

## ***Soup and a chat about food growing***

### **West Lothian Food Growing Strategy Workshop**

6-8pm, 13 Sep 2018, Howden Park Centre, Livingston

#### **Note of the workshop**

##### **1. Introduction**

West Lothian Council hosted an informal workshop to explore what a local food growing strategy for West Lothian should focus on. The workshop was facilitated by greenspace scotland. West Lothian Council wanted to engage with as many groups and individuals interested in community food growing as possible - to shape West Lothian's Food Growing Strategy, create a vision for the future and identify how the Council, organisations and individuals can work together towards this over the five years of the Strategy.

A second workshop took place on 2 Oct 2018 for West Lothian stakeholders, including West Lothian Council employees, schools, national organisations and local food growing organisations.

**This report details the full responses from everyone that took part in the community workshop and is intended as an accurate record for participants and West Lothian Council.** A final report will be created that takes account of the outcomes from both the workshops and makes recommendations for the development of the Food growing Strategy based on the outcomes.

##### **Attendance**

People could sign up to the event using Eventbrite and were initially invited to do so by email from greenspace scotland. A press release was issued by West Lothian Council and a flyer promoting the event was at the Livingston and district horticultural society annual show. The invitation was open and anyone could attend.

42 people attended the event, representing 16 community organisations, 8 individuals, 5 education providers, 1 community council, 1 West Lothian councillor and West Lothian Council.

##### **Event Format**

Following a welcome and presentation of the background to the food growing strategy and its planned development the attendees took part in short workshops to gather their knowledge and ideas.

Lisa Drinnan from Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden gave a presentation highlighting the development, achievements and challenges faced by the community garden as inspiration.

## 2. Workshop 1 - Do you grow your own? Where do you grow? Why don't you grow?

**If you grow your own where do you do it?** Participant place sticker on the relevant type/site of growing on the Our Growing Community posters (**total number 24**)

| Growing Spaces   |    |
|------------------|----|
| my garden        | 10 |
| green corridors  | 2  |
| allotment        | 8  |
| community garden | 2  |
| school garden    | 2  |

**Why do you grow your own?** Participant place post it with their name on the reason that applies to them on the chart.



| Reason   | 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                 |

### Other reasons listed for growing your own:

Brings the community together  
 Climate change  
 For the satisfaction and wildlife  
 Peer to peer learning  
 Youth training and group work  
 For education of all these reasons (others listed)

Note: some people just wrote their name on the post it and put it in other without giving a reason or they put the name of their growing group.

**If you don't grow your own why don't you?** Participant place post it with their name on the reason that applies to them on the chart.



| Reason                                      | Number (Total 12) |
|---|-------------------|
| no garden                                   | 3                 |
| can't get an allotment                      | 4                 |
| don't know how to/lack of gardening skills  | 1                 |
| don't have the time                         | 2                 |
| don't have the tools                        | 0                 |
| lack of wider community support for growing | 0                 |
| not enough volunteers/members in our group  | 2                 |
| other – write on post it note               | 0                 |

### 3. Workshop 2 - What is growing in West Lothian already?

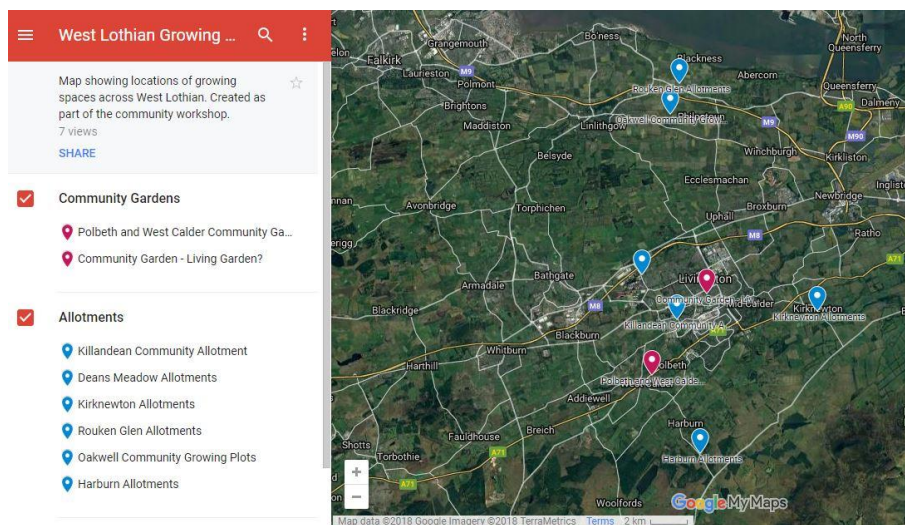
Mapping activity – participants could mark growing sites that they are aware of on the maps covering all of West Lothian. They could also plot growing sites on the digital map of West Lothian.

All locations will be plotted on to a single digital map.

Sites marked on the paper maps are still to be plotted in. Eight sites were marked on the digital map; two community gardens and six allotments

You can view the interim version of the digital map here:

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ySWqj6NuTOLqnG\\_AwskpFT7qxK8\\_tM8T&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ySWqj6NuTOLqnG_AwskpFT7qxK8_tM8T&usp=sharing)



#### **4. Workshop 3 - What would encourage you or others to grow more?**

Participants discussed in small groups what would encourage you (others) to get involved/grow more wrote their suggestions down.

Headings are derived from suggestions given.

##### **Access to land**

Allotments near home

More allotments

Modern houses don't have big enough gardens

More land being made available for growing

New housing projects have space allocated for community gardens

Access to ore growing space

WLC allocates more land for allotments

More areas for wildlife

Growing in public places

Accessibility to growing areas

Bigger garden

Gardens are too small in new build houses – force larger gardens or communal growing areas

Seeing fruit and veg growing in public places i.e. cauliflowers and carrots growing in shopping areas

Everyday access to see fruit & veg growing

Access to land – funding programme

##### **Tools/plants/resources**

More funding for the school

Availability of plants/seeds/cutting at low cost

Give plants away

Seedlings/plants give-away

Free seeds

Seedbank

Good site to make compost

Lend you tools to people

Sharing of tools/equipment

Tool loaning project and demos of “how to use”

Low cost of equipment – tool library

Recipe ideas

recipes

food storage

cooking facility

Equipment

Funding

##### **Knowledge & skills**

Knowing how/who/where to get support

Skills/knowledge

Learning new skills

Demise of local horticultural societies and shows means that expertise is not being passed on

Time/prioritise it

It's okay to fail!

Make a plan!  
Having an achievable plan  
Plan when to start and when to do which jobs  
Quick results  
Learn about growing food  
Learn about container growing  
Growing in planters  
More experience in growing fruit and veg.

### **Events, training & peer support**

Pick, cook, eat days/festivals  
Training, knowledge exchange  
Events/classes  
Peer support  
Run gardening workshops  
People with knowledge of growing to come and “teach us”/share expertise  
Local Gardener’s Question Time  
Local Beechgrove garden TV channel  
cooking classes  
workshops  
Experienced growers mentor new growers

### **Publicity/education**

WLC to make public more aware of what can be done  
Formal register of interested parties  
More publicity on gardening projects and advert for participants  
Education  
What help can you get if you have a physical disability?  
Healthy living programme

### **Support structures in place**

Help for initial start up  
Not sure how to access/find community growing groups  
Knowing how to access allotments locally  
Knowing what is available where  
Opportunities  
Start a Garden Forum  
Networking with other groups  
Help with landscaping/raised beds (heavy work)  
Less bureaucracy and more support with growing from the Council  
Barrier: Public Liability Insurance  
Social media  
Gardening buddies  
Offer gardening groups through Facebook  
Volunteer gardening champion

### **Volunteers/community interest**

Get more people interests in growing in allotments  
More manpower  
Ask someone who doesn’t look after their garden if you can do it – they will become interested  
Managing the weather – fair weather gardening  
More time to get outside in good weather  
Partnerships

A helping hand

PVGs can be a barrier when wanting volunteers to help work in the garden with children

People to look after the school garden during school holidays

More volunteers

More time

Grow with other people to increase confidence in skills

More volunteers to split the job

Get kids involved

Community support network

## 5. Workshop 4 - What would success look like?

If Food Growing Strategy is successful what would the situation in West Lothian look like after 5 years, 10 years, 20 years? Participants wrote down vision statements and put them up on the chart.

| What would success in West Lothian look like?                                      | Years |
|--|-------|
| <b><i>Now and when the Strategy is launched</i></b>                                |       |
| Children learning the skills for food growing to use throughout their lives        | 2018  |
| Local community shops  | 2018  |
| Community focus, people eating better and are healthier                            | 2018  |
| Food forests everywhere  | 2018  |
| Communicating more within West Lothian through social media                        | 2018  |
| Unkempt gardens are used to grow food for community use                            | 2020  |
| Elderly gardeners supported for the heavy work                                     | 2020  |
| Unused space planted for community use   | 2020  |
| Seeing people picking fruit outside - plums, apples and brambles                   | 2020  |
| Growing on every rooftop   | 2020  |
| <b><i>5 Years from now - three years into the Strategy 2023</i></b>                |       |
| Children knowing where food comes from   | 2023  |
| Everyone has access to land they can grow their own food on                        | 2023  |
| Productive community gardens with regular volunteers                               | 2023  |
| Regular visits from local schools to growing spaces to educate our next generation | 2023  |
| Funded education programme to bridge the growing knowledge gap                     | 2023  |
| A new generation of growers who have access to places to grow and harvest from     | 2023  |
| Education from nursery age to grow through school years                            | 2023  |
| More community orchards  | 2023  |
| Grow more crops to be able to hold more basic community cooking classes            | 2023  |
| More and better food is grown and consumed locally                                 | 2023  |
| Our health and diet improve  | 2023  |
| People are talking more to their neighbours  | 2023  |
| Less reliance on food banks - people gain skills for life                          | 2023  |
| Double the number of existing growing plots  | 2023  |
| Growing food education activities in schools                                       | 2023  |
| Local media starts to get involved in promoting food growing                       | 2023  |
| Council allocates more good quality land for allotments                            | 2023  |
| Progress in allotments four fold   | 2023  |
| Using farms and derelict land to grow everywhere                                   | 2023  |
| Every primary school has an area for growing food                                  | 2023  |
| Improved air quality   | 2023  |
| Using the land and space we have better  | 2023  |



|   |      |
|---|------|
| Increase in nature  | 2023 |
| More promotion and publicity  | 2023 |
| We should hold an exchange market where people could swap their fruit and veg surplus with other growers                          | 2023 |
| <b>10 years from now 2028</b>   |      |
| More local community grown 'pick your own' food projects. Good food at fair prices  | 2028 |
| Improved awareness of crop and food production  | 2028 |
| All new housing must have community growing space allocated   | 2028 |
| More locally grown crops to reduce carbon footprint   | 2028 |
| Open spaces would have areas set aside for fruit growing  | 2028 |
| All districts of Bathgate, Livingston, Linlithgow would have community growing space in each area                                 | 2028 |
| All villages would have a community garden area of some kind  | 2028 |
| Every housing estate has a community growing garden   | 2028 |
| Children will be healthier - fresh air, good food, new learning experiences   | 2028 |
| Community spirit is revived - better mental health for kids and adults  | 2028 |
| More wildlife in West Lothian   | 2028 |
| Council tax reductions for donating produce to schools and hospitals  | 2028 |
| Community growing space has become so commonplace that we expect to see it in our communities and are surprised if it isn't there | 2028 |
| The children and young people learning gardening and growing skills now continue this into adulthood                              | 2028 |
| Allotment waiting lists are less than 50% of plots available  | 2028 |
| Growing in all public areas   | 2028 |
| Improved health and diet  | 2028 |
| School kitchens would be sourcing seasonal fruit and veg locally  | 2028 |
| Food is a right and we should be able to reduce inequality by offering good food to everyone                                      | 2028 |
| There should be less supermarkets and shorter supply chains are developed as more food is produced locally                        | 2028 |
| People enjoy more food and cooking becomes a pleasure rather than a task, takeaways decrease by 80%                               | 2028 |
| Less fertilisers are used and soil has been nourished by good practices and crop rotation   | 2028 |
| <b>20 years from now 2038</b>   |      |
| A fruit and vegetable paradise! A wildlife haven!   | 2038 |
| The majority of West Lothian residents grow most of their fruit and vegetables  | 2038 |
| Less plastic packaging due to more local grown produce  | 2038 |
| Community growing space within walking distance of every household  | 2038 |
| Everyone leaving school will take an active interest in social responsibility to grow their own produce                           | 2038 |
| Social enterprise of seasonal food boxes being delivered across West Lothian using farm and community garden produce              | 2038 |

