework.

The Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980 and the Local Government & Planning (Amendment) Act 1981:

Consolidated planning legislation, which has further influenced the forward planning of authorities.

The various acts are collectively known as the 'Allotment Acts' and will be referred to as such in this strategy.

Allotment sites are designated as statutory or temporary. Statutory sites are those that have been acquired by the Council for the purpose of being allotment gardens whilst temporary sites have been acquired for other purposes and are used as allotments in the interim. Statutory sites are directly protected by the Allotment Acts but temporary sites are not.

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT

Allotment gardening is a pursuit that provides wide-ranging benefits to local communities and the environment and can make a positive change to the quality of people's lives. In addition to the advantages of producing good quality, local, low cost, fresh food gardeners gain the benefits of healthy exercise that is active, socially inclusive and reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being. Allotments are available to all sections of the community including the old, young, disabled and people from ethnic communities. Allotments are a unique and valuable aspect of the local area contributing to the quality of the urban built environment and the range of local leisure provision. They also contribute to Wirral's Sustainable Community Strategy, provide opportunities for wildlife and can contribute to the retention of traditional skills. Gardening is the single biggest leisure activity undertaken by the public and in recent years an increasing amount of attention has been shown to allotment gardening.

Allotments were subject to an extensive inquiry in 1998 by the House of Commons – Environment, Transport & Regional Affairs Committee. The Select Committee's report, "*The Future of Allotments*" (ref. HC560-I), was the first major government study of allotments and leisure gardens since Professor Thorpe's inquiry in 1969 and resulted in a number of conclusions and recommendations, focusing attention on areas where Local Authorities needed to take action.

The Select Committee expressed grave concern that there has been a national decline in allotment provision resulting from the growing pressure for development that is being placed on urban green spaces. At the end of world war two in 1945 there were one and a half million allotment plots in England but by 1966 that had declined to a little over a quarter of a million. The inquiry confirmed the patchy nature of Local Authority policy on allotments and that most councils had no strategy policy in place for their protection and development. These trends were thought more disconcerting because there is now a growing interest in allotments which, the select committee felt, was not being addressed by Local Authorities.

Since the publication of the Select Committee report the Local Government Commission has commissioned a major study on allotment management, funded by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Greater London Authority and the Shell Better Britain Campaign. The study, entitled "*Growing in the Community: a good practice guide for the management of allotments*" was based upon extensive research into current good practice, innovation and successful ideas implemented by Local Authorities across England and Wales. "*Growing in the Community*" provides a framework in which Local Authorities might manage their allotment portfolio and includes the Local Government Associations 'Advocacy Document' for allotments, a powerful summary of the many benefits which allotments can provide.

Wirral Council has prepared this document in accordance with the recommendations on developing an allotment strategy and the proposals are in keeping with the examples of best practice given by the Local Government Commission in “*Growing in the Community: a good practice guide for the management of allotments*”.

4. WIRRAL ALLOTMENTS

The Department of Regeneration’s Mission statement:

“Promoting a healthy, safer lifestyle and improving the quality of life for all”



Splash of colour at Mosslands Allotments

Management

Wirral Council administers 41 allotment sites containing a total of 1689 full plots. Their locations are set out in Appendix 1. Two additional sites are self-managed by their own allotment societies. A full plot is approximately 250m² in size. Some sites also have provision for half plots, plots for the disabled, community plots, school plots and animal plots. A full time Allotments Officer with administrative support, assisted by Site Secretaries manages Wirral’s allotments.

Register of Tenants / Waiting Lists

The Parks and Countryside Service keeps a register of tenants and a waiting list of Wirral residents who have expressed a wish to be allocated a plot. All new tenants are required to sign a tenancy agreement. At the time of writing 92% of allotments are let. The annual level of vacancies is used as a Departmental performance indicator. There are currently 33

unusable plots on various sites that cannot be let for a number of reasons, the main one being bad drainage. These plots have not been included in the vacant plot calculation.

The waiting lists are maintained on a first come, first allocated basis for each site. There are currently waiting lists on most sites, with differing reasons why some sites are in higher demand than others. Adverts to highlight vacancies can be placed in the local press.

Allotment Administration

There is a procedure in place to inspect plots, to ensure conformance with the tenancy agreement, which is in accordance with the 'Allotment Acts'. Enforcement can involve a process of serving a warning notice, giving one month to comply with the notice, followed by a notice to quit for non-compliance. Non-cultivation of plots is the most frequent cause for this procedure to be implemented. Enquiries and complaints are dealt with in accordance with Departmental procedures.

Finance

The annual rental for an allotment plot must be paid in advance for the twelve-month period beginning the 1st October each year. Half the full rental amount is charged for a half-plot. Concessions of 50% are given to people over sixty years old. Wirral Passport holders are eligible for concessions of 50% or 10% depending on the category of passport held.

Promoting the Benefits of Allotments

The Parks and Countryside Service publish an allotment leaflet guide to Wirral's allotments. Articles concerning allotments occasionally appear in the local press. Allotment site information and the application procedure is available to view on Wirral Council's web site at: www.wirral.gov.uk

Wirral Allotment Association in partnership with the Council organises the annual Wirral Flower and Vegetable Show, which is normally held at Birkenhead Park.

Allotment Societies

All allotment tenants are members of the Wirral Allotment Association. Nineteen sites have their own societies and the Council supports and encourages tenants to participate in them. Most have an active social programme and other benefits associated with membership. These societies are members of the Wirral Federation of Allotment Societies, which is affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) Ltd.

Membership of External Bodies

Wirral Council is an affiliate member of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) Ltd. This is Britain's largest body concerned with the management of allotments. Council officers regularly attend meetings of the North West Region of the NSALG and attend the annual general meeting of the national body. The Council occasionally seeks the advice of the NSALG in allotment management issues.

Competitions

Wirral Council has won the prestigious Bledisloe Cup every year since 2002 for its allotment management service, in the category of Local Authority with over 200,000 population. This is a national competition run by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

An annual Council competition is held for all tenants to enter. Plots are judged in July and a prize giving ceremony held in October. Currently there are approximately 90 entries for the main competition and 20 for the newcomer's section each year.



Competition prize giving

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the strategy are set within the overall framework and operation of the Council's policies, objectives and linked strategies, such as the Parks and Countryside Service Plan and the Wirral Biodiversity Action Plan.

The aims are:

1. To maintain and improve the infrastructure, facilities and quality of allotment sites, ensuring sites are welcoming and accessible to all.
2. To have safe and secure allotment sites.
3. To continue to implement an effective management and administration process.
4. To improve customer satisfaction and increase tenant participation in the management of sites.
5. To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community, realising the opportunity they offer for education and lifelong learning and to increase social inclusion initiatives.
6. To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation.
7. To develop a health agenda for allotments, focusing on the benefits, in terms of improving health in the borough.
8. To review the existing provision of allotments in Wirral and if necessary to identify areas of potential future allotment provision.



Raised beds at Belvidere Allotments

Aim 1 : To maintain and improve the infrastructure, facilities and quality of allotment sites, ensuring sites are welcoming and accessible to all

It is recognised by Wirral Council that the principal issues contributing to encourage people to take up allotments relate to quality, security, accessibility and affordability.

The infrastructure of an allotment site is very important to its tenants, in particular security against theft and vandalism.

It is important for the Council to establish an agreed quality standard for allotment sites in consultation with appropriate partners and aim to achieve and sustain this standard at all times and at all sites. This standard should seek to ensure good access, good security, good facilities, good paths, adequate water provision and prompt attention to neglected plots. It could be based on the Civic Trust's Green Flag Award Scheme assessment criteria. The Green Flag Award Scheme defines the national standard for parks and green space. Nationally some allotment sites have been entered for the award and have achieved the Green Pennant, which recognises high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups.

A thorough survey of allotment sites needs to be carried out to ascertain the levels of current provision at each site and to recommend any improvements that may be necessary to raise the site to the required standard. From this survey a programme of improvements will be prepared. Potential funding sources will be investigated.

A detailed improvement plan will be drawn up for each site, in partnership with site secretaries and local associations, following the example of the recent plan for Harris Allotments. This plan will provide all tenants with the opportunity to consult and comment on the schedule of improvements proposed for their site.

The majority of allotment sites do not have toilet facilities. This is recognised as a serious deficiency, restricting the amount of time tenants can spend on the site. The lack of toilet facilities particularly affects the prospects of encouraging women, disabled people and school groups. Finding a means of establishing toilet facilities must be a key target for the future. Mains toilets should be the expected method of provision but it is recognised that the location of water and sewer utilities will not make this possible in some locations. Alternatives such as septic tanks and compost toilets will need to be investigated. A survey will be carried out to establish what type of provision could be provided at sites currently without toilets and at what cost.

Maintenance of toilets is also an issue to be addressed, as funding is not currently available for repairs, toilet cleaning and provision of consumables.

A review of programmed grounds maintenance operations needs to be carried out to ensure that best value is being achieved.

No capital investment from the Council has been available for allotments in recent years and therefore improvements have been limited. However individual associations, who have been able to obtain grant funding, have carried out various schemes on their sites. These include roadway improvements, fencing, biodiversity and communal projects and provision of storage containers.

Actions:

- 1.1 Agree a quality standard for all sites**
- 1.2 Carry out a site survey for each allotment site**
- 1.3 Produce an improvement plan for each site**
- 1.4 Carry out a survey to establish the type and cost of required toilet provision on individual sites**
- 1.5 Review programmed grounds maintenance**

Aim 2 : To have safe and secure allotment sites

A Security Audit will be carried out on all allotment sites, with 15 sites targeted for completion in 2008 and 26 sites in 2009. When completed the results will be analysed and incorporated into the annual review of the Allotment Strategy.

More active and well-tenanted sites deter intruders. A strong community on the site encourages tenants to “watch out” for each other and for the site. Links with local residents could also be developed to help keep a watch on sites. Consideration will be given to setting up an Allotment Watch scheme, in discussion with partner organisations.

The Council will investigate ways to improve the analysis of crime data and continue to actively liaise with and involve the Neighbourhood Police, Community Patrol and Community Safety Team in safeguarding sites.

The Council will seek to promote best practice in health and safety on all allotment sites. A system will be set up to enable annual site safety inspections to be carried out on all sites. This will be carried out by the Allotment Officer in consultation with the Site Secretary, with an assessment checklist to be completed. The inspection is intended to identify defects that present a safety problem to allotment users and adjacent residents.

Actions:

- 2.1 Carry out security audits**
- 2.2 Investigate the possibility of setting up an Allotment Watch scheme in discussion with partners**
- 2.3 Improve the analysis of crime data**
- 2.4 Set up system for an annual site safety inspection on all sites**

Aim 3 : To continue to implement an effective management and administration process

The Council will ensure the effective management and administration of allotment sites by continuing to develop a strong partnership with Site Secretaries, the Allotment Association, the Allotment Federation, relevant agencies and individual tenants. It is also important to develop partnerships with other local agencies, which might also have an interest in promoting allotment use, such as the local Primary Care Trust and the Department of Adult Social Services.

To ensure that a high quality service is provided all administration and management procedures will be reviewed. This will include a review of plot letting and waiting list procedures. Allotment administration systems are already computerised. In April 2006 the accounts process was integrated into the Council's new central procurement system.

The Council will liaise with the Wirral Federation to complete their review of the Tenants Handbook, Tenancy Agreement and Roles and Responsibilities booklet. The proposed amendments to these documents need to be agreed and finalised, so that they can be brought into use as soon as possible.

The Council will continue to promote allotments and monitor vacancies with the aim to have all of its sites fully tenanted. A high level of vacant plots reduces the condition and perception of the whole site by weed spread from overgrown plots, a sense of dereliction and a lowering of value. This can lead to an increase in the rate of failed tenancies. Sometimes individually tailored advertising campaigns can be used to attempt to address this problem. Site clearance and maintenance of plots is not always possible within the available budgets.

Vacancies in Wirral have been falling over the past few years:

January 2005 at 14%

January 2006 at 11%

January 2007 at 8 %

The Council uses the annual percentage of vacant plots as a departmental performance indicator (Local P.I. 4258). The target for the next two years is:

2008 = 7% reduction in vacancies

2009 = 6% reduction in vacancies

The Council will continue to investigate the status of allotment sites to confirm their legal status as statutory or temporary sites, where this is unclear. Landican, Plymyard and Earlston allotments are designated as temporary sites.

The Council wants to ensure that it provides the very best service for tenants, ensuring that it's performance remains high when compared with other local authorities. The Council will continue to enter the annual local authority

competition managed by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) as this is the only nationally recognised means of comparison between Local Authorities. In particular we will continue to liaise and compare our service with neighbouring councils to show our commitment to high service and standards across the Wirral.

It is important to investigate ways of securing financing to ensure the continual improvement of the allotment service. This will involve exploring new and creative ways of generating additional funding, by way of local and national grant mechanisms.

Actions:

- 3.1 Review all administration and management procedures**
- 3.2 Review and finalise amended tenancy documentation**
- 3.3 Confirm the legal status of sites, whether statutory or temporary**



Vacant plot at Hill Road Allotments

Aim 4 : To improve customer satisfaction and increase tenant participation in the management of sites

It is important to generate effective communication and consultation with both allotment associations and individual plot holders. All tenants are members of the Wirral Allotment Association.

Some sites have their own associations and tenants are encouraged to participate in them. These associations are members of the Wirral Federation of Allotment Societies, who hold regular meetings to discuss relevant allotment issues. Council officers will continue to attend these meetings. Further information can be viewed at: www.wirralfedallotments.20m.com

The Council will continue to work in partnership with the Wirral Allotment Association and the Wirral Federation of Allotment Societies.

Each site has an appointed Site Secretary who provides an important link between the Allotment Officer and the tenants. Their responsibilities include providing a communication link with tenants, meeting new gardeners, showing them available plots and notifying the Allotment Officer of any site problems. They are expected to apply the tenancy conditions fairly, in the interests of all and to receive support from the other tenants. A Site Secretary's meeting is held with Council officers twice a year. An annual general meeting is also held and all allotment tenants are invited to attend.

The Council will continue to encourage self-help on allotment sites, which is a benefit to all.

The Council's web site is in the process of being upgraded. This will include reviewing and upgrading the allotment pages to provide better and clearer information.

The annual Wirral allotment competition will continue to be promoted to encourage higher standards and levels of participation at all sites.

"The Future of Allotments" (ref. HC560-1) published by the Select Committee, recognises that delegated self-management fulfils two aims: ensuring greater control by the tenants of an allotment site and reducing the administrative burden to the allotment authority. For individual plot holders, devolution can also bring more responsive management on a day-to-day basis, a sense of pride in any improvements to the site, and opportunities for volunteers to bring their own skills and expertise to a new challenge.

The Council will continue to offer the option of delegated self-management agreements to allotment sites, ensuring that tenants themselves have the opportunity to develop their own role as participative citizens. There are currently two self-managed sites in Wirral at Sandringham Avenue in Hoylake and at Wingate Avenue in Eastham.

The Council will introduce an exit survey to identify the reasons for tenants leaving a site, as another means of providing an early indication of emerging trends and problems. This could be accomplished by adding a section onto the current vacating slip for tenants to give their reason for leaving the allotment.

Actions:

- 4.1 Improve the allotment information on Wirral Council's web site**
- 4.2 Introduce an exit survey**

Aim 5 : To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community, realising the opportunity they offer for education and lifelong learning and to increase social inclusion initiatives

It has long been recognised that there is something special about allotment communities. Within the setting of the allotment site age, gender, race, social status and occupation have little relevance.

The Council will continue to seek innovative ways of promoting and advertising allotments, especially in areas of poor uptake, with the aim of reducing the number of vacant plots. The Council will review and update the provision of allotment information utilising leaflets and posters, ensuring these are displayed for maximum effect, in public places such as libraries, doctors' surgeries, community centres and community notice boards and also by developing the allotment pages on the Council's website. It is also important to develop links with other Council promotions and strategies, such as healthy living.

The Council will carry out a review of allotment site notice boards, to determine what on-site information is available and to promote better communication with tenants.

Allotments can play a valuable role in environmental education and some sites have plots let to local schools, such as at King George's Way, Bidston and Church Road, Tranmere. The National Curriculum provides scope for pupils to study plant growth, urban land use, composting, recycling, soils, organic gardening and local sustainable development. All of which can be taught effectively outside the classroom at an allotment.

The Council will investigate with appropriate partners the production of leaflets and guides for new tenants, which could take the form of an allotment starter pack such as provided by Sheffield City Council. This could help to reduce early drop out rates and to retain new tenants.

The Council will continue to offer half plots as well as full plots and publicise this facility to new tenants.

In recent years more interest has been shown by some allotment sites and community groups in having 'communal gardens' where everyone works together for their mutual benefit, this can help strengthen bonds in the community. Dawson Allotment Association was awarded a Lord Winstanley 'Changing Places' award for their community plot, which has a wildlife area, seating, barbecue and a summerhouse. The Council will continue to support community schemes.

It is important to widen the appeal of allotment sites for vulnerable sections of the community and to increase accessibility. This could include making the sites more physically accessible with wider paths and raised beds, such as at

Church Road Allotments, Tranmere. This aspect of allotment development needs further detailed researched, so that correct and adequate provision can be established.

Actions:

- 5.1 Review and update leaflets and posters**
- 5.2 Review notice boards and on site information**
- 5.3 Investigate the production of an allotment guide for new tenants with appropriate partners**



View towards community plot at Dawson Allotments

Aim 6 : To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation

The integration of allotment gardening into local sustainable community development strategies can enhance the benefits of allotments. By growing their own food, allotment gardeners already make a contribution to local food production and the reduction of 'food miles', and this benefit can be enhanced through the distribution of surplus crops within local communities. The adoption of organic methods provides the further benefit of production that is sustainable from an ecological standpoint. The growing of fresh vegetables, flowers and fruit is a sustainable activity and as a consequence this strategy provides a contribution to achieving the goals contained within Wirral Council's emerging Sustainable Community Strategy.

Allotments make a positive contribution to the local environment and form an important part of the network of green spaces across Wirral. Allotment plots and their margins, hedges and unmanaged areas provide valuable habitat for many species of animals, birds and invertebrates. To some degree they also

safeguard other flora and fauna, especially given that their access is restricted. The Sustainable Development Office estimates that allotments have an average of up to 30% higher species diversity than a private domestic garden. There is undoubtedly a greater potential for the better management of the natural features of allotments, creating improved habitats and a richer source of local biodiversity. Even in their choice of crops, allotment gardeners make a contribution to biodiversity. In some instances tenants can help keep alive strains of fruit and vegetable varieties, which are no longer available through commercial channels.

The Council will seek opportunities to improve and sustain the biodiversity of allotment sites and at the same time support and assist allotment societies with funding bids for biodiversity projects, such as the recent initiatives at Harris Allotments to create community gardens and nature areas. Organic gardening practice, which avoids the use of pesticides, artificial fertilisers, and peat is also helpful in maximising biodiversity value and preserving indirect negative environmental effects. An increasing number of allotment tenants in Wirral are now beginning to grow their food organically and this move needs to be encouraged. The Council will endeavour to provide additional technical advice and assistance to tenants and forge closer links with both local and national organic associations to foster more organic practices. Further information can be found in Natural England's leaflet "*Wildlife on Allotments*" ref. NE20. Available to download from www.naturalengland.org.uk

Not all food grown on allotments is organic but it is fresh and it is local. In these days of 'food miles' – the average item of food consumed in the EU has travelled over 4,000 kilometres from origin to kitchen table. In the USA it is a staggering 20,000 kilometres. Food that has travelled from just down the road can therefore make a significant contribution to local sustainability. The opportunity to share with others the fruits (and vegetables) of one's labour is an intrinsic part of the culture of allotments. Surplus produce is often given away to neighbours, friends and relatives in a sociable and generous spirit of reciprocity.

Most allotment tenants are committed to recycling materials, self-sufficiency and environmental competence by the very nature of what they do. Allotments are the heart of living a sustainable lifestyle and support the environment in many ways. The Council will encourage recycling methods and composting initiatives where possible and provide additional guidance on sustainable practices.

For materials that cannot be recycled the Council provides waste skips when necessary. Due to increasing costs to the Council, for disposal of waste, this service will need to be closely monitored and regularly reviewed.

Water usage is also regularly monitored, with 26 sites (64%) having water meters.

Actions:

- 6.1 Review the problems caused by non-recyclable material generated on sites and the provision of skips.**

Aim 7 : To develop a health agenda for allotments, focusing on the benefits, in terms of improving health in the Borough

The value of allotment gardening in terms of public health was identified in the Select Committee report entitled "*The Future of Allotments*" (ref HC560 –I). This report highlighted the therapeutic value of allotments to people with physical and mental health problems. The report strongly recommends that allotments are explicitly included in national public health strategies and are integrated into local delivery. The Health Education Council recommends gardening as a good form of exercise, especially for older age groups who are less likely to participate in active sports or use leisure centres. The mental health benefits of allotment gardening should also not be underestimated. The recently published green paper on public health "*Our Healthier Nation*" also highlighted the links between lifestyle and health. For example a lack of physical exercise is recognised as a major contributor to coronary heart disease. The national cost of poor health styles has been estimated at over £4 billion per annum.

The Council will seek to provide vulnerable people with the opportunity to use allotments as a means of developing a healthy lifestyle and will work in partnership with partner organisations to investigate the Green Gym and similar initiatives, which offer people the opportunity to 'work out' and exercise in the fresh air through gardening activities. There could also be a referral scheme through doctors' surgeries to advise suitable patients to take up an allotment to gain the associated benefits they provide. Links will need to be established with the Wirral Primary Care Trust to develop this programme.

Actions:

- 7.1 Investigate the Green Gym and any similar initiatives with partners**
7.2 Establish links with the Wirral Primary Care Trust

Aim 8 : To review the existing provision of allotments in Wirral and if necessary to identify areas of potential future allotment provision

Safeguarding allotment land

" The best safeguard for an existing allotment site is for the plots to be fully tenanted and well looked after, with the site delivering the full range of benefits to be derived from allotment gardening to the local community. This makes it much easier for planners to argue for the retention of the allotments.

The active promotion of allotments and the conversion of latent demand into new tenancies, two of the key components of the allotment strategy, are therefore also an essential underpinning to the safeguarding of allotment land within the planning system” from “*Growing in the Community – a good practice guide for the management of allotments*” by Professor David Crouch, Dr Joe Sempik and Dr Richard Wiltshire.

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide allotments as determined by section 3 of the Smallholding & Allotments Act 1908. The Council will fully recognise its responsibilities under the Act.

National planning policy set out in “*Planning Policy Guidance: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*” (PPG17, July 2002) now makes specific reference to allotments, including details on the protection and disposal of sites. Allotment sites are also subject to an additional measure of protection as previously undeveloped land, which has the lowest priority for new development.

The Unitary Development Plan for Wirral already allocates allotment sites within the urban area for protection from development as part of its wider approach to the provision of urban greenspace and the sites are identified for protection on the Proposals Map. Allotment sites within the Green Belt are not specifically identified but are subject to protection from development under the national Green Belt controls. This approach will be carried forward into the emerging Local Development Framework.

The Council will be undertaking a full audit of open space and recreation provision, including allotments, during 2007, as part of the preparation of a Core Strategy for the Borough, in parallel with the preparation of the Cultural Services Forward Plan. This will ensure that the Council’s emerging land-use planning strategy will be fully integrated with the Council’s wider corporate objectives.

The review of allotment provision will need to include an assessment of both current needs and latent demand, which will need to be balanced against the Council’s ability to achieve a manageable level of provision where quality can be maintained within available resources.

It may be necessary to examine alternative uses for sites or part of sites that are unlikely to ever be let. Unusable plots may be redesignated as communal plots, wildlife areas, car parks or, as a last resort, may even need to be considered for disposal for development. Special justification will, however, be needed before planning permission can be granted.

Actions:

- 8.1 Review current allotment provision and identify any future need**
- 8.2 Review the use of unusable areas on allotment sites**



Thornton Allotment site before renovation

6. ACTION PLAN

	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
	Aim 1		
1.1	Agree a quality standard for all sites	Allotments Officer & Partners	2008
1.2	Carry out a site survey for each allotment site	Allotments Officer	2009
1.3	Produce an improvement plan for each site	Allotments Officer & Partners	2010
1.4	Carry out a survey to establish the type and cost of required toilet provision	Allotments Officer & Partners	2009
1.5	Review programmed grounds maintenance	Allotments Officer	2007
	Aim 2		
2.1	Carry out security audits	Senior Parks Development Officer	2009
2.2	Investigate the possibility of setting up an Allotment Watch scheme with partners	Allotments Officer & Partners	2008
2.3	Improve the analysis of crime data	Allotments Officer	2008
2.4	Set up system for annual site safety inspections	Allotments Officer & Site Secretaries	2007
	Aim 3		
3.1	Review all administration and management procedures	Senior Parks Development Officer	2007
3.2	Review and finalise amended tenancy	Senior Parks	2007

	documentation	Development Officer	
3.3	Confirm the legal status of allotment sites	Allotments Officer	2007
	Aim 4		
4.1	Improve the allotment information on Wirral Council's web site	Senior Parks Development Officer	2008
4.2	Introduce an exit survey	Senior Parks Development Officer	2007
	Aim 5		
5.1	Review and update leaflets and posters	Senior Parks Development Officer	2007
5.2	Review notice boards and on site information	Allotments Officer	2008
5.3	Investigate the production of a guide for new tenants with partners	Allotments Officer & Partners	2008
	Aim 6		
6.1	Review the problems caused by non-recyclable material generated on sites and the provision of skips	Allotment Officer	2009
	Aim 7		
7.1	Investigate the Green Gym and any similar initiatives with partners	Allotments Officer & Partners	2008
7.2	Establish links with the Wirral Primary Care Trust	Allotments Officer	2007
	Aim 8		
8.1	Review current allotment provision and identify any future need	Allotments Officer	2009
8.2	Review the use of unusable areas on allotment sites	Allotments Officer	2008
	Annual review of Allotment Strategy	Allotment Officer & Partners	Annually

Where years are stated the target date will be the end of the year.



Competition judging at Love Lane Allotments

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Strategy is a live document that will form the basis of Wirral Council's priorities for allotments over the coming years. It will be subject to annual monitoring and review, adjusting to suit the changing circumstances and needs that develop over time. The target dates for the actions identified in the Strategy will enable people to see what progress has been made and what objectives have been achieved.

In recent years a great deal of improvements have been made to allotments in Wirral. However, there is still a considerable potential for their development that will be realised through this strategy.

The key to success is progressing this strategy through partnership and sharing a vision for the future development of allotments in Wirral.



Variety of crops at Mountwood Allotments

8. APPENDIX

1. Allotment location list
2. Allotment site information
3. Allotment budget

1. Allotment location list

Site	Plots	Address	Entrance
Ashton Park	8	Westbourne Road, West Kirby	By 83 Westbourne Road
Beaconsfield Road	19	Beaconsfield Road, New Ferry	In Mayfields South
Bebington Road	260	Bebington Road, Bebington	By 186 Bebington Road
Bedford Avenue	13	Bedford Avenue, Tranmere	By 69 Bebington Road
Belvidere Road	17	Belvidere Road, Wallasey	By 48 Belvidere Road
Boundary Road	37	Boundary Road, Bidston	Opposite Flaybrick Cemetery
Buckingham Road	46	Buckingham Road, Wallasey	By 11 Buckingham Road
Carlett Park	35	St David Road, Eastham	By 33 St. Davids Road
Carrodus	36	Hoylake Road, Bidston	By 77 Hoylake Road
Church Road	13	Church Road, Tranmere	Corner of Church Rd/Elm Rd
Coronation Park	44	Greasby Road, Greasby	In Coronation Park
Cross Lane	28	Cross Lane, Wallasey	Cross Lane
Dawson	68	Kings Lane, Bebington	By 89 Kings Lane

Earlston	10	Earlston Road, Wallasey	In Earlston Gardens
Fairview Road	22	Fairview Road, Oxton	By 47 Storeton Road
Forwood Road	26	Forwood Road, Bromborough	Forwood Road
Grange Hill	19	Grange Old Road, West Kirby	On Grange Hill
Harris	166	Prenton Road West, Prenton	By 59 Prenton Road West
Hill Road	40	Hill Road, Bidston	Opposite 12 Hill Road
Ilford Avenue	75	Ilford Avenue, Poulton	By 31 Ilford Avenue
King George's Way	17	Boundary Road, Bidston	Opposite 32 Boundary Road
Landican	26	Woodchurch Road, Woodchurch	By Arrowe Park traffic lights
Lansdowne Place	5	Lansdowne Place, Bidston	By 1 Lansdowne Place
Love Lane	90	Love Lane, Liscard	By Central Park bowling greens
Manor Drive	18	Manor Drive, Upton	By motorway flyover
Manor Lane	8	Manor Lane, Rock Ferry	By 23 Bedford Road
Molyneux	19	Moore Avenue, Rock Ferry	By 9 Moore Avenue
Mosslands	44	Mosslands Drive, Wallasey	By 160 Mosslands Drive
Mountwood	21	Borough Road, Prenton	By 970 Borough Road
Newton Park	35	Newton Park Road, West Kirby	By 39 Newton Park Road
Ormonde	43	Storeton Road, Prenton	By Traffic lights by Corfe Stone
Plymyard	81	Bridle Road, Bromborough	By Plymyard Cemetery
Salacre	28	Salacre Lane, Upton	By St. Mary's churchyard
Shaftesbury	2	Mendip Close, Prenton	By 2 Mendip Close
Shakeshaft	11	Observatory Road, Bidston	By 43 Observatory Road
St James	5	Tollemache Road, Bidston	By 192 Tollemache Road
Sumner Road	11	Sumner Road, Bidston	By 41 Sumner Road
Teehey Lane	69	Teehey Lane, Bebington	By 259 Teehey Lane
Thornton	31	Vyner Road North, Bidston	Vyner Road North
Tollemache	30	Tollemache Road, Bidston	By 27 Tollemache Road
Upton Road	14	Hill Road, Bidston	By 34 Hill Road

2. Allotment site information

Site	Water Meter	Animal Plots	Pigeon Plots	Unusable Plots
Ashton Park	✓			8
Beaconsfield Road	✓			
Bebington Road	✓			8
Bedford Avenue				
Belvidere Road	✓			
Boundary Road				
Buckingham Road	✓			
Carlett Park	✓			
Carrodus	✓		✓	
Church Road				
Coronation Park	✓			
Cross Lane	✓			
Dawson	✓			

Earlston	✓					
Fairview Road						
Forwood Road	✓					
Grange Hill	✓					
Harris		✓			6	
Hill Road	✓					
Ilford Avenue	✓					
King Georges Way					1	
Landican	✓	✓				
Lansdowne Place						
Love Lane	✓					
Manor Drive	✓					
Manor Lane	✓					
Molyneux						
Mosslands	✓					
Mountwood						
Newton	✓					
Ormonde					1	
Plymyard	✓				9	
Salacre	✓					
Shaftsbury						
Shakeshaft						
St James	✓					
Sumner Road						
Teehey Lane	✓					
Thornton						
Tollemache Road	✓					
Upton Road						

Revised : July 2007

3. Allotment budget

2007/2008 - Probable Expenditure

	£
Admin/Insurance/Establishment	28,400
Metered Water Supply	9,706
Day-to-Day Repairs	7,100
Skips	3,000
Grounds Maintenance	3,555
Allotment Competition	1,100
Site Secretaries Allowance	1,539
Pest Control	5,000
Minor Improvements	5,000

Total = £64,400

Budget £64,400 minus Income £24,400 = Net expenditure of £40,000

2007/2008 - Allotment Rental Charges

Full Plot	£28.00
Half Plot	£14.00
Concessions	£14.00