

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee – Allotments Inquiry – May 2022

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector in Scotland, representing its interests and ensuring that colleges are at the heart of a world class education sector that is recognised, valued and available to all. Colleges Scotland, as the membership body, represents all 26 colleges in Scotland which deliver both further education and around a quarter (23%) of all higher education provision in Scotland.

Colleges are civic anchors which bind communities together by providing local hubs for people to meet and offering campus amenities such as sports facilities, hair salons, beauty services, and restaurants that are affordable for the people within the local area.

The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Colleges Scotland is pleased to contribute to the scrutiny around provision of allotments as part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (“the Act”). It would be difficult to say whether the Act has achieved its aims of improving the availability of allotments and reducing barriers to accessing them as some horticulture provision existed before the Act, while other initiatives have delivered funding to colleges to support horticulture within the lifetime of the Act.

Colleges Scotland agrees that community, health, educational, and environmental benefits of allotments and community gardens are vital and should be supported in the future. Given the focus on the environment from events like COP26, the rising risks from the climate emergency, and the interest and enthusiasm within students, staff and communities for gardening, local food production, and as spaces for learning, we would support more availability for allotments and community growing spaces and would emphasise that these spaces should be truly accessible.

Colleges and Green Spaces

A number of colleges are also opening up their green spaces for benefit of their students and local communities. These spaces provide learning experiences for students and wellbeing spaces for local people. Case study examples are provided below.

City of Glasgow College

The college has two gardens and an allotment in the Gorbals, near its Riverside campus, with everything grown from seed. In just six years since the college’s City campus on Cathedral Street opened, two external areas have been transformed into a thriving organic vegetable garden and an orchard. The produce from both gardens is used by cookery students, and the college’s in-house caterer, BaxterStorey.



As part of the Glasgow Community Food Network, the gardens offer practical opportunities to teach students about sustainability and climate change, as well as horticulture, human geography, business, and cookery.

They are also truly organic and self-sufficient using compost created from the college's own food waste, thanks to an industrial composter which the college invested in. With the ability to compost an estimated 26 tonnes of food waste on site each year, both composter and gardens are going a long way to helping the college meet its environmental ambitions.

As well as creating produce which is used by the college's professional cookery students and training restaurant, they provide the ideal space to develop outdoor education.

Glasgow Clyde College

Glasgow Clyde College opened a new £1.8 million horticulture learning centre in 2018. The purpose-built facility based at the college's Langside campus consists of two modern workshops, three industrial sized greenhouses to support horticulture and plant growth and new changing rooms.

Students and staff studying horticulture and landscaping courses now benefit from being in a permanent area which is helping to develop teaching strategies and collaborations with the local community.



Funded by the Glasgow Clyde Education Foundation, the investment and build of the facility has allowed the college to increase the number of places and courses available. It also demonstrates to employers that students are learning within a professional environment.

In Glasgow alone, there are over 90 parks and gardens for people to access and enjoy, which all require maintenance and to be kept to a high standard for continued use from residents and visitors. As the number of greenspaces continues to grow, the demand for horticulture jobs will also increase, and the college facility will help provide those future horticulturists.

The centre is also benefitting the local community, allowing students to offer skills and support to community projects within the surrounding areas and carry out live projects.

Glasgow Kelvin College

Glasgow Kelvin College has designed and is currently developing a community garden at its East End Campus (2 Haghill Road, Glasgow). The aim of the garden is to provide an inspiring space that can help to deliver exciting, interactive outdoor learning experiences for learners and staff; provide the benefits of the outdoors to the college and local community linked to the health and wellbeing; and help to improve the college's awareness of and relationship with the surrounding natural environment.



The garden design is centred on issues concerning social, economic, and environmental sustainability. These include minimising the environmental impact of the garden's construction and protecting the existing ecosystem; requires low maintenance

and is resilient to current and future climate change effects; and ensures the college community have the potential to gain and develop lifelong learning and employability skills.

It is intended that the garden will benefit students, staff, and the local community by providing several learning and personal development opportunities through woodwork and construction projects, a herb growing garden and fresh food produce, and a welcome area to relax and enjoy the outdoors.

The college secured funding from several bodies registered through the Scottish Landfill Community Fund and received the support of students and staff from the Scottish Rural Universities and Colleges Horticulture and Garden Design department. The project was a finalist in the EAUC Green Gown Awards 2021.

West College Scotland

In addition to West College Scotland's Learner Development Horticulture Gardens at the Clydebank and Paisley campuses, their Ferguslie Centre in Paisley also runs a community course. The Horticulture class runs on Tuesday afternoons where there are three double raised beds and access to the polytunnel.

This year the students have planted seeds and are growing vegetables, potatoes, fresh herbs, and tomatoes. They are studying the Allotment Gardening unit which is part of the NPA Horticulture level 4 and includes Soft Landscaping and Plant Propagation. Most of the students said they absolutely love the class, being outside has really helped with their mental health and they have learned a lot. They are so dedicated, that during the Spring Break the Ferguslie lecturers arranged to meet a couple of the students to water the plants.



One of the students in the class is now leading and improving her local community green space at Barochan Green and imparting her knowledge to local residents (read more [here](#)), and she and another student from the class volunteered to help OneRen Leisure team to clear away debris and weeds and tidy up their planted area at the front of Renfrew Baths.

Colleges Scotland
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