



Allotments & Community Growing Strategy

2024-2029



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Introduction

Since the pandemic, demand for allotments has more than doubled with 2,100 people now on Fife's waiting list. More people are looking for ways to grow their own fresh produce, stay active, feel connected to nature, and be part of their community.

This strategy builds on the previous allotment strategy for Fife by expanding the remit to include community growing. By doing this, we aim to help more people who want to grow their own fruit, vegetables, flowers, and herbs to access land, in ways that are safe and sustainable, and with the requisite skills and knowledge. Community growing should be accessible to all who want to take part. This means having a continuum of opportunities, suitable for people of all ages, abilities, and life circumstances.

There are many different forms of community growing from allotments, orchards, edible hedgerows, and growing spaces in schools, churches, health centres, as well as town and village bloom groups. We want to support people to access the space that is right for them, whether that's an individual plot or joining a community organisation.

"I would also love the opportunity to be involved in a local orchard project. So many of the local varieties are dying out which is a shame."

Community Growing survey respondent

New and innovative grassroots models are springing up all over Fife, and food growers' networks are being established from the ground up to connect likeminded growers and share ideas. We want to ensure that community groups are supported to start and sustain by making more resources available to them. This may include small grants schemes, toolkits, and networks, and being more proactive to support the communities' needs.

To facilitate this, the strategy requires services across the Council to work together to deliver the vision of helping more Fifers access land to grow. We need services to work in a coordinated way by breaking down service siloes and collaborating to achieve the actions set out in the action plan. This strategy is not owned by one council service, but the whole organisation, and can only succeed through working in partnership with others.

"There is a lot of public land held by the schools and the NHS. It would be good to see this land being used more productively."

Community Growing survey respondent

The benefits of community growing spaces are wide ranging. Community growing is an upstream intervention that can help create more positive outcomes for people. It aids the Council's wider reform work on prevention as there are significant positive impacts for the health and wellbeing of Fife's population. Below are some of the benefits this strategy aims to support.

- There is evidence that spending time in nature can have positive effects on mental health¹.
- There is a wide body of research that supports the benefits of gardening on physical health².
- Improvements to physical health can be achieved through active travel to and from allotments and growing spaces, as well as a reduction in people's carbon footprint from active travel.
- Achieving improvements to biodiversity through providing habitats for wildlife, flowers for pollinators, and tree planting.
- Increases in people's ability to eat more locally grown produce through community growing groups and community food projects.
- Promoting and increasing skills development in horticulture for current plot holders, new plot holders, community growing groups and staff working with these groups.

“As a disabled person, I feel an allotment would benefit my health.”

Community Growing survey respondent

“[Allotments] should also be easily accessible by foot or public transport to reduce people's carbon footprint.”

Community Growing survey respondent

“I think being able to grow your own food should be considered a necessary skill not just a hobby.”

Community Growing survey respondent

By working together across services, we can strengthen our actions and have a greater, longer-term impact on communities cutting across social connections, the climate and nature emergencies and health and wellbeing.

¹ [Benefits of allotment gardening – The National Allotment Society – National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd \(nsalg.org.uk\)](https://www.nsalg.org.uk/)

² [Why gardening is good for your body - Thrive.org.uk](https://www.thrive.org.uk/)

Policy Context

This strategy is underpinned by the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#), which requires local authorities to produce a Food Growing Strategy for their area and identify land that is potentially suitable for allotments and other forms of community growing. The Act places a duty on Fife Council to take reasonable steps to provide and protect allotments, set fair rents, manage waiting lists, balance supply and demand, and provide training.

The [Plan for Fife](#) gives strategic direction for all community planning partners working in the area and sets out the ten-year ambitions for a fairer Fife. Allotments and wider community growing has a place in all four of the ambitions with benefits to mental and physical health, social inclusion and connectedness, access to greenspace and being in nature, and skills development.

These benefits also cut across the current [Plan for Fife reform priorities](#):

- Addressing the Climate Emergency,
- Leading Economic Recovery,
- Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis,
- Underpinned by Community Wealth Building.

These connections relate to several national and local policies and strategies that present new opportunities for strengthening and joining up work.

Growing and eating good food

The [Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) underpins in law what is already being done nationally to make Scotland a Good Food Nation. The Act puts a requirement on local authorities to develop a Good Food Nation Plan and builds on the national policy [Becoming a Good Food Nation](#), launched in 2014, which set a new vision for Scotland:

that by 2025, Scotland will be “a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day.”

The [Food4Fife Partnership](#) is developing Fife’s Good Food Nation Plan. The Food4Fife Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030 is currently under development but sets out a vision to “create a sustainable and healthy food culture for Fife”. One way of achieving this is increasing access to growing spaces, training and education. The Allotments & Community Growing Strategy feeds directly into Food4Fife under the Community Food pillar, through links to increasing community spaces for growing.

Community Food Pillar

The ambition for Community Food in Fife is for a Good Food Movement. This is about connecting people through community food networks, increasing skills that nurture a positive food culture, increasing community spaces for growing and harvesting, and encouraging innovation in the production and distribution of community grown food.

Benefits to Health and Wellbeing

[Scotland's Public Health Priorities](#) reflect a consensus on the most important things Scotland must focus on over the next decade if improvements are to be made to the health of the population. The six priorities require action by national and local government and partnerships across the system to make progress. The benefits of having an allotment and working in a community such as connection with nature, social interaction, and the physical activity of cultivating the land link to many of these priorities.

[NHS Fife Public Health](#) has adopted these priorities to focus on the upstream determinants of poor health and wellbeing in Fife. The Director of Public Health Report 2020-2021 found that in Fife:

- Over a quarter of people report having low or very low activity levels.
- Around two thirds of the adult population meet the recommended levels of physical activity.
- Around two thirds of adults are overweight (including obese).
- One in five people report eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- One in ten people report eating no fruit or vegetables.

The role of physical activity and social connectedness in Health and Wellbeing was the focus of a series of leaderships conversations as part of the [Our Fife Leadership Summits 2022](#). These conversations brought together 100 leaders from across the Fife Partnership to talk about public service redesign and led to a series of [recommendations](#) for Fife Partnership.

Fife's **Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2021-2024** has a vision for "an Active Fife where everyone has opportunities to be more active, with better health and wellbeing". It notes that the benefits of being physically active are wide-ranging and potentially transformative, for both the individual and at a community level.

Benefits to Biodiversity and the Climate

Fife Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Shortly after, the Council approved [Climate Fife: Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan](#) in March 2020. Climate Fife recognised both the catastrophic effects climate change will have for Fife and the changes needed to all aspects of day-to-day life. It recognised the contribution local growing initiatives can have on carbon sequestration and food security. How people travel to and from their allotments and community growing spaces also has an impact on Fife's approach to active travel, which is a key area for action in Climate Fife as a means to reduce carbon emissions. A refresh of Climate Fife is in progress and the finished update will include an action to support community food growing on public land.

Through careful and complimentary planting and planning, allotments and growing spaces can also help to alleviate the nature crisis through supporting and boosting biodiversity. This would benefit outcomes within the [Fife Local Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (LBAP). The LBAP sets out nature conservation priorities and projects for Fife. It helps to improve the condition of habitats and protects species, as well as contributing to restoring and enhancing landscapes. A renewed Fife LBAP is currently under-development and will have close ties to the Allotments & Community Growing Strategy. By helping further our understanding of nature and tackle locally some of the threats that face biodiversity through our approach to community growing, this strategy will help to meet the Council's biodiversity duty and build local resilience to ever decreasing biodiversity levels across Fife, in areas which have long been underrepresented in environment projects. This directly allows local people to take part in conservation initiatives on their doorstep and helps raise awareness

about the value of the environment both to nature itself but also to communities through the ecosystem services that growing spaces rely on, such as pollinators and soil condition.

NHS Fife has published its [2030 Greenspace Strategy](#). It describes greenspace as “a route to not only improved health and wellbeing but to addressing the climate and nature emergencies while improving local skills and supporting a local food culture across Fife”. Ensuring connections between these strategies will allow for more opportunities to collaborate, helping connect patients, staff, and the local community through promoting the growing of healthy food and keeping more people active.

Other relevant strategies and policies

- Local Community Plans (local)
- NHS Fife Population Health and Wellbeing Strategy (local)
- Place Principle (national)
- National Planning Framework 4 (national)

Fife's Community Growers

There are over 40 recognised growing sites across Fife. In developing this strategy, we wanted to gain insight into the experience of current growers at these sites and understand the interests of those on the waiting list.

Two surveys were conducted to target:

1. Current allotment holders in Fife, and
2. Those on the waiting list.

The surveys have provided more up-to-date information to aid the planning for provision by gauging interest in a range of different elements related to holding an allotment. These findings have been instrumental in forming the areas of focus and Action Plan for this strategy.

Allotment Holders Survey

One third of current allotment holders responded to the survey. Below are the key findings.

- Most respondents (97%) travel less than 5 miles to get to their allotment with half travelling less than 1 mile.
- Despite this, more than half of respondents travel by car to get to their allotment (51%), whereas 40% walk, and only 7% cycle.
- When asked to rank the benefits of allotments, respondents rated “exercise and health” top, followed by “fresh produce”, “contact with nature”, “social activity”, with “saves money” ranking last.
- 91% of respondents agreed that their allotment was value for money and 42% said they would be prepared to pay more for their plot.
- 41% have indicated that they would like horticultural training.

Community Growers Survey

Over one third of people on the waiting list responded to the Community Growers Survey Below are some of the key findings.

- Respondents are interested in a range of growing opportunities, not just allotments, such as community gardens, growing groups, and orchards.
- Most respondents (56%) indicated that they would likely travel by car to a growing site. 30% said they would walk and 10% said they would cycle.
- Many expressed preferences for growing spaces that are smaller than the recognised size of allotment plot within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.
- Defying traditional perceptions of allotment holders, the majority of those on the waiting list who responded to the survey were under 55 and more than 50% were female.
- Many (62% of respondents) expressed an interest in horticultural training.
- When asked what they thought the benefits of an allotment would be, respondents voted “fresh produce” highest, followed by “exercise and health” and “contact with nature”.

Areas of Focus

Over the period of this strategy, we will focus on several areas for action. See the full action plan in Appendix 1.

Creating sites

We will comply with the statutory duty under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to create new sites for allotments across Fife. With increasing demand for allotments, we need to ensure there is more land available and that we make best use of the land we have. We will:

- Work across council services and public sector partners to identify and map public land for community growing and explore the use of an interactive map of sites.
- Increase the number of allotments, community growing spaces, orchards and community gardens by developing a minimum of two new allotment sites per annum and aspiring to create new community gardens (including informal community growing spaces) in each of Fife's seven areas.

Managing allotments

We will manage allotment sites on public land by complying with the legislation and subsequent secondary guidance. We will continue to comply with annual reporting to the Scottish Government on allotments.

Developing horticultural skills

All new growers will be required to undertake introductory horticultural training, which will be a condition of tenancy (allotments). Horticultural training can be extended to community groups.

We want to support growers to develop their skills through access to horticultural training as set out in the legislation. We will:

- Ensure that all new growers are enrolled in introductory horticultural training, which will be a condition of tenancy (allotments).
- Extend training to community groups by establishing a training and mentoring scheme through an external training provider, while will aim to have a minimum of 150 people trained per annum over the course of this strategy.

Encouraging participation

We want to build public awareness, increase participation, and support people's access to information and resources regarding their local growing spaces. We will:

- Expand mapping of allotment sites and orchards to include other community growing sites and make it available online to the public.
- Improve knowledge sharing, connect people, and strengthen networks across Fife, by developing a communications plan for good growing practice and expand outreach.

- Promote the benefits of active travel to growers and encourage them to walk or cycle to their allotments and community growing sites.
- Provide support to allotment and community growing sites to ensure people with protected characteristics, such as those with disabilities (as well as refugees, single parents, etc.), can access sites and participate fully.

Supporting communities

This strategy is aligned to the Food4Fife Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2030 and contributes to the Community Food Pillar (as set out on page 4). We want to support community growing groups to start up and sustain and learn from and build on examples of best practice. We will:

- Explore the potential for more focused funding via Fife Council central and area budgets, exploring the use of a small grants scheme to support community growing groups.
- Enable and support opportunities for volunteering to build skills, confidence, and sense of community.
- Support and connect community growers to strengthen the network of groups across Fife's seven areas.
- Explore opportunities to support and expand seed libraries and seed and plant swapping in allotments and community growing spaces.
- Work with community groups, grower's networks, and public sector procurement to distribute local excess food to where it's needed.

Working in partnership

To make progress on all these areas of focus, we need to work in partnership across Council services and with external partners such as NHS Fife, local businesses and third sector organisations. We will:

- Establish and maintain links with Fife Council staff working in Area Teams to ensure they are equipped to support communities to start up and sustain community growing projects. This will include developing a process map for staff to follow to ensure a coordinated approach to provision across the local authority area.
- Work with Fife Council's Planning Service to ensure colleagues are familiar with allotment and community growing guidance when processing planning applications. This will include developing a process map for staff to follow to ensure a coordinated approach.
- Work with Fife Coast & Countryside Trust Biodiversity Coordinator to support and boost biodiversity in our approach to community growing.
- Work with Fife Council's Education Service to ensure a coordinated approach to community growing spaces in school grounds.
- Work with Fife Council Estates to establish land governance.
- Work with Fife Council's Grounds Maintenance Service to highlight any changes to maintenance regimes and collaborate on GIS mapping.

Governance

Working across council services and with external partners will be key to achieving this strategy and the action plan. Since the previous strategy, there has been greater partnership working to connect communities with growing spaces and working more collaboratively across services to identify new sites and manage allotments.

Fife Council's Communities & Neighbourhood's Service provides overall leadership and governance for the strategy. Reporting and monitoring of the strategy will be made to Fife Council's Cabinet Committee.

In accordance with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Fife Council will continue to report to Scottish Government annually on allotment sites.

The action plan at Appendix 1 was developed following the consultation set out in the section on Fife's Community Growers and was shaped in collaboration with council services and key external partners.

For the strategy to succeed, there must be adequate resource to enable and ensure delivery of the action plan. Working in partnership can ensure that allotments and community growing can bring benefits to Fife's communities in a range of ways as demonstrated, but additional resources are required. To deliver the community growing element of the strategy, more support is needed to carry out actions.

Appendix 1. Allotments & Community Growing Action Plan 2024-2029

Allotments Action Plan (statutory)

Area of Focus	Action	Lead	Timeframe	Output / Measure	Outcome
Creating sites	Roll out a programme of new sites, working with Fife Council's Planning Service (ensuring alignment to the Local Development Plan) and with area teams	Fife Council – Allotments Team Fife Council - Planning Service Fife Council area teams	2024-2029	Permissions granted for new sites Minimum of two new allotment sites developed per annum	More public land is available for allotments and community growing More people can access land for allotments and community growing Creation of new sites is complimenting Fife Council's climate priorities
Creating sites	Work across council services and public sector partners to identify and map public land for community growing and explore the use of an interactive map of sites	Fife Council – Allotments Team Fife Council area teams External partners, such as NHS Fife	2024-2029	Identification of new sites on public land Interactive map of sites has been developed	More public land is available for allotments and community growing More people can access land for allotments and community growing More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife
Managing allotments	Issue new lease to allotment holders	Fife Council - Allotments Team	By start of March 2024	All tenants have signed the new lease	More efficient land management

		Fife Council - Business Support		Allotment holders and Allotment Associations have clear roles and responsibilities	
Managing allotments	Consult allotment associations on taking on additional responsibilities, including the revision of constitutions	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council area teams ³	By end of December 2024	Constitutions updated and improved Funding opportunities identified Allotment holders and allotment associations have clear roles and responsibilities	Allotment associations have more autonomy and devolved responsibilities More efficient land management
Managing allotments	Review and refresh the waiting list on an annual basis	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council area teams Fife Council – Business Support	2024-2029 (annually)	Management of waiting list and communications	More accurate waiting list Shorter waiting times for allotments, faster turnaround, and fewer vacant plots
Developing horticultural skills	Establish a horticultural training scheme for allotment holders and allotment associations	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council area teams External supplier	2024-2029	Minimum of 150 people trained per annum	More efficient land management More people are upskilled in horticulture More people can access employability opportunities through new skills
Supporting communities	Further analyse survey results and incorporate findings into new site development or projects Fife- wide.	Fife Council – Allotments Team Fife Council area team	2024-2029	Fife-wide and area actions are informed by evidenced	More people can access land for allotments and community growing

³ Fife Council area teams refers to council services that are divided on an area basis, for example CLD, Housing etc.

	Share findings with Area teams to allow more targeted provision in local areas. For example, sustainable transport / active travel options, disability plots.	Fife Council – Planning Service			Improved targeting of new sites in local areas
Supporting communities	Encourage local produce swaps at allotment and community garden open days	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council - Food Team Fife Council area teams Third sector	2024-2029	Less food wasted from allotments and community growing spaces Better use of surplus food	Less wastage of produce More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife

Community Growing Action Plan (non-statutory)

Area of Focus	Action	Lead	Timeframe	Output / Measure	Outcome
Developing horticultural skills	Establish a horticultural training scheme for staff supporting community growing groups and interested growers	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council area teams External supplier	2024-2029	Minimum of 150 people trained per annum	More efficient land management More people are upskilled in horticulture More people can access employability opportunities through new skills
Supporting communities	Assist community growing groups with funding, constitution, and horticultural advice. Assist with Fife Council permissions from Estates for land use.	Fife Council area teams Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council - Estates	2024-2029		More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife

		Fife Council - Planning Service			Community growing groups are supported to start and sustain More effective partnership working
Supporting communities	Identify groups under the Equalities Act that require additional support to get involved in community growing, including, disabled people, refugees, single parents etc. and work with these groups to ensure support is in place.	Fife Council - Allotments Team Fife Council area teams	2024-2029		More people can access land for allotments and community growing More effective partnership working
Supporting communities	Create communications to promote new sites in communities when they launch and share information with communities on site management, horticultural training, active travel options for getting to sites, etc.	Fife Council – Allotments Team Fife Council – Communications Team Fife Council area teams Fife Council – Transportation Service	2024-2029		More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife More people are upskilled in horticulture
Working in partnership	Create process maps for area teams and the Planning Service to use for taking forward new projects. Create and establish an information hub for all Fife-wide projects connected to community growing.	Fife Council area teams Fife Council – Allotments Team Fife Council – Planning Service Fife Council – Grounds Maintenance Fife Council - Estates Fife Council – Education Service NHS Fife	2024-2029		More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife Improved targeting of new sites in local areas More effective partnership working

Working in partnership	<p>Work with Fife Coast & Countryside Trust Biodiversity Officer to support and boost biodiversity in our approach to community growing.</p> <p>For example, rainwater harvesting, smart composting, biosecurity, green infrastructure, reducing chemical use, pollinators, and wildlife friendly practices on sites.</p>	<p>Fife Council – Allotments Team</p> <p>Fife Coast & Countryside Trust</p> <p>Fife Council area teams</p>	2024-2029	Green audit	<p>Towards achieving Climate change goals and biodiversity improvements</p> <p>More effective partnership working</p>
Working in partnership	<p>Work with Education to ensure a coordinated approach to community growing spaces on school grounds.</p>	<p>Fife Council - Allotments Team</p> <p>Fife Council – Education Service</p> <p>Fife Council – Grounds Maintenance</p> <p>Fife Council - Estates</p>	2024-2029		<p>More people can access land for allotments and community growing</p> <p>More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife</p> <p>Improved targeting of new sites in local areas</p> <p>More effective partnership working</p>
Working in partnership	<p>Work with Fife Council Estates to ensure protection of sites.</p>	<p>Fife Council - Allotments Team</p> <p>Fife Council - Estates</p>	2024-2029		<p>More people can access land for allotments and community growing</p> <p>More efficient land management</p> <p>More effective partnership working</p>
Working in partnership	<p>Work with Fife Council's Grounds Maintenance Service to highlight any changes to maintenance regimes and collaborate on GIS mapping.</p>	<p>Fife Council - Allotments Team</p> <p>Fife Council – Grounds Maintenance</p>	2024-2029		<p>More people can access information about allotments and community growing in Fife</p>

		Fife Council area teams			More efficient land management More effective partnership working
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