

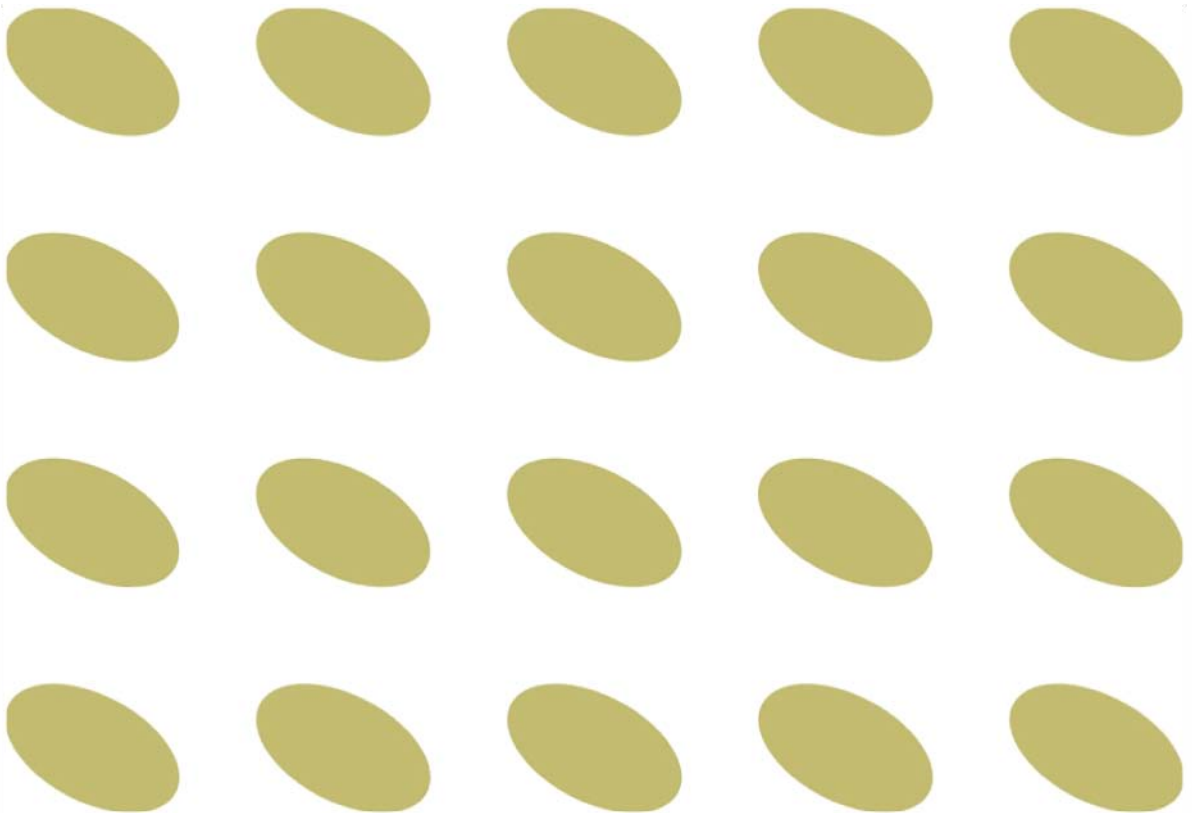


membership resources

State of the Market Survey 2008

Report

Local Authority Allotments in Scotland



Briefing 08/58
December 2008



The state of the market survey was conducted by Pat Taggart, APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland

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Local Authority Allotments

State of the Market Survey 2008

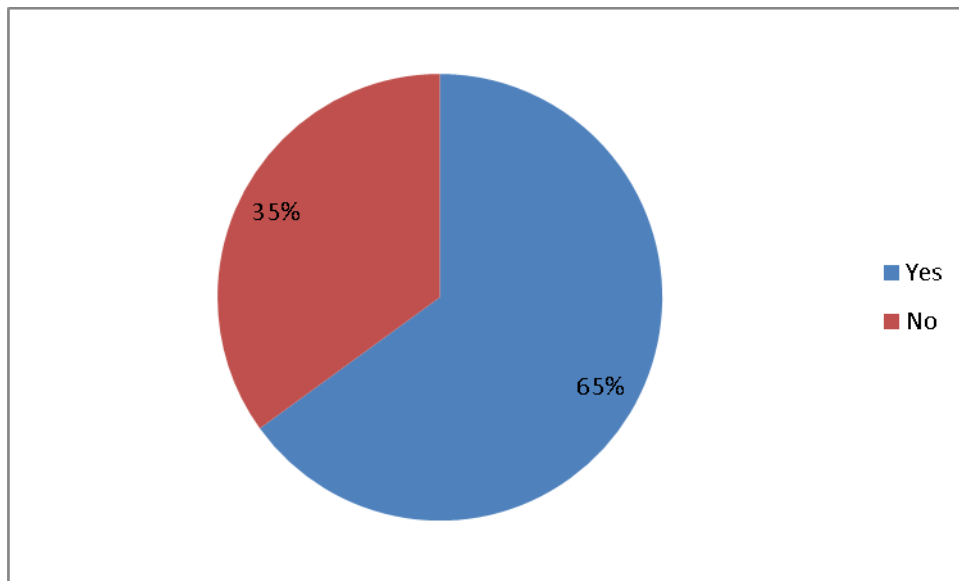
APSE conducted an on-line survey during September 2008 and sent it to Scottish contacts within the Parks, Grounds and Street Services area. 24 responses were received from 200 contacts representing a statistically significant response rate of 12%.

A series of questions were asked covering attitudes to the issues currently facing the facility of providing allotments, their organisation and challenges for the future.

Results

Of those completing the survey, 20 out of 32 authorities completed representing a 62% response although 4 further answers did not divulge their authority.

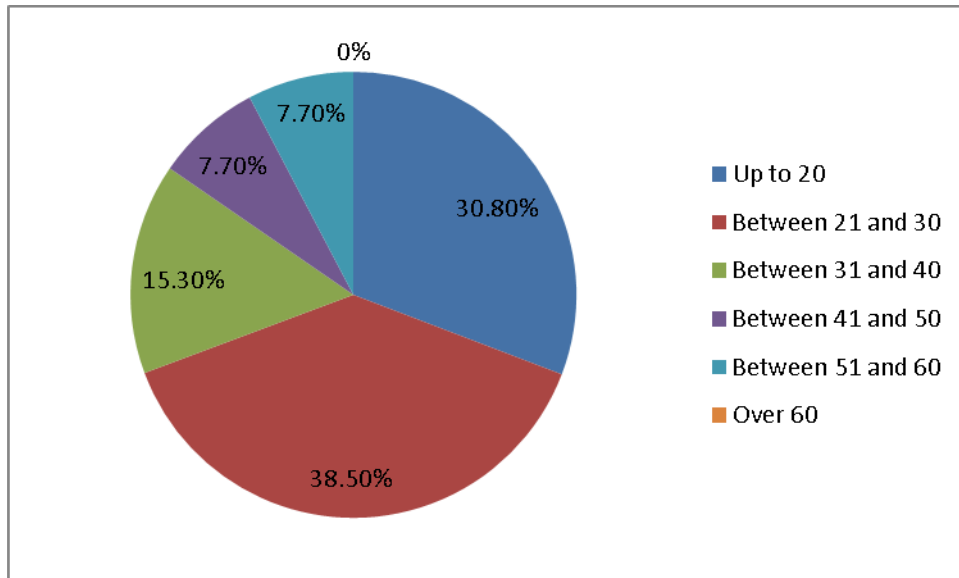
Council managed allotments



Although some authorities stated that they had no managed allotments, 7 authorities stated that demand has been expressed to provide the service in the future. Pilot schemes have been agreed in some areas with others still about to take their future plans to corporate management team meetings. Greenspace strategies will incorporate allotments for many councils in the future working closely with community groups. Over two thirds of responses stated that allotments are directly managed by a council officer with the other third being managed through a site committee/association.

Cost per annum in rental fees 2008/09

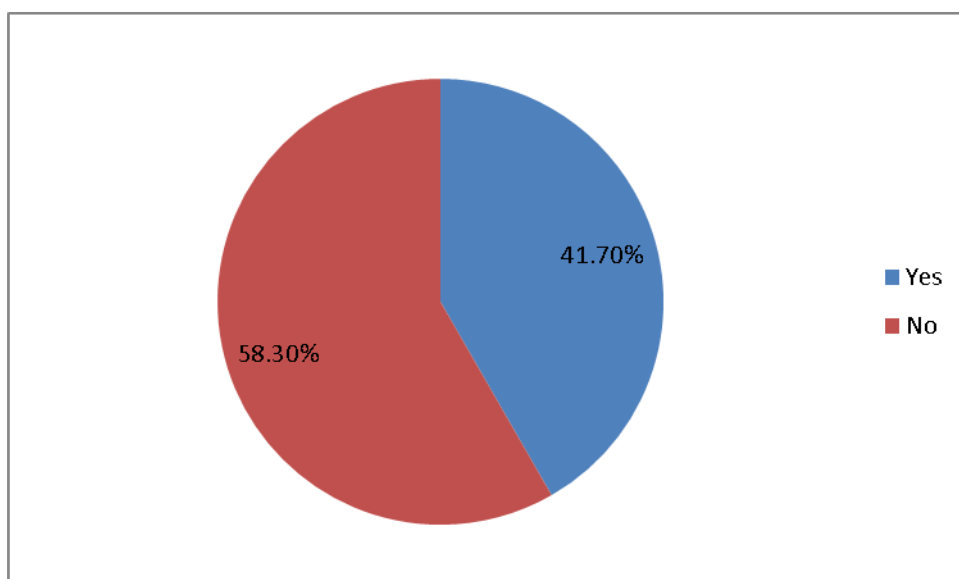
Most of the responses to this question showed that most authorities charge in the region of £20 - £30 per annum in fees with there being little or no increase in the coming year. Interestingly, 57% of respondents claimed that the charge was related to the area of allotment size, as opposed to 43% stated that the charges were levied irrespective of size. There was almost a 50 – 50 split when asked about whether concessions were available although no further comments were received as to why this was.



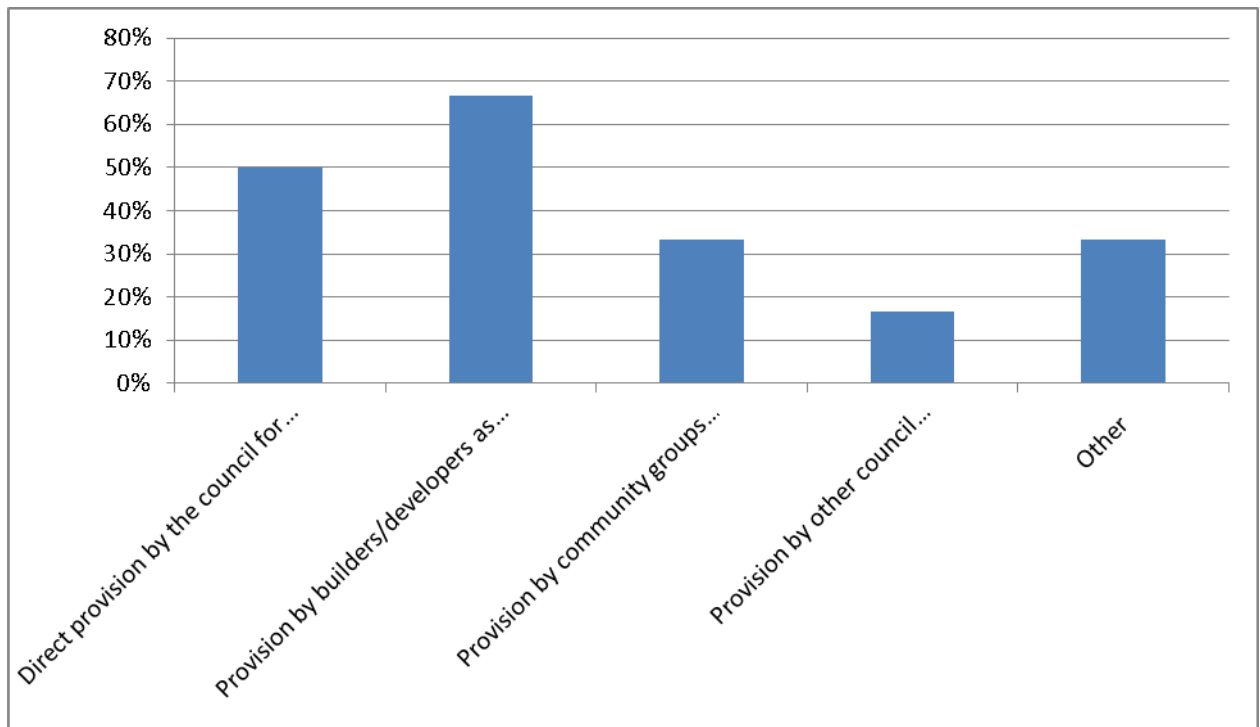
Value in pounds

Again there was a 50 – 50 split in relation to the size of plots available, some being standard and others ranging from 150m – 200m. When asked about the number of plots available for rent in authorities, this ranged from 28 to 400. However, two authorities had 1278 and 1320 allotments which were currently being used. Waiting lists have proved the demand for allotments with the number currently awaiting a suitable plot ranged from 50 – 1500.

Plans to increase the number of allotments

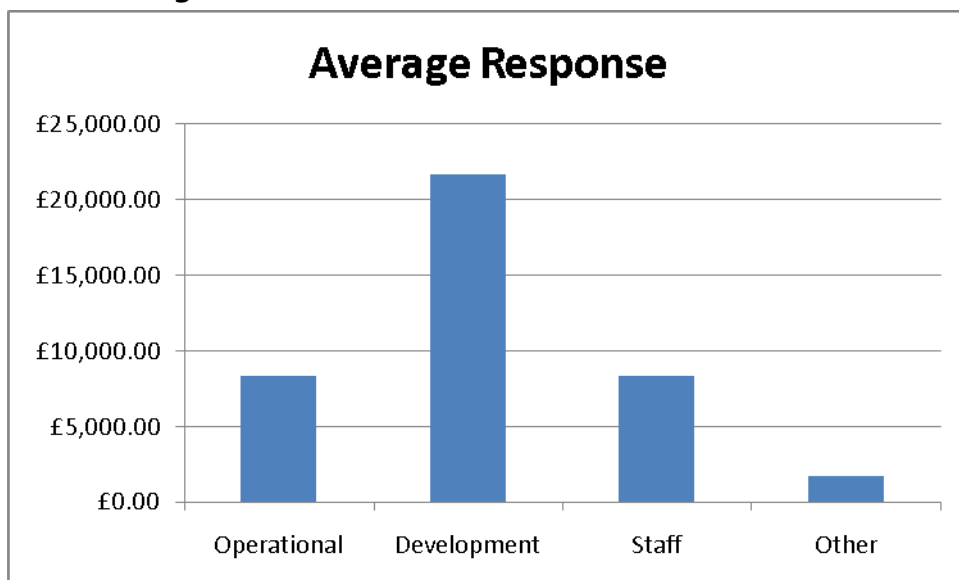


Will allotments be increased within authorities?



Some authorities have just released sites to local community groups leaving them to manage and occupy the plots. Although some authorities have no direct plans to increase the number of allotments, as part of their Open Space Strategy this provision is being reviewed.

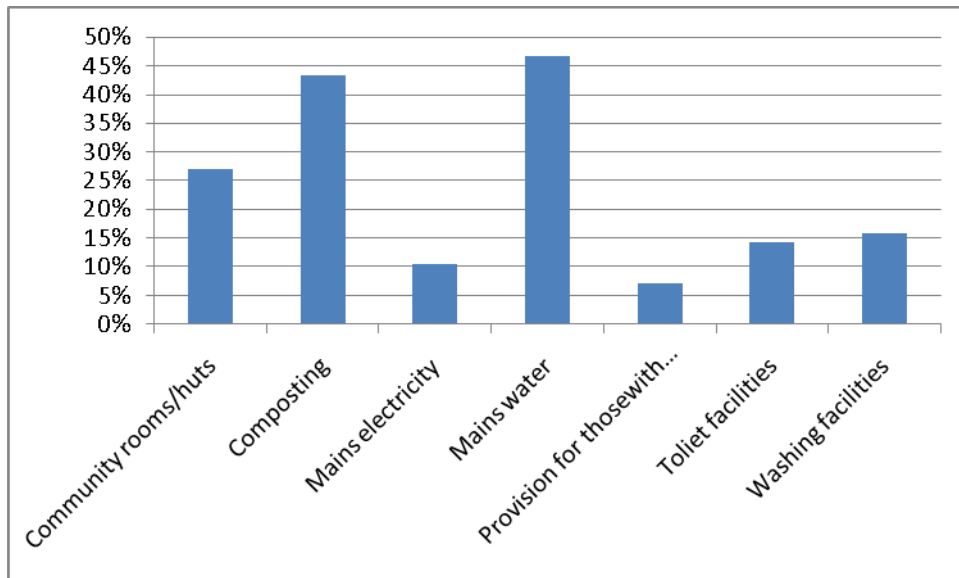
Annual budget for allotments



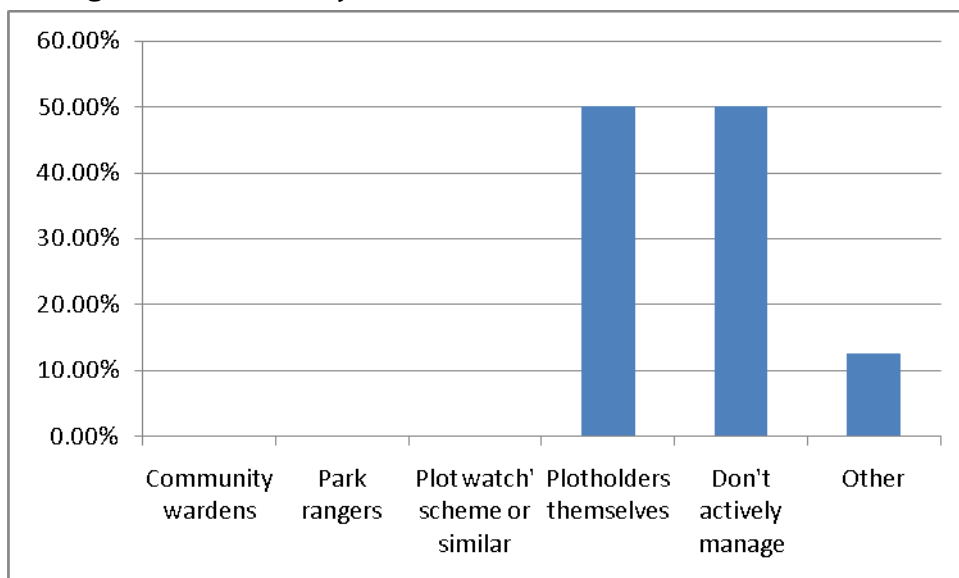
Included in these budgets is responsibility for water bills and some authorities even have responsibility for payment of electricity, paths/roads/steps and perimeter walls/fencing with some of these costs being shared with budgets from other areas within council

budgets. Most allotment sites have the provision of water and a small number provide services including electricity, composting, toilets and washing facilities. Not all sites are currently on a maintenance programme and no regular maintenance is required at sites although ad hoc work is carried out by grounds maintenance operations teams.

Facilities at allotment sites



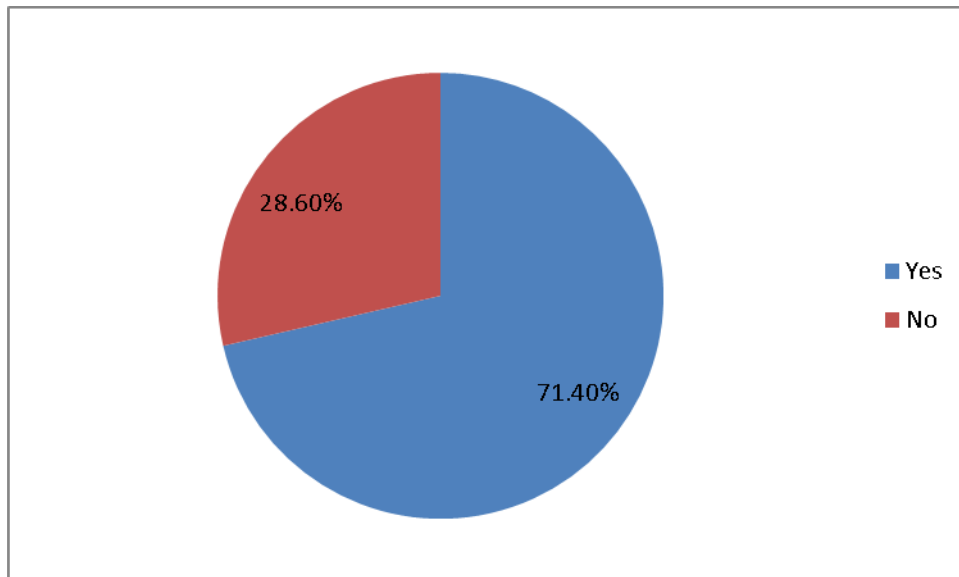
Management of security at allotments



In some instances park rangers and community police are requested to check on allotments when incidents are reported. Only 25% of allotments have a forum or group who can discuss any issues concerning security. 75% of those who answered stated that there is no provision for the allowing of livestock (poultry/bees etc) to be kept at any of their allotment sites.

Draft allotment strategies have been issued to allotment associations and other key stakeholders have been invited to submit comments concerning the future of allotments within councils.

Development of future allotment strategies



Comments on the future

Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on potential factors that would either increase or decrease take up in the short to medium term. These have been incorporated within the text of this document and the charts show the response to specific questions asked within the survey. Overall, a 12% return is reasonable when it reflects the views of 20 Scottish Local Authorities.

Many were realistic about the effects of a squeeze on local authority budgets and anticipated a reduction in future funding although this tends to contradict the fact that allotments are considered a priority by the Scottish Government adding to the wider healthy lifestyle approach incorporating mental health and ways to combat this indirectly or directly through allotment provision and Greenspace.

Perhaps a future role for APSE will be to lobby and attempt to influence Government Ministers to provide funding if not directly for allotments but perhaps linked to community regeneration projects. This survey was specifically sent to Scottish contacts but a new survey will now be sent to other UK contacts to gauge the response and reaction to allotments and once these results are known, they too will be shared with the APSE membership.

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together

with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authorities membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area, please email ptaggart@apse.org.uk

Pat Taggart

Principal Advisor