

Report on Food Growing Strategy Stakeholder events project CC9106

greenspace scotland October 2018

1. Introduction and project methodology

In July 2018 West Lothian Council engaged the greenspace scotland project team to work on the delivery and reporting of two local workshops to begin the development of the Food Growing Strategy. Workshop 1 was to be aimed at community (growing) groups and individuals with an interest in grow your own and Workshop 2 was for council, agency and third sector stakeholders with a role in supporting local food growing. The method we used for the project is described below.

This report outlines policy background for developing a food growing strategy, what the current picture of community food growing in West Lothian is, where the sites are and what existing support is available from organisations and individuals. It then goes on to describe the barriers to community growing and support needs identified by community stakeholders. The report also explores the vision and scope of the food growing strategy and considers recommendations for future activity and support to achieve this vision.

1.1. Stakeholder mapping

This was carried out working closely with a West Lothian Council Open Space Officer and included identification of key local authority staff, existing community growing groups and other organisations which support community growing (local and national), Community Councils, Development Trusts, other representative and local support bodies and local councillors. Please see the stakeholder list in Appendix 1 for more information.

1.2. Events planning

The two events were run in a participative and inclusive way to ensure everyone felt able to contribute to discussions and that all thoughts/ideas were captured. Workshop 1 was aimed at community (growing) groups and individuals with an interest in grow your own.



Participants at Workshop 1 community (growing) groups and individuals

Workshop 2 was for council, agency and third sector stakeholders with a role in supporting local food growing.



Participants at Workshop 2 council, agency and third sector stakeholders

At the events we set out the national and local policy context for the Food Growing Strategy and then explored the following themes:

- What is local food growing?
- Where are we now? What is “growing” in West Lothian already?
- The scope of the Food Growing Strategy - what types of food growing will be covered by the strategy and what types of sites should be included?
- What is the strategy/policy connections for your service/organisation?
- What is our [collective] vision for the Food Growing Strategy? And what should the priorities be to make this happen over the next 5, 10, 20 years?

At the second event, we shared the aspirations captured at the community event with the Council, agency and third sector stakeholders. We used a summary of what the community stakeholders had told us they thought would encourage others to get involved with grow your own and themselves to grow more as the basis for the session.

The session asked what organisations/services are doing currently to support community growing under 6 themes of support needs identified at the community workshop:

1. Provide access to land and help community groups and individuals to identify land for growing food
2. Access to support and support organisations that can help groups and individuals develop their project ideas
3. Develop a programme of regular learning events and support for growing activities
4. Develop a programme of networking events to bring people and groups together
5. Provide access to resources such as tools, seeds/plants, cooking facilities and funding
6. Raise awareness of grow your own by developing a programme of communications and publicity

This was discussed in four groups who also considered the opportunities, challenges and potential for collaboration under each of these themes of support.

1.3. Communications and promotion

The events were advertised via direct email and people could sign up to the event using Eventbrite. A press release was also issued by West Lothian Council and a flyer for the community event was distributed at a Livingston and District Horticultural Society event. The West Lothian Council Open Space Officer created a dedicated food growing page on the West Lothian Council website where the events and survey was advertised, and West Lothian Council used its social media channels to promote the events.

The two events were attended by a total of 71 people, 6 attending both workshops and 39 attending Workshop 1 (community stakeholders) Slightly less, 26, attended Workshop 2 for council and third sector stakeholders. The participants were:

- 14 local community (growing) groups
- 13 West Lothian Council staff – 14 with the Open Space Officer
- 9 education bodies
- 8 individuals
- 7 Third sector support organisations (local & national)
- At least 3 local councillors
- 3 community council representatives
- 1 Community Development Trust

1.4. On-line survey

To engage with as many different stakeholders as possible in a short space of time we also conducted an online survey. It provided those unable to attend the events with an opportunity to share knowledge and information. A total of 88 people completed the survey. We asked the respondents for their postcodes and have created a map showing where in West Lothian the respondents stay. Results from the survey will be referred to throughout this report and the full survey questions can be found in Appendix 4

1.5 Reporting

Initially we produced a write up from the two events and shared it with participants to make sure there were no discrepancies or inaccuracies. A few participants also emailed us further information after the events.

This report draws together the stakeholder mapping, workshop outputs, online survey results and any additional feedback from West Lothian Council (and partners) into a document outlining the policy background and rationale for producing a Food Growing Strategy, the current picture of food growing in West Lothian and future opportunities for local food growing on a spatial, thematic and policy basis.

We will also highlight potential partners and stakeholders for progressing strategy development and give recommendations for next stages. To keep the report concise, we will use appendices to provide fuller details.

2. Policy background and rationale for developing a Food Growing Strategy

Support for community growing and the development of allotment sites is not a new activity for West Lothian Council. However, current national policy dictates a specific focus on the development of a Food Growing Strategy. This is supported by the West Lothian Open Space Strategy and Local Development Plan.

2.1 National context

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, Part 9, Section 119 requires each local authority to prepare a food-growing strategy for its area to identify land that may be used as allotment sites, identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing, and describe how the authority intends to increase provision, particularly in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage. Part 9 also places a duty on local authorities to review the Food Growing Strategy at least every five years. Local authorities are required to prepare their first FGS by 1 April 2020, that is two years after Part 9 of the Act came into force.

Scottish Government and partners have developed guidance to support local authorities which is due to be finalised in November 2018. The draft guidance reiterates how the shared purpose of the Scottish Government and its partners is to encourage Scotland to become a Good Food Nation, with opportunities for everyone to grow their own food through increased access to land for grow-your-own activities.

The guidance sets out how Scottish Government expect local authorities to deliver on the vision for grow-your-own in Scotland and states that the guidance is intended to help local authorities facilitate and enable those wanting to grow their own to actively manage and participate in these initiatives.

Through the development of local food growing strategies and action to support community growing Local Authorities will also contribute to some of the Scottish Governments National outcomes such as

- We are healthy and active
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

And a range of National Indicators such as

- Mental wellbeing, healthy weight and physical activity
- Visits to the outdoors, biodiversity and climate action
- Perceptions of local area, loneliness, access to greenspace and social capital

2.2 Local context

West Lothian Council are looking to develop a Food Growing Strategy (FGS) for 2020 to 2025, which will feed in to the **Open Space Strategy** covering the same period. The Open Space Strategy provides an overall vision for the provision, development, regeneration and management of open spaces throughout West Lothian and includes Allotments and community growing spaces in its typology of open spaces.

The newly adopted **Local Development Plan (LDP)** for West Lothian has a specific policy ENV15 on Community growing and allotments (p.48) and states that The West Lothian Allotment Strategy 2011 and its review will inform the location of community growing spaces. However, this is now likely to also be informed by the Food Growing Strategy.

The LDP explains that community growing spaces will be supported where there is no detriment to the existing recreational use or natural heritage, biodiversity or landscape provisions and adjacent uses and the proposals can be shown to be self-sustaining and free of additional revenue implications or the council.

It is also acknowledged that where land becomes derelict it can have a negative impact on local neighbourhoods, affecting the appearance and image of places. One solution can be

'temporary greening' and included uses such as growing spaces (for food or biomass crops), community gardens, landscaping and recreation resources. This has the potential to improve sites which detract from the environment of a neighbourhood until development can be implemented and can also provide a focus for community action and make a valuable contribution to green and open space networks.

Similarly, the **Climate Change Strategy** especially Outcome 2: A Resource Wise West Lothian – mentions growing food and the new **Adaptation Action Plan** (still to be launched) will reference the Food Growing Strategy.

The development of the Food Growing Strategy and support for more local people to grow their own fruit and veg will contribute to **The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan** outcomes such as:

- Building Stronger communities – we live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities
- Health Life expectancy & Physical & Mental Wellbeing - we live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities.

West Lothian recently launched its **Anti-poverty strategy** to support the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and as the Food Growing Strategy must address how the authority intends to increase provision in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage, it is likely that it will contribute towards Anti-poverty strategy outcomes such as

- Outcome 1: Maximise financial resources of households on low incomes
- Outcome 8: Increase opportunities for local people to fully participate in their communities and bring about change. It is also likely to support the approach of the anti-poverty strategy described on page 11 by “creating the conditions within our community where people are able to take responsibility and do more for themselves to pursue and achieve their own dreams and aspirations”

The accompanying **Anti-Poverty Action Plan** mentions access to fresh produce (which Grow Your Own could contribute to) Under Outcome 7: Reduce the number of children living in relative poverty, it says:

We will work with food projects to consider how we improve access to fresh produce including dairy, fruit and vegetables

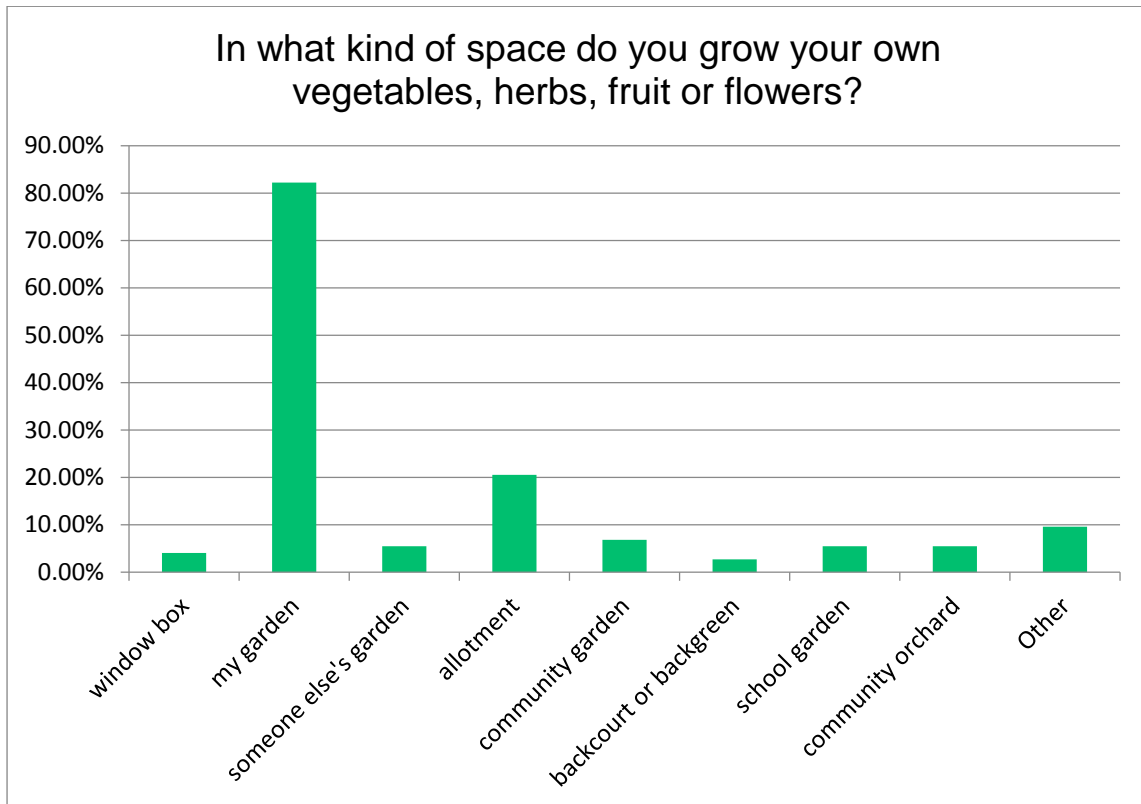
3. Current picture of community food growing in West Lothian

The information gathered at the workshops and the survey demonstrates that there is currently a variety of individual and community growing sites and types across West Lothian. Alongside this growing activity several national and local organisations provide support for food growing.

3.1. Growing sites and types

From both the community workshop and the online growing survey **the most common place to grow in West Lothian is private gardens**, followed by allotment sites. Community gardens, school grounds and green corridors were also mentioned by participants at the community workshop.

Taken from the online survey results, the table below shows the growing sites of the 73 people (out of a total of 88 respondents) that already grow own their own.



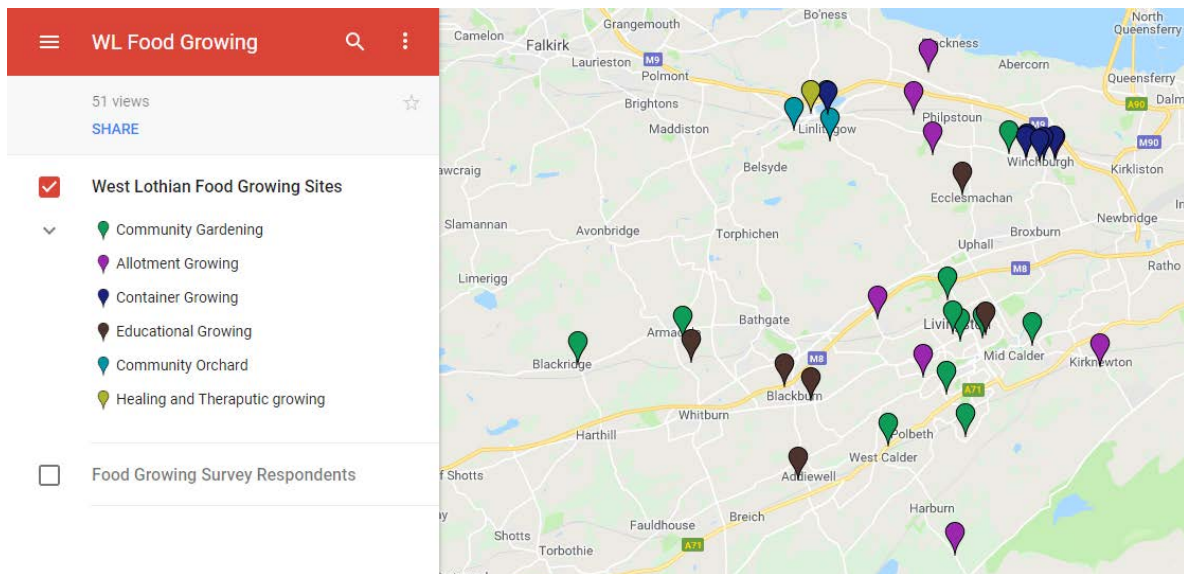
This result corresponds with the result from the national Greenspace Use and Attitude Survey from November 2018 where 87% of respondents stated that they used their own gardens for grow their own, 7% used allotments and 6% someone else's garden.

At the community and stakeholder workshops 35 different community growing spaces were identified on maps provided.



Participants identifying growing locations at Workshop 1

The community growing locations have all been plotted on a google [map](#). They range in scale from small planters and town centre bedding areas to large allotments sites with multiple plots. Private garden growing spaces were also identified at the workshops, but these have not been plotted as they are not publicly accessible.



From these identified sites **the type of growing (meaning how people grow) that was most common was community growing** with allotment growing as the next most common. **The site type (meaning the type of place they grow at) that was most common was community centres** closely followed by allotments. Community growing happens in a wide variety of site types from community woodlands to public parks. Allotment growing only happens on allotment sites.

For all the communal food growing locations identified the tables below give a breakdown of both the growing types taking place at the locations and the site types of the locations:

Type of Growing	No.
Community gardening	11
Allotment growing	8
Educational growing	6
Container growing	6
Community orchard growing	3
Healing and theraputic growing	1
Grand Total	35

Type of Site	No.
Community centre	9
Allotment	8
Residential and amenity land	5
School grounds	2
Town centres and high streets	2
Derelict and undeveloped land	2
Church grounds	1
University and college grounds	1
Community woodland	1
Historic buildings and estates	1
Civic and public building	1
Public park	1
Farm and agricultural land	1
Grand Total	35

3.2. Growing Activity

Participants at the community workshop and survey respondents were at various stages of growing. This ranged from those that did not grow at all, to people that grew already but wanted to grow more and people confident about growing who did not want to grow more. **Overall 75% of participants and survey respondents were already growing their own and 25% were not currently growing.**

From those that gave answers at the **community workshop 66% were already growing and 34% were not.** From the **online survey 78% already grew their own and 22% did not.**

From those already growing almost half (47%) still wanted to grow more than they currently did. Out of the total survey responses **59% wanted to grow more** vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers.

3.2.1 Why do people grow their own?

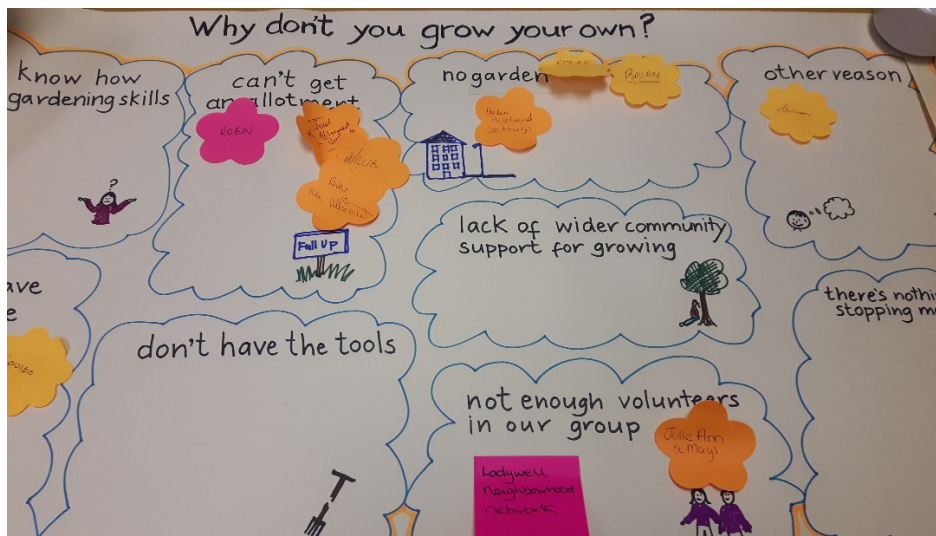


The main reason people at the workshop grow their own was because it was fun and enjoyable, followed equally by spending time outdoors and because it tastes better.

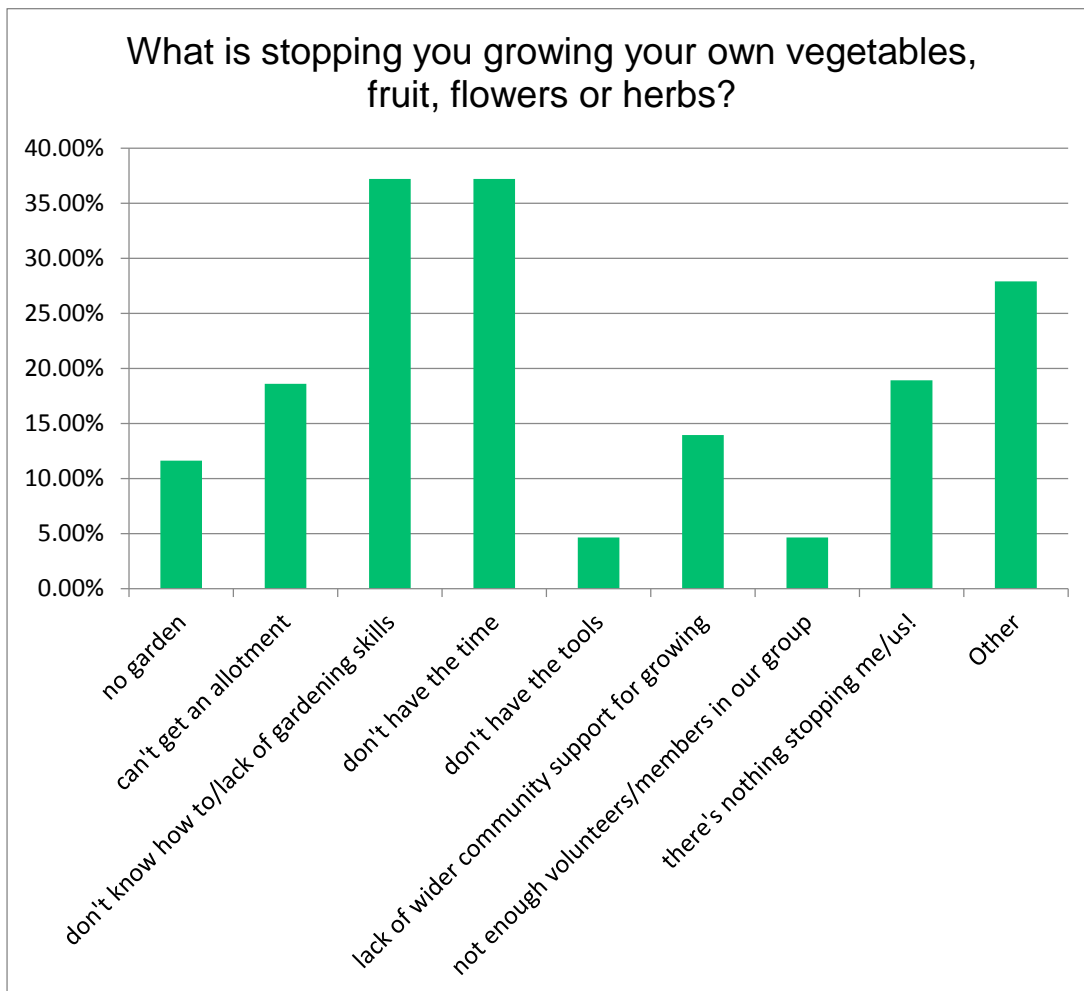
Why do you grow your own?	Number (total 48)
To be completely self-sufficient	1
to enhance the food, I buy	4
to save money	0
to spend time outdoors	7
to get exercise	2
because it tastes better	7
so, I can be sure there aren't chemicals on my food	5
to reduce food miles	3
It's fun and enjoyable	10
other – please say why..."	9

The other category responses were varied including community cohesion and climate change. The full list is in Appendix 2 on page 2.

3.3. What's stopping people growing their own?



At the community workshop we asked the 12 people who did not grow their own what was stopping them. For over half the issue was lack of a suitable growing space, also mentioned were lack of time and lack of volunteers to help set up growing sites and projects. The survey asked the same question and the responses are shown in the table below:



Most of the other category responses were lack of space or suitable growing spaces nearby, information on where to grow and health issues. The full list is in Appendix 4 on page 6.

These broadly match the results from the national Greenspace Use and Attitudes Survey (Nov17) [survey](#) where the respondents who wanted to grow their own (but didn't) were asked: 'What is stopping you growing your own vegetables (and fruit)?'

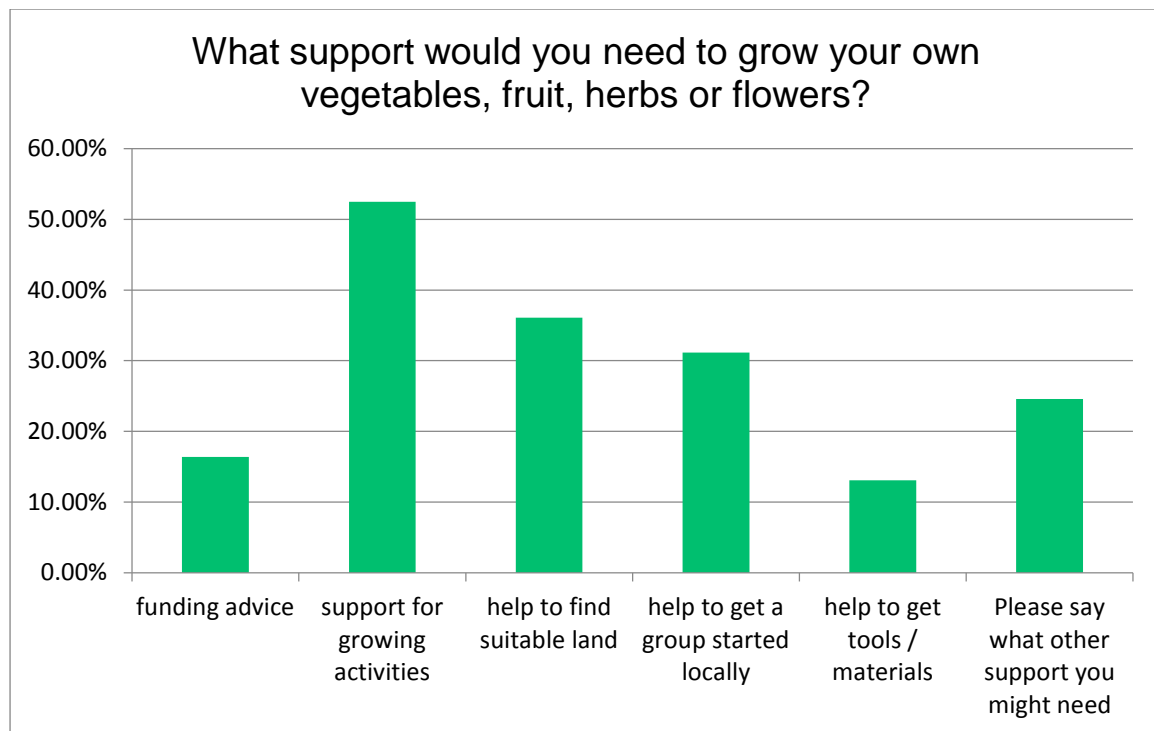
- almost half (44%) said they do not have a garden
- around a third said they do not know how to or cited a lack of skills (32%).
- just over a quarter (26%) said they do not have time.

In the West Lothian survey similarly the most common responses were a lack of skills (37%) and don't have the time (37%). No garden (11%) is not such an issue.

3.4. Support currently needed and provided

3.4.1 Support needed

From the survey the support needed to grow your own was varied but **over half (52%) the responses were support for growing activities** which connects back to the lack of skills reported as a barrier in the survey. The survey responses are shown in the table below:



The other category responses were varied including physical assistance, more volunteers and more time. The full list is in Appendix 4 survey report on page 8.

3.4.2 Support currently being provided

At the stakeholder workshop participants were asked what support they are providing now. This was varied, provided at a range of levels by a mix of organisations such as national organisations like TCV and RHS, statutory bodies like West Lothian Council and local community groups such as allotment societies and community growing groups.



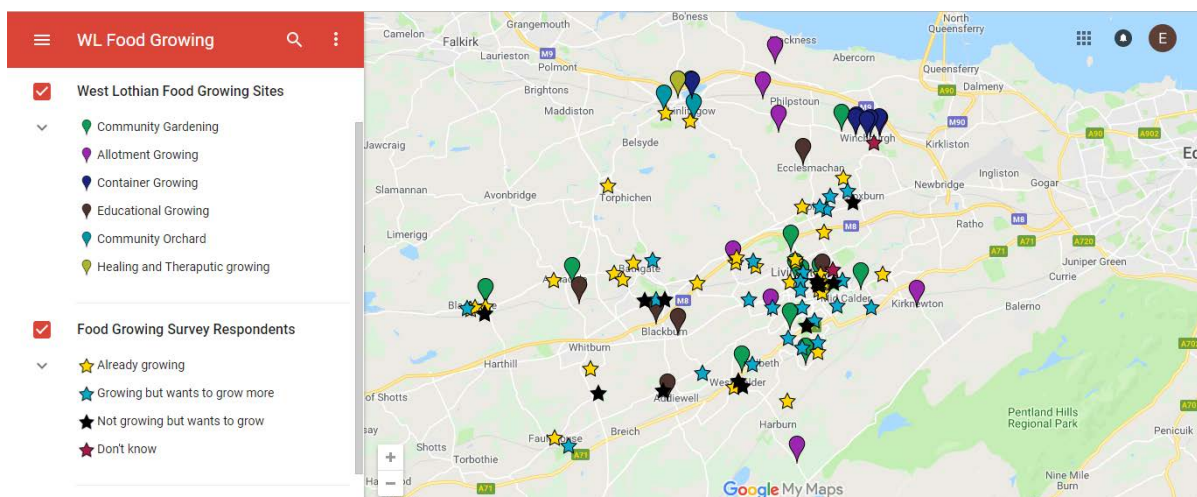
The support included:

- provision of sites from growing plots to raised beds;
- educational work in primary schools by RHS, with young people by TCV and formal education courses by SRUC;
- tool lending schemes;
- informal mentoring and training for new plot holders;
- asset mapping, help with site identification and land contamination issues by West Lothian Council;
- cooking workshops delivered by Beechbrae and Transition Linlithgow;
- and active social media pages Facebook and a digital growing app by Winchburgh Community Growing Group.

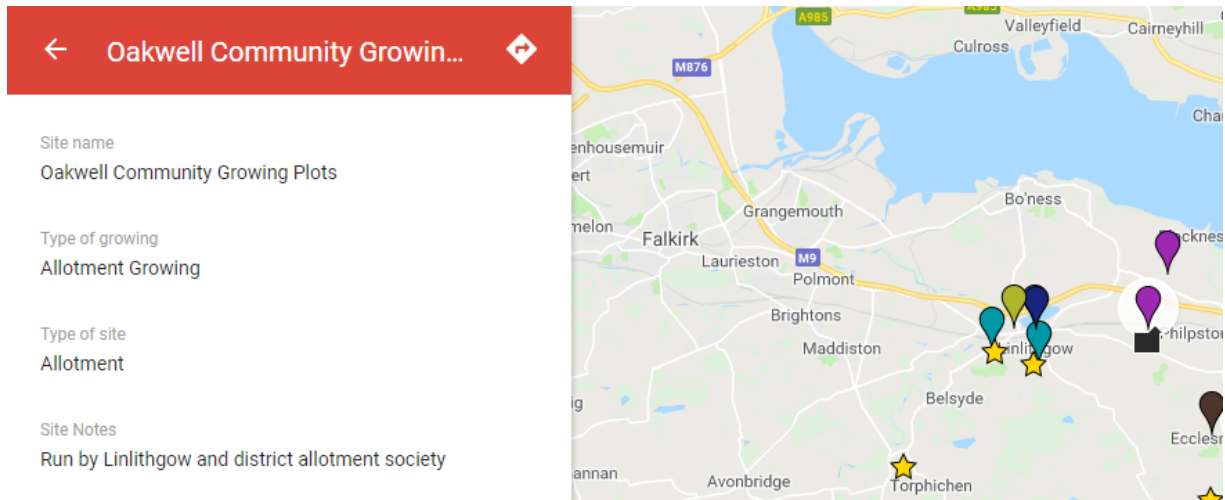
The full list is in Appendix 3 stakeholder report on pages 4 - 18.

3.5. Mapping the current picture

Using google maps the food growing sites [map](#) has been combined with the food growing survey respondents to give a geographic picture of the survey respondents, if they grow their own, where and barriers alongside the growing sites.



The digital map allows you to select the markers to get further information about the site and the respondents survey responses.

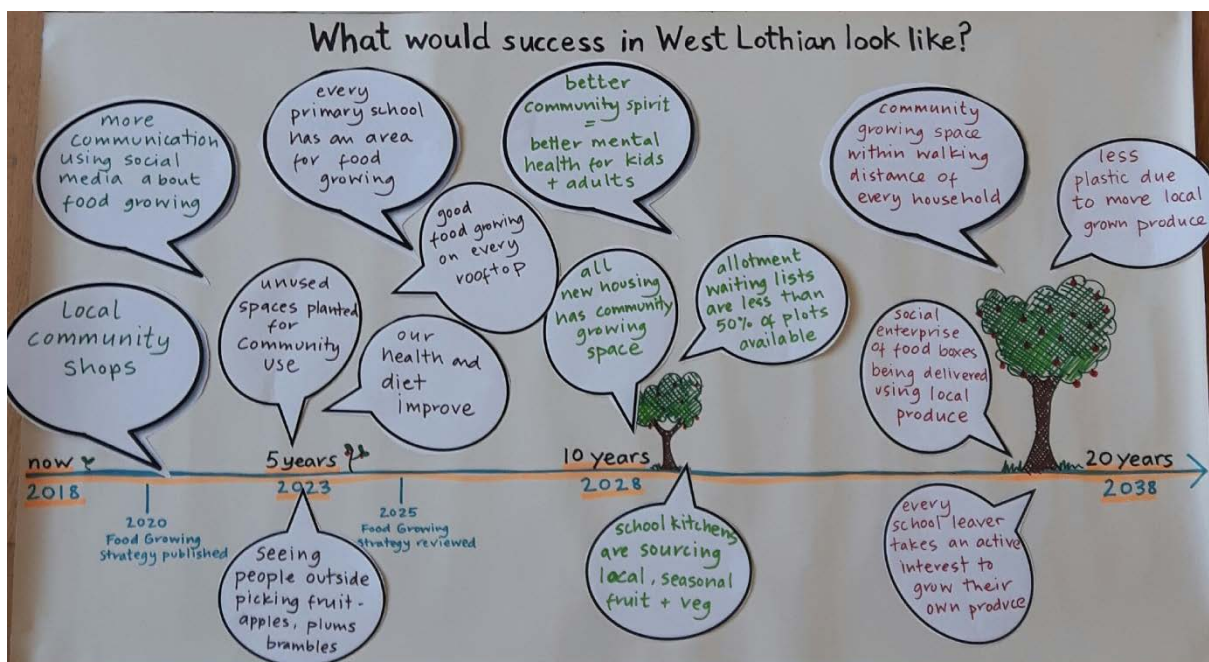


4. Looking to the future

This section looks at creating a vision for the food growing strategy and setting out its scope. We explore what support needs local people and organisations have to achieve the vision and outline the opportunities for food growing identified at the workshops.

4.1. A vision for food growing in West Lothian

To begin the development of a shared vision for food growing in West Lothian we asked all the participants at the workshops what West Lothian would look like if the Food Growing Strategy is successful? It is the duty of the Local Authority to review and publish its Food Growing Strategy every 5 years, so we asked for vision statements relating to 5, 10 and 20 years from now.



Summary of vision statements from Workshop 1 - community groups and individuals

Below is a summary of statements made, the full list of statements is in Appendix 2 and 3.

5 years from now

Horticulture and food growing promoted as a career option

There is a community growing and food skills and education programme for all

Focus on children and school curriculum and growing spaces – encouraging the next generation of growers

More spaces to grow; allotments, schools, unkempt gardens, underused space, rooftops, hospitals

There is a vibrant West Lothian growing network sharing skills and learning

10 years from now

More spaces to grow – all housing estates, all schools, all public spaces, every village

Food growing delivering outcomes in other policy areas such as mental health, climate change, community regeneration

More local seasonal food is consumed by West Lothian residents

There is an abundance of free fruit in parks, green corridors and greenspaces with people confident to pick their own and use their harvest

20 years from now

We use less plastic packaging due to more local grown produce

There is a community growing space within walking distance of every household

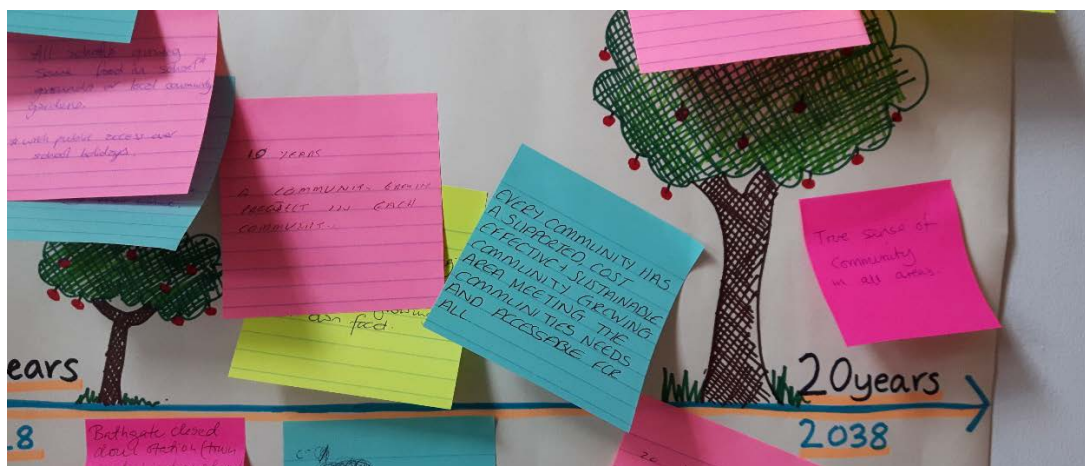
We have a social enterprise of seasonal food boxes being delivered across West Lothian using farm and community garden produce

People with physical and mental health problems are involved in food growing projects and there is a true sense of community in all areas

Every community has a supported, cost effective and sustainable community growing area meeting the communities needs and accessible for all.

All school children have basic skills in food growing “leave school knowing how to make a pot of soup”

Community growing is taken into consideration in all aspects of council policy development



4.2. Scope of the Food Growing Strategy

Following on from stakeholder mapping, setting out a vision for the Food Growing Strategy it is important to define the intended scope of the Food Growing Strategy. Scoping includes consideration of what types of food growing, what types of site and key strategy/policy connections.

Draft guidance from Scottish Government on scope is very broad and states *that “Local authorities must ensure that they take a balanced and considered approach when considering what greenspace, both existing and planned, could be used as growing space. There are many different forms of food growing spaces that local authorities should include in their strategies, from the traditional to the innovative. Local authorities should incorporate as many appropriate forms of growing sites, and types of growing, as their local areas allow”*

4.2.1 What types of food growing and what types of site will be covered by the strategy?

Since the main policy driver for the process is the Community Empowerment Act, it could be decided that the Strategy will only cover community growing activities – if this is the case, then thought needs to be given to the status of growing in ‘communal spaces’ which are not accessible to everyone. Community growing can include a range of different models including public and private allotments, community gardens, school gardens, community orchards and garden share schemes.

It might be felt, however, that the strategy should also cover food growing by individuals in their homes and gardens - the 2017 Greenspace Use and Attitude Survey showed that the majority of people (87%) who grow their own do it in their own garden and in the West Lothian survey carried out as part of this project shows the figure is just over 80%

Consideration should also be given to whether small scale commercial growing should be covered in the Food Growing Strategy as it is difficult to identify a strong logic for distinguishing between community organisations growing at scale; social enterprises based on food growing and distribution and ‘family-scale’ market gardens etc.

Community Supported Agriculture is another possible blended approach, essentially commercial farming, but the local community share the risks with the farmer through payment up front and volunteering schemes.

What types of site will be considered?

It should be decided if the strategy will cover land which is privately owned or only publicly owned land? This could be land owned by the local authority but also other public bodies

It should also be discussed if the strategy will include very small spaces such as street corners, municipal flower beds, containers and raised beds in hard landscaped areas. The Winchburgh Growing Group’s activities is a good example of how this “incredible edible” approach galvanises community action.

Will the strategy consider contaminated land? A guide to growing on contaminated land has been produced by the Grow Your Own working group and there will also be guidance from Scottish Government on how to involve Contaminated Land Officers in the process of identifying land for growing at the earliest possibility.

<http://www.growyourownscotland.info/news/new-guide-for-growing-on-contaminated-land/>

As West Lothian is still one of the places where most new houses are built in Scotland it would also make sense to explore if sites earmarked for housing development could include community growing at the master planning stage?

Based on greenspace Scotland's community growing matrix (see Appendix 7). The following growing approaches and sites were identified as most relevant in a West Lothian context by participants in workshop 2 which was aimed at council, agency and third sector stakeholders with a role in supporting local food growing.

The workshop was split into four groups for this exercise. The number of * indicates how many groups mentioned this growing approach or type of site in their feedback.

Top growing approach	Top growing sites
Allotments ****	Allotment sites ****
Community gardens ****	Community Centres ****
Container growing ***	School grounds ****
Edible landscape and borders ***	Sheltered housing and care homes ***
Healing and therapeutic gardens **	Derelict and underdeveloped land ***
Community orchards**	Health Sector land and NHS Estate ***
Abundance and foraging **	Public park and gardens ***
Raised beds**	Residential and amenity spaces ***
Community market gardens*	Community woodlands*
Community supported agriculture*	Green corridors*
Forest Gardens*	Roadside verges and underpasses*
Beekeeping*	Town Centres and High Streets*

We also asked the groups to identify if they considered any of the sites or growing approaches irrelevant in a West Lothian context. One group did not think the idea of using rail and bus stations and roadside verges and underpasses was a good idea due to fear of contamination. Another group thought that although roof gardens and vertical growing could be great if purpose-built on a school, it probably was a less relevant growing approach in West Lothian.

4.2.2 What is the strategy/policy connections?

While the key policy driver for the development of a Food Growing Strategy comes from the Community Empowerment Act, there are many other local authority (and partner) policies, plans and strategies with strong links to the strategy.

These are important because they set out the context for the strategy by defining the priority areas for tackling inequalities; setting the targets for regeneration of vacant spaces and defining where communities are likely to expand or contract.

These related strategies are also likely to include spatial plans which identify areas where growing could take place and areas designated for uses which are less compatible with food growing. Therefore, they could have an important role to play in refining ideas for possible growing spaces and strengthening the rationale for growing in specific areas

At the end of the second workshop participants were asked to highlight and policy/strategy links from their work to the Food Growing Strategy – below is a summary of policy and strategy mentioned including weblinks where available

National

Scotland's programme for Government – natural environment commitments

<https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/news/scotlands-programme-for-government-2018-19-published>

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/>

Scottish Land Use Strategy – Urban and rural

<https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/Countryside/Landusestrategy>

RHS campaign for school gardening (CDP Topics and Curriculum for Excellence resources)

Eco-congregations <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/>

CSGNT target: triple the amount of allotments, community gardens, community orchards by 2050

CSGN DP25 workplan: Actions to 2025 include supporting the development of good quality new growing sites, providing access to advice & guidance and improving the policy environment (e.g. incorporating growing site planning and regeneration)

West Lothian

Local Development Plan – Specific policy ENV15 on Community growing and allotments (p.48) https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/27735/Adopted-West-Lothian-Local-Development-Plan/pdf/West_Lothian_Local_Development_Plan_-_Adopted_final.pdf

Local Outcomes Improvement Plans <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/3893/Local-Outcomes-Improvement-Plan>

Regeneration framework and regeneration plans in 13 SIMD areas

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/4491/West-Lothian-Regeneration-Framework/pdf/West_Lothian_Regeneration_Framework1.pdf

Open Space Strategy <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2448/Open-Space-Strategy>

Climate Change Strategy https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/28605/Climate-Change-Strategy-2015-20/pdf/WEST_LOTHIAN_COUNCIL_Climate_Change_Strategy_2015-20201.pdf

PEPAS Strategy: Physical Education and Sport

Food poverty – West Lothian Poverty Alliance

Anti-poverty strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/28013/West-Lothian-Anti-Poverty-Strategy-2018---2023/pdf/West_Lothian_Anti-Poverty_Strategy_2018-2023.pdf

Anti-poverty Action Plan: https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/28332/Strategic-Plan-2018-2023/pdf/Strategy_Plan.pdf

Mental Health Strategy

Asset transfers

Participatory Budgeting (move towards community having a say in how their public realm spaces are managed)

Green prescriptions

Walking groups – consistency to help GPs to prescribe green prescriptions

Education

2018 national improvement framework (NIF) and improvement plan

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/2018-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>

Curriculum for Excellence: Food and health benchmarks, Health & Wellbeing (including focus on mental health) Food technology

Health Promoting Schools (Education Scotland Food for Thought; background and findings from past 5 years) <https://www.eis.org.uk/Education-And-Professional-Publications/Health-Promoting-Schools>

HIGIOS: How Good is Our School

Eco-schools Scotland <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainable-development-education/eco-schools/>

Strategies/policies not mentioned by the West Lothian stakeholders which should be investigated for food growing links are:

- Health and Wellbeing policies and strategies – especially those relating to public health, physical activity and healthy weight
- Flood Risk Management and Surface Water Management plans
- Strategies and action plans developed by local communities – e.g. Food Charters, local place plans developed by Development Trusts, Community Action Plans and Charettes.

4.3. Support needs identified by community stakeholders

At the community workshop we outlined the barriers to community growing identified at national level (which are mirrored by the West Lothian specific barriers outlined above) and asked the participants how these could be overcome in their experience. We asked what would encourage others to grow their own or themselves to grow more and the themes below emerged.

4.3.1 Access to land

Not surprisingly access to land for growing was highlighted as an issue in the workshop. Participants mention both the need for more allotments (near home) and the fact that modern houses are not built with gardens that are big enough for growing fruit and veg. The latter could be alleviated if new housing projects have space allocated for community gardens. Container growing and growing in pots is also possible even in a small garden.

Growing in public places was also mentioned as an option and it was thought that it would be encouraging to see fruit and veg growing in public places i.e. cauliflowers and carrots growing in shopping areas.

4.3.2. Access to support and support organisations that can help groups and individuals develop their project ideas

Participants would like to see support structures in place for growing groups with initial start-up and less bureaucracy and more support with growing from the Council. Public Liability Insurance and Disclosure Scotland checks for volunteers working with vulnerable groups and children can be a barrier to starting up which people need help to deal with.

A lot of groups lack volunteers and ask for support to involve more people in their projects. School gardens have challenges with getting volunteers to look after the garden during school holidays and here partnership with the wider community is key.

Participants advocate using social media and offer gardening groups and activities through Facebook.

4.3.3 Develop a programme of regular learning events and support for growing activities

Lack of skills and knowledge is cited by many as a barrier to grow your own and people are asking for guidance on where to get support and learn new skills. It was mentioned that due to the demise of local horticultural societies and shows expertise is not being passed on.

“We would like people with knowledge of growing to come and “teach us”/share their expertise”

“Experienced growers mentor new growers”

There are a lot of experienced growers in West Lothian who could be encouraged to share their skills and experiences.

4.3.4 Develop a programme of networking events to bring people and groups together

Participants also highlighted that they would like events where local people and groups can come together for *“pick, cook, eat days and festivals”*

This is less about being taught and learning new skills and more about peer support and sharing of experiences. It was suggested that West Lothian could have its' own version of Gardener's Question Time and even a Local Beechgrove garden TV channel.

“Start a Garden Forum”

“Networking with other groups”

4.3.5 Provide access to resources such as tools, seeds/plants, cooking facilities and funding

A lot of workshop participants mentioned the need for plants/seeds/cuttings to be available for free or at a low cost. Tool banks/libraries or individuals simply lending their tools to others is mentioned to encourage people to begin gardening. Others talk about what happens after the fruit and veg is grown and would like recipe ideas, ways to store food and cooking facilities. Some were also asking for practical help with landscaping and building of raised beds.

4.3.6 Raise awareness of grow your own by developing a programme of communications and publicity

It was suggested that more could be done to make the public aware of community growing opportunities and allotments across West Lothian. Many were hopeful that this would happen as the Food Growing Strategy develops and suggested it should be a mix of education, publicity on gardening projects and adverts for participants.

“Not sure how to access/find community growing groups”

“Knowing how to access allotments locally”

“Knowing what is available where”

A representative from Murieston Community Council highlighted how he was surprised at the number of people who were keen to have a Community Garden/Allotment but were unable to find one in West Lothian. Murieston Community Council have found it difficult to establish a new growing site and build a community around it.

4.4. Opportunities identified by council and third sector stakeholders

Workshop 2 asked what organisations/services are doing currently to support community growing under 6 themes of support needs identified at the community workshop and the support identified included:

- provision of sites from growing plots to raised beds;
- educational work in primary schools by RHS, with young people by TCV and formal education courses by SRUC;
- tool lending schemes;
- informal mentoring and training for new plot holders;
- asset mapping help with site identification and land contamination issues by West Lothian Council;
- cooking workshops delivered by Beechbrae and Transition Linlithgow;
- and active social media pages Facebook and a digital growing app by Winchburgh Community Growing Group.

The full list is in Appendix 3 stakeholder report on pages 4 - 18.

In addition, we asked the groups to consider the opportunities, challenges and potential for collaboration under each of these themes of support and these are summarised below. The full workshop report can be found in Appendix 3.

4.4.1 Provide access to land and help community groups and individuals to identify land for growing food

It was identified as an opportunity that there is “plenty” of land in West Lothian and a large amount of vacant land. School grounds were identified as a source of land for growing “67 Primary and 11 Secondary schools in West Lothian Council potential for 78 school orchards”

The value of land for development was recognised as a challenge, but it was suggested that

- 1) Food growing section/suggestion should be included in new planning developments and
- 2) Focus should be on existing publicly owned land: community centres, schools, cemeteries, public parks.

4.4.2 Access to support and support organisations that can help groups and individuals develop their project ideas

There is an opportunity to create better links between all the organisations providing support in West Lothian, so people can be signposted the right help e.g. West Lothian Council, CSGNT for design and funding help. To RHS/Social Farms for group coordination and growing advice.

An online directory of resources was an opportunity along with creating a West Lothian Council role as a point of contact and coordinator. However, it was recognised that getting funding for the directory and post would be a challenge.

4.4.3 Develop a programme of regular learning events and support for growing activities

Collaboration was identified as an opportunity whereby anchor organisations could work with schools. Joint events could be held and experts with different skill sets brought in.

4.4.4 Develop a programme of networking events to bring people and groups together

Support like this is offered through Social Farms and Gardens and Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society. There is funding for visits, knowledge exchange and running networking events. However, it is a challenge to get this information out to people want/need it.

It could also be an option to establish a West Lothian wide federation of community gardens for knowledge sharing and funding

It was also identified as an opportunity to set up green prescription group with community gardens who have certain things in place (e.g. H&S, insurance) and is certified for GPs to prescribe for patients

4.4.5 Provide access to resources such as tools, seeds/plants, cooking facilities and funding

The challenges identified to delivery of this were around education, lack of knowledge and low demand for people to get involved. Costs of delivery and existing staff/volunteer demands. Funding timescales and duration and knowledge of funding opportunities. Distances between sites was seen as a barrier to sharing opportunities.

4.4.6 Raise awareness of grow your own by developing a programme of communications and publicity

Opportunities identified were for schools to connect more with parents and encourage them to help with school growing. A challenge was the need to communicate through a wide range of platforms from face to face through to social media and ensuring you have the time and skills cover all these bases.

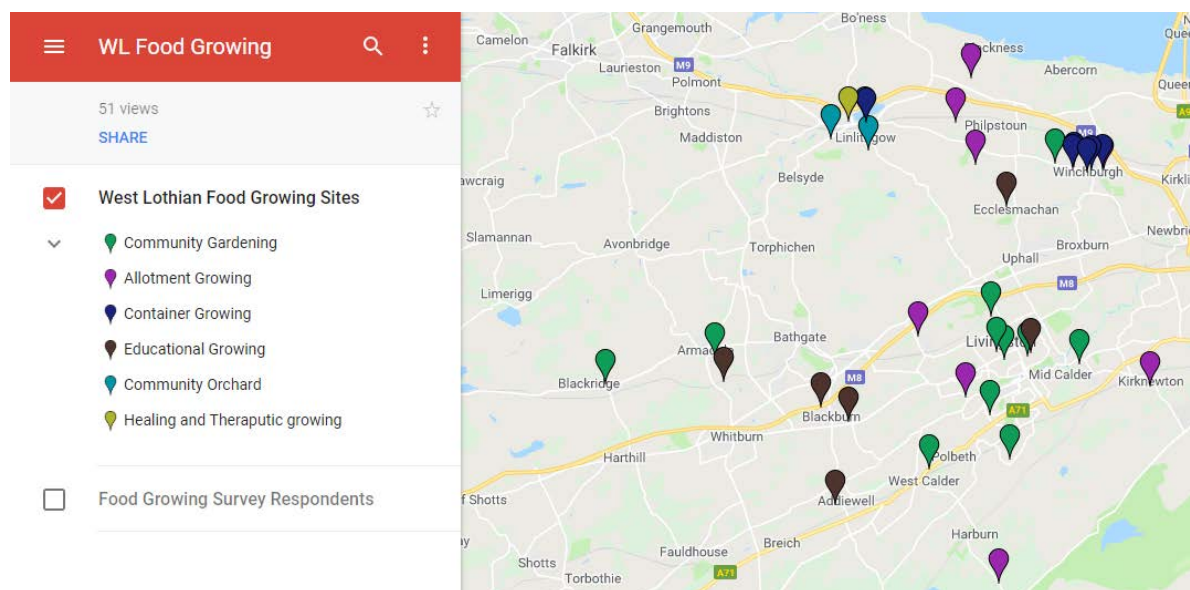
5. Developing the Food Growing Strategy

Based on the barriers to grow your own, opportunities and challenges outlined above this section pulls together a range of recommendations for future focus and development of the Food Growing Strategy developed by greenspace scotland.

5.1. Spatial opportunities

Using stakeholder mapping information from West Lothian Council, information given to us at the workshops and via the survey we have plotted the existing Community Growing and Allotment sites onto a google [map](#).

There are currently 35 growing sites consisting of eight allotment sites and 27 community growing spaces (including school gardens) that we know of. See map below:



Except for the very westerly part of the Council area the community growing sites and allotments seem to be spread evenly across West Lothian.

Of the eight allotment sites five are private and are as such not part of the Council allotment provision. The allotment sites on Council land are Deans Meadow and Killandean, both in Livingston. Bridgend allotments in Bridgend are owned by Rosebery Estates but plots are leased by the Council.

To live up to the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act West Lothian Council must take reasonable steps to ensure that local people who want an allotment will be allocated one in a reasonable distance from their home and/or accessible by public transport. Therefore, West Lothian Council should consider where the existing allotment sites are in relation to new residential areas and where the need may arise to establish new allotment sites.

5.1.1 Priority areas for development based on demand?

The survey showed us that most people who responded to the survey and who don't currently grow their own but would like to stay in the Livingston area. One of the reasons people don't grow their own is that they don't have a garden, some are unable to get an allotment and others again would like to be involved in a community garden

"I want a community garden not an allotment. shared investment, shared rewards, etc"

This is not surprising as Livingston is the largest town in West Lothian and it would make sense to support community growing initiatives in this area. Pressure on land for development is likely to be high, so an option could be to develop smaller sites with a focus on raised beds and fruit trees and bushes for foraging along green corridors or growing within public parks

5.1.2 Priority areas for tackling inequalities?

As the Community Empowerment Act requires local authorities to describe how they intend to increase provision, or grow your own opportunities particularly in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage West Lothian Council should consider how the Food Growing Strategy links to the Regeneration framework and its' 13 areas with community owned regeneration plans, based on priority areas with clusters of data zones in the worst 20% in West Lothian

https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/4491/West-Lothian-Regeneration-Framework/pdf/West_Lothian_Regeneration_Framework1.pdf

“Headline levels of disadvantage including unemployment, financial exclusion, poor health and lower educational attainment tend to be higher in south-west West Lothian – Armadale, Blackburn, Bathgate, Boghall, Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley and Whitburn along with parts of Livingston”.

West Lothian Council should identify where the current provision of community growing sites and allotments are in conjunction to these areas and where increased provision could contribute to regeneration outcomes especially under the themes of health and wellbeing & community capacity and cohesion.

5.2. Provide access to land and help community groups and individuals to identify land for growing food

Recommendations:

- Explore land available for food growing around community centres and in residential/amenity spaces. The new Craigsfarm Community Hub could be an exciting exemplar project <http://craigsfarm.org.uk/>
- Develop links to the health sector (via West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership) to explore land available for growing in the NHS Estate and around sheltered housing and care homes
- Continue to support development of allotment sites and allotment growing
- Harness the interest in community gardens and less work-intensive ways of growing your own, like container growing and raised beds to raised awareness of grow your own
- Build on food growing already taking place in schools across West Lothian and develop programme of support for growing in school grounds. Consider good practice from elsewhere in terms of vertical growing – Busby Primary School in East Renfrewshire has installed an edible vertical garden <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/news/busby-primary-pupils-create-edible-vertical-garden>
- Where access to land is limited it is an option to encourage foraging and develop foraging opportunities – see below

The survey highlighted that there is an interest in foraging and picking fruit that people haven't grown themselves across West Lothian. 60% of the respondents say that they currently forage for fruit, veg and flowers in Council parks/open spaces, woodlands, hedgerows and use farms for “pick your own”.

The West Lothian Council Tree and Woodland officer points out that the rangers planted fruit trees in the Hillhouse part of Beecraigs a while ago and that there are current bushes planted at the edge of the woods down the South Drive in Almondell.

“On most of our sites brambles and raspberries grow wild and are used by many for jam making”

Foraging is also linked to the concept of ‘abundance’ and ‘responsible scrumping’ and the idea of using individual gardens for community growing. Responsible scrumpers and abundance groups locate, pick and use surplus or unwanted fruit from trees and orchards. In some cases, networks are set up so that some of the produce, for example in the shape of jam, makes it back to the grower of the fruit. In other cases, the abundant fruit is redistributed to charities.

“Ask someone who doesn’t look after their garden if you can do it – they will become interested”

The Tyne Esk LEADER programme is currently leading on a potential Scotland-wide foraging co-operation project and working the West Lothian LEADER to shape this in West Lothian.

The basic premise is a ‘foraging festival’ which would take place on the 1st 2 weeks of September (to coincide with Scotland’s Food and Drink Festival), but each area can translate that in their own way, and of course add in year-long activities to complement.

A small subgroup from the LEADER decision making body, the Local Action Group (LAG) would like to target the festival to areas of deprivation. There are also plans to target schools to get parents and the wider families involved in delivering some of the events in the festival.

5.3. Access to support and support organisations that can help groups and individuals develop their project ideas

Recommendations

- Involve the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian the Third Sector Interface organisation in West Lothian. The primary purpose of the organisation is to support the Third Sector (Charities, Social Enterprise and Voluntary Sector) WSGWL can support groups to recruit, manage and retain volunteers and provide management, governance and development support.
- Signpost to the range of regional and national support organisations including
Social Farms and Gardens – provide information and support to community gardens and urban farms and run a community learning exchange
<https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/scotland>
Scottish Allotments and Garden Society (SAGS) works for allotment sites and plot holders throughout Scotland <http://www.sags.org.uk/>
Royal Horticultural Society especially in relation to its school’s programme and skills training <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/home>
Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society (RCHS) or the Caley <https://thecaley.org.uk/>

5.4. Develop a programme of regular learning events and support for growing activities

Recommendations

- Bring together local community growing groups and allotment sites to find out what everyone is planning, agree a yearly calendar of events and publicise it
- Encourage those who already grow to share knowledge with others e.g. members of the Livingston Horticultural Society and allotment plot holders
- Encourage national support organisations such as Social Farms and Gardens and CSGNT and TCV to run West Lothian based skills events.

- Develop the West Lothian garden competition to also include school gardens
- Develop the case for a local food growing coordinator funded by a mix of internal and external funding sources.

5.5. Develop a programme of networking events to bring people and groups together

Recommendations

- Develop a West Lothian Growers network or Federation– and seek funding for a programme of local “seeing is believing visits” to established West Lothian growing sites/allotments
- Work with LEADER programme to develop the Foraging Festival
- Explore links to the Riverside Community Fridge initiated by Almond HA and lead by the Youth Action Project (YAP) Team from the Youth Wing at the side of Riverside Primary school. The concept of the Riverside Community Fridge is to bring back ‘community spirit’ by sharing surplus food within the local community; helping residents to access nutritious food, save money and reduce waste. As well as locally grown vegetables from the Community Garden, a weekly delivery of food is donated by a large local supermarket.

5.6. Provide access to resources such as tools, seeds/plants, cooking facilities and funding

Recommendations

- Explore links with the growing Men’s Shed movement for support in relation to tools, building of raised beds etc.
- Keep an eye on the funding for tool libraries announced by Scottish Government in its Good Food Nation progress report
<https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/news/good-food-nation-progress-report-published>
- Develop partnerships with community centres and community cafés as venues for storing local produce, cooking and eating together.
- As several community growing sites are at community centres larger pieces of equipment only used occasionally could be shared between centres
- Create an asset list showing what tools and equipment growing groups have and if they are willing to share it.
- Allow community group members to be trained in using tools that can be borrowed from West Lothian Council.

5.7. Raise awareness of grow your own by developing a programme of communications and publicity

Recommendations

- Develop and update West Lothian Councils growing web page <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/31466/Food-Growing>
- Promote links to GYO Scotland website and resources <http://www.growyourownsotland.info/>
- Launch Facebook page for West Lothian growers run by volunteers to share information on events taking place across West Lothian
- Publicise the West Lothian garden competition – use Facebook to celebrate winners and encourage others to get involved
- Disseminate local good practice and innovation such as the Winchburgh Community Growing Group App. <https://www.winchburghcgg.co.uk/wcgg>

6. Concluding remarks

greenspace scotland worked with West Lothian Council from July – November 2018 to deliver and report on two local workshops as a starting point for the Councils development of the Local Food Growing Strategy.

At the same time as this piece of work has been undertaken greenspace scotland and other third sector and local authority partners have worked with the Scottish Government Good Food Nation team to finalise the [statutory guidance](#) for local authorities to assist them in their duty to prepare a food growing strategy, as set out in part 9, section 119 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

greenspace scotland have also produced a series of Local Food Growing Strategy Learning Notes to assist local authorities. The learning Notes can be found in the resources section of our website under the [growing spaces](#) section.

It is our belief that with the guidance, learning notes and this report in hand West Lothian Council is in a good position to develop its first food growing strategy by the April 2020 deadline set by Scottish Government.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – West Lothian food growing stakeholder list

Appendix 2 – West Lothian food growing strategy community workshop notes

Appendix 3 – West Lothian food growing strategy stakeholder workshop notes

Appendix 4 – West Lothian food growing strategy online survey results

Appendix 5 – Workshops participants list

Appendix 6 – Our Growing Community Map resource

Appendix 7 – Community Growing Matrix resource

Appendix 8 – Community food growing sites in West Lothian