



MEDIA INFORMATION

The National Allotment Society

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About The National Allotment Society

Founded in the early 20th century, The National Allotment Society (NAS) is the leading representative body for UK allotment holders, upholding the interests and rights of the allotment community, with over 130,000 members.

We work with government at national and local levels, landlords, developers and charities to provide, promote and preserve allotments – highlighting the social and environmental benefits of growing sites and preserving allotments for future generations.

Membership comes with a host of benefits including free initial legal advice, allotment liability insurance, horticultural discounts, allotment expertise, advice and guidance.

We operate as a not-for-profit cooperative, with 11 regional committees providing regional support and guidance for allotment sites, associations and individuals.

Our head office legal team work with the Secretary of State, advising in cases of allotment land disposal, we also offer legal advice and training to associations and councils – supporting them to manage sites and tenancies.

In 2011, we received the esteemed patronage of His Royal Highness King Charles III. His deep passion for gardening, commitment to environmental causes, and steadfast dedication to preserving the UK's rich traditions make him an invaluable advocate for our mission.



The origins of allotments

- In 1887, the Allotments Act was introduced, which allowed local authorities to provide plots of land for allotments, although it was not very successful.
- Twenty years later in 1907, Parliament passed the Smallholding and Allotments Act, which forced councils to facilitate allotments where there was demand. This act still stands today, with some amendments, and it dictates that local authorities should provide plots if there is demand from more than 6 people.
- The majority of allotments were developed under the Defence of the Realm Act of 1916 which allowed local authorities to commandeer as much land as possible for conversion to wartime allotments - this was the start of a lot of allotments.
- By February 1918 there was a cry for more allotments in urban areas. As a result, the Board of Agriculture pressed to have the compulsory powers of local authorities extended to enable the grounds of unoccupied private gardens to be used for growing food. After the war land was still being claimed for allotment use.
- In December 1918, 26 local authorities provided 5,000 new allotments.
- Post WWII there were 1.4 million allotments. After the war, allotments became less and less prominent with the disappearance of rationing and the arrival of cheap mass-produced food. With this decline, local authorities started selling off land.
- By the 1970s, the number of allotments had been cut by two thirds, and while there was still some interest in growing your own veg, by 1997 there were 265,000 plots, 16% of which were vacant.



Allotment statistics

Allotments today

- A recent survey showed 152,432 plots from the principal councils, and there were a total of 78,827 people on the waiting list.
- NAS now estimate that there are currently about 330,000 allotments in the UK.



Waiting list statistics

A study completed by APSE in August 2023 reported on local authority allotment statistics.

- The demand for allotments is still high, with 30% of local authorities having over 1000 people on the waiting list for an allotment and 57% with over 300. 88% said their waiting list was regularly updated.
- 54% of respondents stated that their council plans to increase the number of allotments as opposed to 42% in 2022.
- 69% of local authorities stated that over 18 months was the average waiting time, which is an upward trend – an increase of 11% on 2022. 2022 saw an increase of 2021. This increase in waiting time shows that despite local authorities splitting plots to create smaller plots which many people are willing to take in order to reduce their waiting time, the demand is still outstripping their ability to provide enough plots.
- It is clear that demand is still high for allotment plots, the waiting lists often being in large urban areas.

Find the local authority APSE survey [here](#)

Managing and creating allotments

- The National Allotment Society work to help reduce waiting lists by working with councils, allotment associations and sites to identify and manage behavioural and non-cultivation issues.
- We recommend the strategy of splitting plots to provide new allotmenters with a manageable plot size and to free up additional plots.
- We provide training to Councils and forums to Parish Councils, to educate and guide on managing allotments.



Creating new allotments

The National Allotment Society have taken a proactive approach to engaging with new housing developments – to encourage allotments to be incorporated into residential building plans.

We work with Developers, Planning Officers and Building experts to provide guidance and allotment expertise, encouraging the integration of plots into building plans. NAS also provides ongoing information and guidance on self-management and advises on securing long term use and protection for the new allotment site.

In 2023, an examination of planning applications shows that there are now over 100 planning applications for new housing developments which include new allotment sites.

The Benefits of Allotments

Allotments are valuable community assets, boosting health & wellbeing, providing sustainable growing spaces and creating biodiverse green corridors. Not only are they a valuable part of our UK heritage, but they play an important part in our future too.



Rich Green Spaces

Historically seen as simply spaces for individuals to enjoy, studies increasingly show the green value of allotment sites. Allotments are rich in biodiversity, creating green spaces for wildlife and pollinators throughout the country.

The quality of soil on allotments creates a unique environment from which all life can emerge – particularly precious in urban areas. Even in rural areas, the ecological value of sites per square metre, surpasses that of adjoining industrial farmed agricultural land.

Natural England acknowledges allotments as a firm part of 'Green Infrastructure' – a network of connected green features in the landscape that play an important role in urban and rural environments. They improve health and wellbeing, air quality, biodiversity, nature recovery and resilience to and mitigation of climate change. For more information see Natural England's website and learn about the importance of Green Infrastructure. [Natural England >](#)

Social and Community

Far from being useful only to plot holders, allotments are increasingly used for the benefit of wider communities. There are some outstanding projects taking place on allotments sites up and down the country who are allocating spaces for community, educational, disability and social prescribing projects.

From community open days to educational projects, to community hubs offering workshops, mental health projects, food sharing schemes, sensory gardens for those with disabilities, collaboration with community payback schemes and green social prescribing by GPs – the beneficial community uses for allotment sites are immense.

Gardening is good for you and allotment gardening offers additional benefits that help to alleviate loneliness and enable people to contribute to society. Many plot holders become involved in managing their sites. Even on a site with no allotment association, plot-holders are part of a community of like-minded people.

Allotments have a huge educational value too - offering the chance for those without large gardens to learn how to grow their own and gain knowledge from the experienced allotment community. Allotments offer a rich natural learning environment away from classrooms. Many sites run primary and secondary educational projects in conjunction with local schools and clubs, teaching young people about nature and the value of growing.

Health and Wellbeing

There is a growing awareness of the role that gardening plays in improving mental health. Many allotment gardeners will tell you that a spell on the plot nurturing plants and contemplating nature makes them feel calmer and more hopeful and there have been recent studies that have measured this benefit.

In 2018 the UK Government produced a 25 Year Environment Plan, which acknowledges that connecting people to their environment will also improve their health and well-being.

The social contact offered by gardening in an allotment environment helps to combat the lack of social capital embodied by loneliness, which has the equivalent risk to health as consuming 15 cigarettes daily and is twice as harmful as obesity. A study in the Netherlands showed that every 10 per cent increase in exposure to green space translated into an improvement in health equivalent to being five years younger, with similar benefits found by studies in Canada and Japan.

The physical benefits of regular spells of gardening help plot-holders to keep fit even if they have sedentary jobs. The twisting and turning involved in gardening helps to maintain good gait and balance in older gardeners and also helps with cognitive decline.

Getting outside is also good for us. Depending on your skin type, spending just 15-90 minutes a day out in the summer sunshine can build up your levels of immune boosting vitamin D.

The Personal Value of Growing Your Own

If managed properly, an allotment can produce enough food to supplement a family's weekly shop, with fresh fruit and vegetables over the year. Allotment gardeners can choose to garden organically and avoid ingesting chemicals that are likely to be present on shop bought fruit and vegetables.

In a survey of National Allotment Society members nearly every person said their love of allotment gardening comes from the fresh air, home grown produce, healthy lifestyle and like-minded people this activity offers.

As many new plot-holders discover, growing vegetables requires acquiring new knowledge and skills and the satisfaction gained from eating their first home grown tomato or new potato makes them taste even more delicious!

Cost of living & allotments

- The average cost of running a 300 square yard / 250 square metre plot was £247 per annum. An approximate value of the produce could be as much as £1,909.82 per plot, plus the inestimable personal satisfaction of growing your own and getting valuable exercise into the bargain.
- Average allotment gardener on a 300 square yard plot came out at 203 hours per year or costed at the minimum wage rate average £1982.50.
- A study was commissioned and funded by the Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation to examine and quantify the benefits of allotments to residents and to the Council.
- This suggested that allotments make significant financial impact to the wider community and thus the cost of living.
- A conservative financial valuation of just a selection of these wider impacts shows that each plot benefits the city by at least £166.84 p/a (excluding the value of food produced).
- Overall, the potential benefits to a city - including wider council departments - are could be as much as £385,567 each year, alongside food worth an estimated £1.12m.
- Find more about the study [here](#)

