

Ensure allotments are mentioned in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan; Local Plans are an opportunity for communities to influence what happens in their neighbourhood, this could benefit allotments if aspirations to protect or increase supply are built in to the document or it could be the point at which allotment land is identified as potential housing land or other development. Detailed information about neighbourhood planning can be found at www.mycommunity.org.uk/programme/neighbourhood-planning/

Register for consultations on your council website; and make sure your voice is heard. As part of the process of preparing a Local Plan your local authority is obliged to carry out an "Housing and economic land availability assessment". Allotment land will come under scrutiny as part of this process and it is important that local views about the value of the site as allotment land are taken in to account.

In theory the Localism Act put citizens in charge of local decisions; in practice it is not quite so simple but worth the effort. A fair bit of stamina is needed to engage with Local Planning, council websites contain reams of documents and you need to keep on your toes to avoid missing deadlines for consultation etcetera. However if a site comes up for disposal the National Planning Casework Unit will assess any contradictions between the council's intention to dispose of allotment land and other council policies, particularly in local or neighbourhood plans.

Become a member of The National Allotment Society

Membership of The National Allotment Society comes with a raft of benefits, from discounts on horticultural products through to initial legal advice and horticultural expertise. To become a member visit www.nsalg.org.uk or call **01536 266576**.

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Have a look around area to see what help is on offer; many areas have a Planning Watch group that will be able to help communities make sense of the changes brought by the Localism Act, and facilitate community engagement with the processes involved.

Register your site as an Asset of Community Value; if a site is registered, the listing lasts for five years. If during that time the owner wishes to sell the land, they must inform the council and the group (that requested the listing) of the planned sale. The group then has six weeks to confirm that it wishes to be treated as a potential bidder. If it does so, the group has six months to raise the finance.

How the Society can help

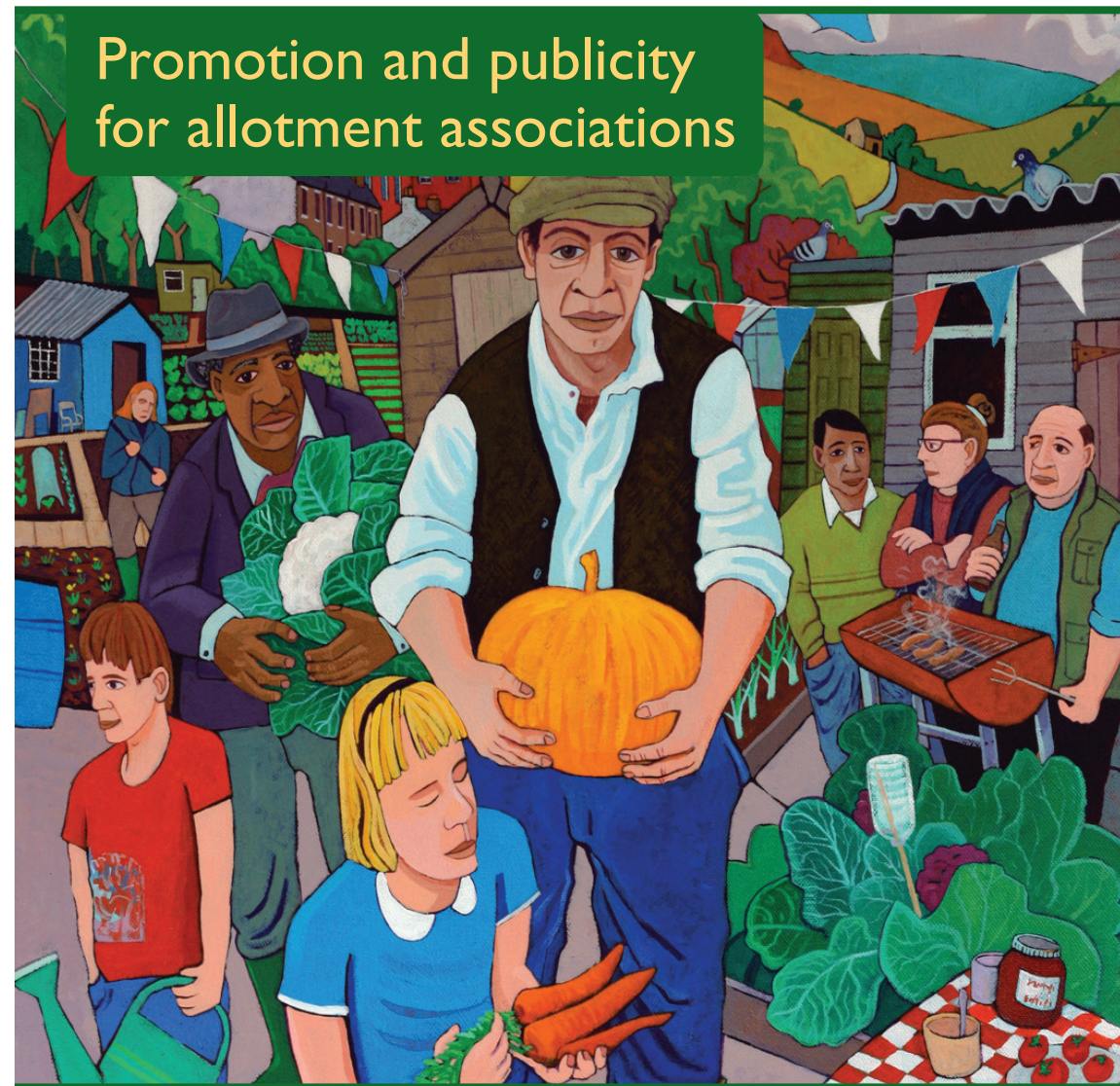
- If you are promoting the NAS and allotments at a big garden show it may be possible to use our Public Liability Insurance – contact natsoc@nsalg.org.uk for details.
- For more detail on about Local Plans and Assets of Community Value etc read through our Community Rights leaflet
- Publicise your event via the NAS website, e-newsletter or facebook page

Useful links

- www.mycommunity.org.uk
- www.locality.org.uk
- www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk



Promotion and publicity for allotment associations



Public interest in allotments is strong and by opening up your site for Open Days and Events you can help to keep the allotment movement in the public eye and bring together plot-holders and the community to celebrate.

Illustration by: Chris Cyprus

www.nsalg.org.uk



Promoting your site will enable your association to keep a healthy waiting list and sustain the general interest in allotments and growing your own food; increasing the number of people who appreciate the benefits allotments bring and encouraging them to support us in our efforts to protect existing sites.

There are a variety of methods that you can use from open-days, a website or word of mouth to social media and posters; you will also find that opportunities to talk directly to people at local shows and markets are very effective.

Events and Open Days

National Allotments Week Since 2002 the Society has used National Allotments Week, an annual event held in the second full week in August, to raise awareness of allotments and the role they play in helping people to live healthier lifestyles, grow their own food, develop friendships and bolster communities. National Allotments Week is a good time to hold an event but they can be very successful at any time of year.

Event suggestions

- Old Fashioned Tea Party
- Fundraising Quiz with allotment theme
- Ask the Expert table
- Sunflower/scarecrow competition
- Bug Hunt
- Vegetable Auction
- Plant sales
- BBQ – for example; hog roast with apple sauce, burgers with homemade tomato relish
- Talks and demonstrations – for example: how to make jam, jellies and preserves

Health and Safety

Please ensure you inform your landlord about your intention to hold an event on site; most will be in favour of the idea. Much of health and safety is common sense but your landlords are likely to ask if you have completed a health and safety questionnaire or risk assessment. The Society can provide you with a template risk assessment form.

Insurance

As an allotment society you should already have insurance which covers public liability, but please do check your policy. If you need insurance then please contact The National Allotment Society's recommended insurer, Shield Total Insurance on 01277 243 054, or visit www.shieldtotalinsurance.co.uk for a quote.

Holding raffles

Raffles and tombolas are useful community fundraising tools but they are classified as lotteries and organisations must be careful to abide by the Gambling Commission rules. However there is no need for a licence or registration with your local council if your raffle or tombola meets the criteria below for an "incidental non-commercial lottery"

- All tickets must be sold at the location during the event and the result made public while the event takes place.
- The promoters of the lottery cannot deduct more than £100 from the proceeds in expenses incurred, such as for the cost of printing tickets, hire of equipment, etc.
- No more than £500 can be spent on prizes (but other prizes may be donated) and the raffle cannot involve a rollover of prizes.

More information about this and other types of raffles can be found here www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/Gambling-sectors/Lotteries/Lotteries-raffles.aspx

Press release tips – let the world know about your event!

- Send details of the event to the relevant reporter on your local paper
- State whether the release is for immediate use or embargoed till a specified time, keep paragraphs to two or three sentences.
- Start with a snappy headline
- Para 1 – key information, who, what, where, when, how but keep short (35 words)
- Para 2 – expand above info and give context
- Para 3 – a quote from relevant person
- Para 4 – background info
- Ends
- Notes for editors – outline any other relevant information, facts or figures and whether you have images, interviewees.

Facebook – if you do not have a face-book page yet it is worth considering setting a page up for your association, as well as posting news and information for your plot-holders you can invite people to events, advertise plots on your site and link up with other allotment groups.

Website – a Society website is a useful place to post documents, such as your constitution and tenancy terms and conditions, for easy access by your existing and prospective plot-holders. News items will be picked up by web search engines and the site can be easily linked to a face-book page.

Posters, leaflets and flyers – although many people look for information on the internet some do not and a small poster in a shop window or leaflet displayed in the library will catch those people who have either opted out of the digital age or not thought to look on-line. Use images and colour to attract attention, use at least font size 12 and give clear, concise information with a link to further details. It is advisable to laminate posters that will be used outdoors.

Why do we need to promote?

Although there is now a healthy interest in renting an allotment plot that has not always been the case. From the 1960s up until the early years of the 20 century allotments were neglected by local

authorities and used by relatively few people. The allotment movement needs to ensure that this does not happen again and guard against new pressures from the need to find land on which to expand our housing stock. The Society, allotment authorities, associations and plot-holders need to work together to gain acknowledgement from planners, developers and government that allotments are an important part of our national heritage and make an enormous contribution to the health and well-being of communities.



Local campaigning

As allotments are, in the main, owned by local authorities measures to protect and promote allotment sites need to be taken locally. If you are part of a local federation of allotment associations, a member of an association or just an interested individual we would encourage you to take the following steps.

Monitor your Council's Health and Well Being Strategy;

does it acknowledge the potential for the allotment service to support delivery of many of their Public Health targets? If not, lobby the elected representatives who sit on the Health and Well-being Board and ask them why. Allotments can contribute to aspirations to improve community nutrition, emotional resilience and healthy activity, especially for our ageing population.