

Protecting access to allotments

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Summary

Geographical research on the value of allotments to their users, as well as on the increasing quality of maintenance of allotments by their users and councils, led to longer term availability of public land for use as allotments.

In doing so, it increased the popular understanding of the role of common land and green space in local communities, including health, wellbeing and environmental quality benefits.

Challenge

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had been considering requests from a number of local authorities to allow them to sell-off allotment plots as part of cost-saving measures. Allotment users and environmental groups across the UK wished to demonstrate and show evidence of the value and role of allotments to communities.

Solution

Professor David Crouch FRGS of the University of Derby undertook a national survey to explore the trends of demand and use among allotments, and the value in which they are held by their users.

The 2006 survey report [can be found here](#).

As an expert witness for the DCLG, Professor Crouch's evidence set out a clear case for continuing to guarantee the availability of public land for use as allotments.

Professor Crouch had previously advocated successfully to require councils to publicise available allotment plots and ensure their sustained use. He was involved as a key witness for the 1998 Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs [Fifth Report](#).

Benefits

Policy insight

The UK government decided, in May 2011, to retain legislation and policy guidance which has required local authorities to meet local demand for allotment plots [community gardens]. In January 2014, the government issued guidance to local councils on allotment disposal, safeguards and alternatives.

Better decisions

Thousands of people across the country will continue to be able to access land to cultivate food. The guidance recognises allotments as "valuable community spaces that provide people with the opportunity to enjoy regular physical exercise; meet new people in their neighbourhood; and benefit from a healthier diet, regardless of income".

Raising awareness

The research highlighted the much wider role allotments are seen to play in society for communities, both in terms of the value people attached to them as green spaces and the positive contribution they make to local environmental quality, as well as associated health benefits.