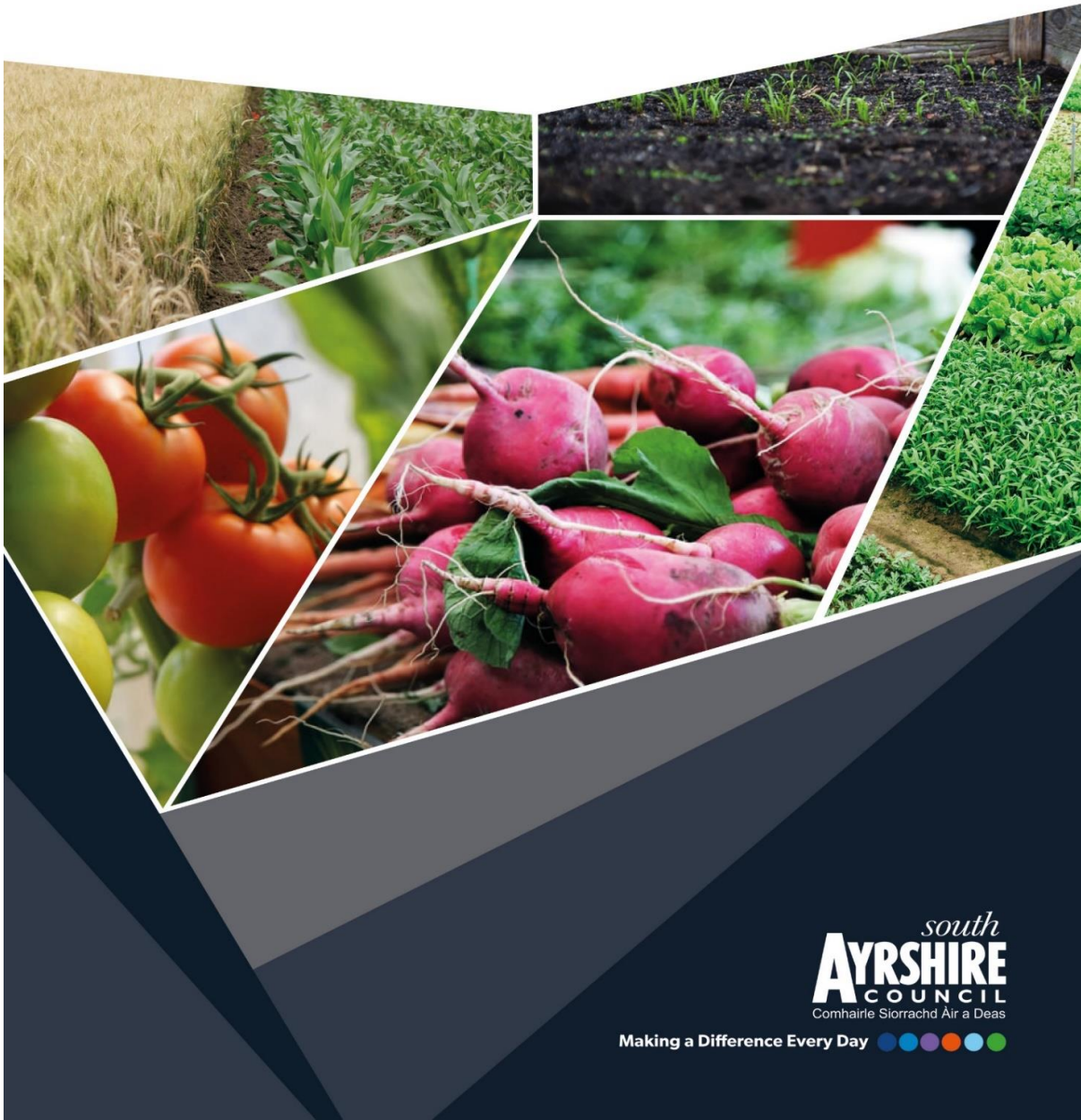


South Ayrshire Council Food-Growing Strategy



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Comhairle Storrachd Air a Deas

Making a Difference Every Day 

South Ayrshire Council Food-Growing Strategy



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1. Foreword

“Sustainable food growing is an essential element of any sustainable society. Not only does it provide healthy, nutritious food with a low carbon footprint, it connects people to their environment and their communities. It provides a healthy, sociable way to exercise and learn for people of all ages as well as offering benefits to biodiversity, pollution levels and many other environmental variables. With all of this in mind we are delighted to be bringing forward our food growing strategy for South Ayrshire, supporting local people to grow local food.

The strategy is the result of a comprehensive consultation which took place early this year. Working with Greenspace Scotland we engaged with people in person across the council area as well as online. We had a very positive starting point, as here in South Ayrshire we have a history of investing in local food growing, recently doubling our allotment provision from three sites to six. We are also proud of feedback we gained from the many groups and stakeholders we reached during the consultation, much of which was very positive. But we do recognise the different limitations many growers or potential growers face and the opportunity was taken to explore these through the consultative process. It is with these in mind, along with the many benefits local food growing can bring, that this strategy is designed.

This food growing strategy is intended to help us to go beyond our current position to work with individuals and groups in our communities to further the opportunities, capacity and abilities we have to grow food in South Ayrshire. We hope you will find the strategy both informative and inspirational, highlighting the many exciting opportunities we have to take food growing from strength to strength locally.”

Cllr Ian Cochrane, Portfolio Holder, Environment

2. Introduction

To comply with Scottish Government legislation laid out in Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 all local authorities in Scotland have a statutory duty to develop their own Food-Growing Strategy that will initially run from 2020-2025 and will then be reviewed every 5 years thereafter.

The purpose of the Food-Growing Strategy is primarily:

1. to identify land that may be used as allotment sites
2. to identify other areas of land that could be used for community food-growing, and
3. to describe how the authority intends to increase provision, particularly in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.

The Food-Growing Strategy will also ultimately form part of a wider 'South Ayrshire Food Strategy', which was a commitment set out in the Council's recently published Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy.

3. Policy background and rationale for developing the Food-Growing Strategy

The Food-Growing Strategy is a strategic outcome in the plan to enhance the environment through social, cultural and economic activities.

The Council plan '***Our Vision, Our Place 2018-2022***' set the framework for achieving the goal:

"We want South Ayrshire to be the best it can be and for all people and places to have the opportunity to reach their full potential."

3.1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy

The Council's **Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy** was introduced in October 2019 and sets out how we aim to further sustainable development and tackle climate change over the next five years.

An outcome of that strategy is for the Council to develop an overall South Ayrshire Food Strategy which will cover food-growing as well as wider issues about food sustainability. The Food-Growing Strategy will form part of this wider South Ayrshire Food Strategy.

3.2 Open Space Strategy

The Council is also currently updating the Council's **Open Space Strategy** that we originally introduced in 2012, and are making use of the typology in Planning Advice Note 65 (PAN 65) which includes allotments and community food-growing facilities as a starting point for auditing our open spaces.

This land audit comprises 100 key sites we have identified spread across 30 settlements in South Ayrshire and includes the six Council allotment sites we currently manage.

3.3 Good Food Nation

The Scottish Government is encouraging Scotland to become a 'Good Food Nation' - a land of food and drink, not only in what we produce but also in what we buy, serve and eat, with opportunities for everyone to grow their own food through increased access to land for grow-your-own activities.

The Scottish Government published the national food and drink policy 'Becoming a Good Food Nation' in 2014 and the policy set a new vision for Scotland that by 2025 Scotland will be:

"a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day."

Although not yet legislation Scottish Ministers remain committed to the concept and aspiration of achieving their vision for Scotland to become a Good Food Nation where:

1. it is the norm for Scots to take a keen interest in their food, knowing what constitutes good food, valuing it and seeking it out whenever they can
2. people who serve and sell food - from schools to hospitals, retailers, cafes and restaurants - are committed to serving and selling good food
3. everyone in Scotland has ready access to the healthy, nutritious food they need
4. dietary-related diseases are in decline, as is the environmental impact of our food consumption
5. Scottish producers ensure that what they produce is increasingly healthy and environmentally sound

The Scottish Government aim to make a real and positive difference to the lives of the people of Scotland by:

1. helping to improve their access to, and understanding of, the benefits of healthy local foods
2. ensuring sustainability of our wonderful food industry
3. ensuring food companies are a thriving feature of the economy and places where people want to work
4. looking to grow Scotland's reputation as a Good Food Nation from which other countries can learn

The Council will ultimately produce a South Ayrshire Food Strategy which will aid towards the goal of Scotland becoming a Good Food Nation.

Through the development of the Food-Growing Strategy and action to support community food-growing, the Council will contribute to some of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes such as:

1. We are healthy and active
2. We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment
3. We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

and a range of National Indicators such as

1. Mental wellbeing, healthy weight and physical activity
2. Visits to the outdoors, biodiversity and climate action
3. Perceptions of local area, loneliness, access to greenspace and social capital

3.4 Local Development Plan

A **Local Development Plan (LDP)** is required for each Council area across Scotland. It allocates sites, either for new development, such as housing, or sites to be protected, and also includes policies that guide decisions on all planning applications.

The South Ayrshire Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in 2014 and set out strategic spatial priorities and policies for South Ayrshire and secured land for specified uses (e.g. housing / education / leisure / retail / industry etc.) to provide certainty for development.

The Council's recently updated Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) contains a Green Networks Policy and a commitment to prepare a Green Networks Strategy to expand the Central Scotland Green Network within South Ayrshire.

The policy also recognises that the temporary use of land for active or passive open space activities prior to permanent development can also have positive environmental and social benefits. Although allotments and food-growing sites are not specifically mentioned as part of the Green Network they are part of the open space provision mentioned.

3.5 Food-Growing Vision

The Council's Vision on food-growing is:

"In South Ayrshire, the Council and partners aim to develop a Food-Growing Strategy to explore food-growing opportunities and sites to improve the health and well-being of its residents ensuring opportunities for those who wish to grow their own food. These aims help to fulfil South Ayrshire Council's sustainability plan and reduce food poverty and waste."

4. Consultative Activities undertaken

In November 2019 the Council engaged Greenspace Scotland to assist in gathering up-to-date, local information to underpin the Food-Growing Strategy. The consultative work undertaken in partnership with Greenspace Scotland included the delivery and reporting of an internal Council colleague workshop, and thereafter three evening public consultation workshops aimed at community food-growing groups and individuals who had an interest in 'grow your own' food-growing activities.

An on-line survey was also made available to anyone who could not attend the evening workshops and all the resultant suggestions and recommendations were considered and referenced when finalising the Food-Growing Strategy.

Support for community food-growing and the development of allotment sites is certainly not a new activity for the Council as we have actually doubled the number of allotment sites since 2015, have assisted various groups in establishing community gardens, and are currently also supporting the development of new constituted allotment associations.

4.1 Stakeholder mapping

This included the identification of key Council staff across all relevant services, the existing community food-growing groups, and any other organisations which support community food-growing both locally and nationally.

4.2 Events

As mentioned, in total four events were delivered and reported on as part of the overall consultation process. The first event was an internal Council colleague workshop (held on the 22nd of November 2019) attended by key Council staff across all relevant services that cover food-growing and community engagement services, and thereafter three evening public consultation workshops in Prestwick (12th of February 2020), Girvan (18th of February 2020) and Belleisle, Ayr (20th of February 2020) aimed at community food-growing groups and individuals with an interest in “grow your own”. The events were run in a participative and inclusive way to ensure that everyone felt able to contribute to discussions and that all their thoughts and ideas were captured.



Picture: Participants at the Prestwick workshop

At all the events the national and local policy context for the Food-Growing Strategy was set out and also gave us the opportunity to explore with local people whether or not they were currently taking part in food-growing activities, and if not, the reasons why.

4.3 On-line survey

We also conducted an on-line survey to engage with as many different stakeholders as possible in a short space of time and to provide those unable to attend the events with an opportunity to share knowledge and information on food-growing.

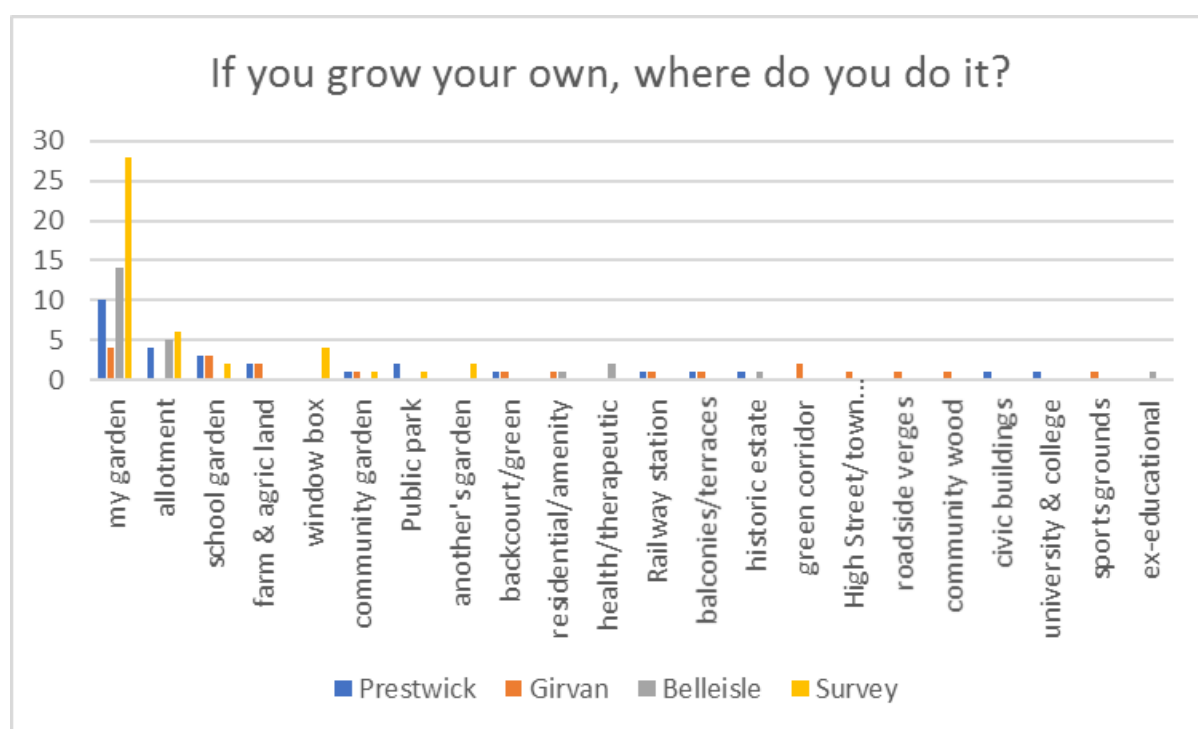
4.4 Information gathered

The information gathered at the workshops and from the on-line survey demonstrated that currently there is food being grown in a variety of sites across South Ayrshire including individual's home gardens, community gardens, allotments, schools, orchards, and health facility & therapeutic facilities. The information confirmed that most respondents grow food in their own home gardens, even if they also grow food on other sites, such as allotments or community gardens.

It was also noted that much of the social housing in South Ayrshire consists of flats, so those particular residents do not have any access to gardens so find it very difficult to carry out any food-growing activities. No food-growing activity on derelict land was recorded.

As testament to the current high level of provision of Council-owned allotment plots available to applicants residing in South Ayrshire, accessibility to an allotment plot was not considered to be a barrier to the food-growing aspirations of any participants at the consultation events or in the on-line survey.

See **Appendix 1** for a range of information gathered at the public consultation events and from the on-line survey similar to the table below.



See **Appendix 2** for Greenspace Scotland's 'Our Growing Community' map resource on which participants were asked to place a coloured dot to indicate the main site where they grow food.

5. Strategic Aims and Actions

By 2025 the aim is for the Council to achieve the following outcomes:

1. to have created, offered, or supported increased opportunities for communal food-growing activities

2. to provide up-to-date food-growing information on a dedicated webpage
3. to produce on-line maps showing existing allotment sites and community gardens
4. to produce maps identifying land with potential for food-growing in key settlements
5. to provide easy to access information about allotments and community food-growing opportunities
6. to ensure the process for applying for an allotment plot is straightforward and well publicised
7. continued production and publication of the Council's 'Annual Allotment Reports'
8. to produce and implement the Council's updated 'Allotment Rules and Regulations'
9. to review formal planting procedures to consider replacing ornamental tree and plant species with fruit trees, herbs and vegetables where possible and practical

The Food-Growing Strategy aims to identify, develop and maintain sustainable levels of land to accommodate food-growing usage by giving people wishing to grow their own fruit and vegetables a range of individual and community food-growing opportunities close to where they live.

The production of the Food-Growing Strategy and the aim of achieving all the associated outcomes also helps to fulfil the Council's sustainability plan to reduce food-poverty and waste.

The Sustainable Food Cities Network helps people and places share challenges, explore practical solutions, and develop best practice on key food issues. The approach involves developing a cross-sector partnership of local public agencies, businesses, academics and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) committed to working together to make healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of where they live.

Action 1: As the Food-Growing Strategy will subsequently form part of the overall South Ayrshire Food Strategy the Council will consider working towards becoming a Sustainable Food City / area.

5.1 Land currently identified for use as allotment sites

1. Alloway allotments, Monument Road, Ayr
2. Craigie allotments, Craigie Way, Ayr
3. Troon allotments, Fullarton estate, Troon
4. Overmills allotments, Dalmlilling, Ayr
5. Outdale Avenue allotments, Prestwick
6. North Park allotments, Monument Road, Ayr

Action 2: We will continue to provide allotments for general public food-growing use and will routinely review the overall level of provision in line with government guidelines.

5.2 Land identified for community use for growing vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers

There are already many good examples of local social enterprise activity in South Ayrshire. These include small scale commercial food-growing activities which are run by community and/or charitable organisations, and include:

1. Girvan Community Garden
2. Belleisle Conservatory Ltd (BCL), Ayr
3. The River Garden at Auchincruive (Independence from Drugs and Alcohol Scotland)

4. Little Acorns Early Years CIC (use Auchincruive and Corsehill Gardens)
5. CEIS Ayrshire (Co-ordinated Early Intervening Services)
6. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Ayr – John Pollock Centre

Action 3: We will look at ways of working with the local social enterprise greenspace and food-growing sector to explore more food-growing opportunities in this area.

5.3 Land with potential for future use as additional allotment sites

The Scottish Government has already set out specific requirements for local authorities regarding allotment provision, stating that:

1. the number of applicants on the waiting list must not be more than one half of the total number of allotment plots owned and leased by the authority, and
2. an applicant must not need to wait on the list for a continuous period of more than 5 years before they are offered an allotment plot

Fortunately, over the past few years we have managed to substantially increase the number of allotment plots we are able to offer to applicants through the creation of 3 additional sites at Overmills, Outdale Avenue, and North Park. We now have a total of 6 Council-owned allotment facilities in South Ayrshire offering a total of 338 allotment plots, and at 31/12/2019 we only had a total number of 66 applicants on our waiting lists. This means that currently we are well within our required capacity requirements for allotment provision. However we still require to consider building further capacity in case we suddenly receive a spate of new applications, and so we must look at all the available site options.

Amenity areas within new residential and affordable housing developments have potential for the inclusion of new allotment sites and community food-growing usage. The guidance from Scottish Government highlights that:

'When considering demand, authorities should also map where future demand for food-growing space is likely to be, such as where new housing development sites are being planned, particularly those developments which will provide little or no garden space to residents. Local authorities may also wish to take steps to retain quality topsoil in the gardens and food-growing spaces of new housing developments.'

The Council's '2018 Housing Land Audit' has been published, effective May 2019. This audit monitors and quantifies the requisite 5-year effective land supply from 2018-2023 and provides a comprehensive description of all current sites for housing within the authority area of a capacity for 4 or more homes.

Action 4: We will discuss with the Council's Planning Service to see if sites earmarked for new housing developments could potentially include areas set aside for allotments or community food-growing facilities at the master planning stage.

5.4 Land with potential for future community food-growing use

In addition to the potential for community food-growing facilities to be included in new housing developments as discussed above, we must also consider the potential for such facilities to be accommodated in more general public open spaces. This could potentially replace some existing shrub beds, flower beds, tree plantings, and raised beds with food-growing options.

At the consultation workshops the type of sites suggested by participants as potential areas for food-growing ranged from spaces set aside in public parks, civic and public buildings, residential and amenity spaces, shrub beds, flower planters, recreational grounds, green corridors and areas of Vacant and Derelict Land.

Even very small sites such as open spaces on street corners, municipal flower beds, ornamental shrub-beds, and planters in hard-landscaped areas can be useful as they could potentially accommodate community food-growing activities to some degree where appropriate. This ethos is mirrored across the UK where the Incredible Edible Network encourages ordinary people to transform their own local landscapes and to turn municipal ornamental sites into abundant sources of healthy food.

An example of this practice in South Ayrshire is where Colmonell Community Association has already planted fruit trees and bushes in a few 'left over greenspaces' and have plans to extend this activity across the village. They are currently in discussion with the Council regarding taking over the management of an unused area of greenspace off Craigneil Road.

Action 5: We will explore how Council-owned and managed land and general amenity open space could be used for community food-growing practices instead of just continuing to plant ornamental shrubs, ornamental trees, and mowing the grass. However there may be certain Planning conditions that require an application for a change of use at some sites.

The Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce is working to transform the existing approach to bringing vacant and derelict land back into productive use, which could potentially include food-growing activities. It is acknowledged that where land becomes derelict it can have a negative impact on local neighbourhoods, affecting the appearance and image of places, so one solution for a more positive effect can be 'temporary greening' and includes uses such as growing spaces (for food or biomass crops), community gardens, landscaping and recreation resources.

This has the potential to improve sites which could otherwise detract from the environment of a neighbourhood until a more permanent development can be implemented in the future, and can also provide a focus for community action and can make a valuable contribution to green and open space networks.

Action 6: We will consider any available Vacant and Derelict Land that could potentially be used for community food-growing purposes.

Land identified as 'contaminated land' is not necessarily a barrier to food-growing as even on these sites food crops can still be grown safely by being planted in raised planters filled with imported fertile and uncontaminated soil rather than being planted directly into the contaminated soil on the site.

Action 7: We will work with Contaminated Land Officers in the process of identifying any sites with contaminated land that could potentially accommodate food-growing.

Individuals' own residential gardens are also a potential land resource for food-growing purposes and was mentioned at the public consultation workshop events as some garden-owners are unable to tend their own gardens so could potentially open them up for food-growing use by volunteers who may not have a garden of their own to work.

Action 8: We will provide up-to-date information on the Council's dedicated allotment and food-growing webpage and will include information on the potential use of private

residential gardens where the garden-owners are unable to work their own gardens and are willing to allow volunteers to work their gardens instead.

Another option we will consider is to support the creation of a community food-growing forum to facilitate networking of all the associated stakeholders to enable the sharing of food-growing information. We have already created a dedicated email address foodgrowing@south-ayrshire.gov.uk for all associated food-growing related correspondence with the public and other relevant stakeholders.

Land owned by other public bodies across South Ayrshire such as the NHS, Scottish Natural Heritage, large historic estates, universities and colleges could also potentially accommodate food-growing practices. In relation to the NHS and wider 'health estate' a staff member of the South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership who attended the Prestwick public consultation event noted that he was aware of several sheltered housing and care homes that made use of the amenity greenspace surrounding them for gardening and food-growing activities. This is a part of the Care Inspectorate programme 'Care About Physical Activity' which aims to support people experiencing care to move more each day.

Action 9: We will work with external partners regarding the potential for supporting food-growing practices on land not owned by the Council.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is another possible blended approach to food-growing, essentially commercial farming, where the local community share the risks with the farmer through payment up front and volunteering schemes. CSA takes many forms in the UK and the diversity reflects the fact that CSA farms have grown from grassroots initiatives and individuals finding their own way to address the challenges of food production, rather than following a set model. However, all share the common principles of sharing the risks, rewards and responsibilities of food production. In South Ayrshire agricultural land could provide opportunities for community supported food-growing close to settlements.

Action 10: We will consider the inclusion of information on the Council's dedicated allotment and food-growing webpage that relates to the potential opportunities for Community Supported Agriculture particularly in rural settlements, especially if Council-owned land is not available or suitable for food-growing, and where there may already be a positive working relationship with a local farmer or private estate.

5.5 Increase the provision of food-growing land in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage

The Community Empowerment Act requires the Council to describe whether and how the authority intends to increase the provision of land for allotments and/or community food-growing especially in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020 was recently published and showed that of South Ayrshire's 153 SIMD zones fifteen are in decile 1 - i.e. in the top 10% most deprived areas in Scotland.

Most of the South Ayrshire zones are in and around Ayr, particularly Ayr North and Whitletts where the severest deprivation is evident.

The Council's Ranger Services have previously been working with an additional support needs group at Belleisle where they have been growing plants in raised planters, however

the Rangers are currently working with a community group in Lochside (Ayr North) to create a new community garden at Lochside Community Centre.

Action 11: We will ensure that we include these SIMD zones when we next look to increase allotment provision and community garden / community food-growing provision.

The Council is currently piloting our 'Thriving Places' programme in two communities – 'North Ayr' and 'Girvan' with the aim of supporting communities to identify local issues and develop plans to address these, and consideration will be given to potential opportunities for developing greenspaces and food-growing spaces as part of this process.

Action 12: To support and enable community food-growing proposals the Council will consider community-led projects submitted through the Participatory Budgeting scheme.

6. Reviewing the Strategy

The Food-Growing Strategy must be reviewed before the end of a period of 5 years from the day on which the strategy is first published so will initially run from 2020-2025 and will then be reviewed every 5 years thereafter. An Annual report updating on actions will be brought forward to Leadership Panel.

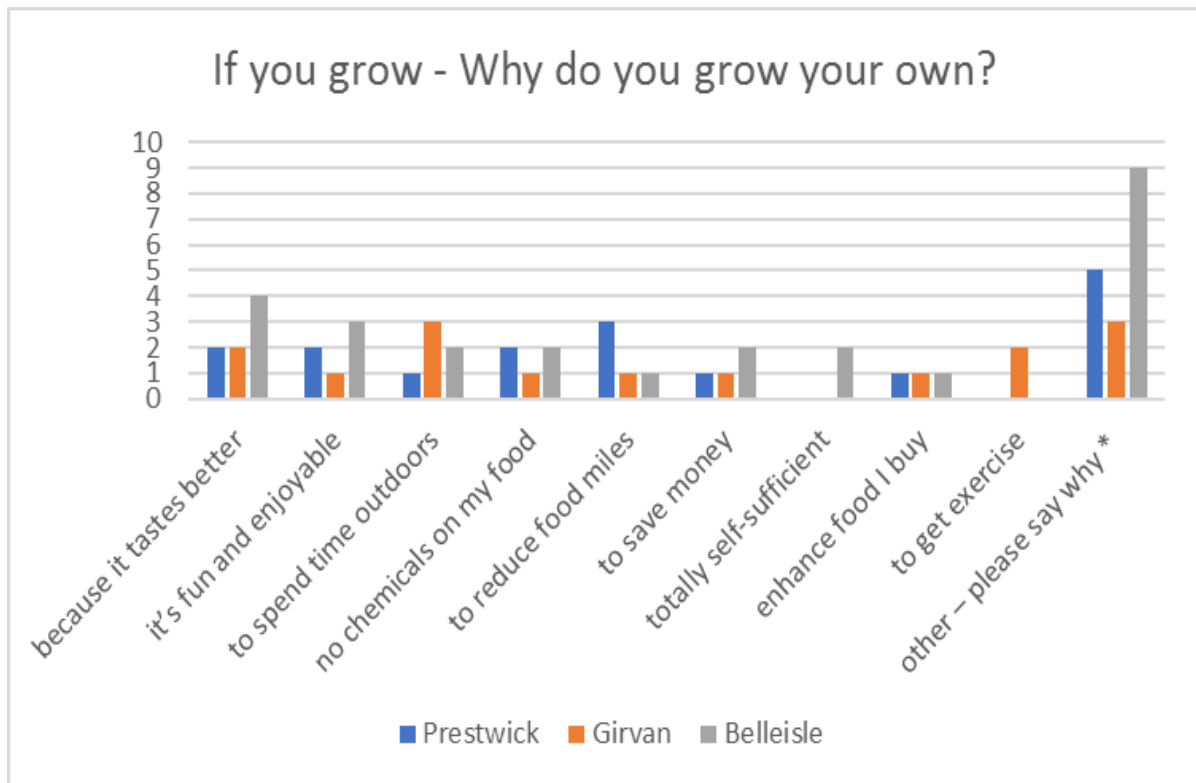
If following a review we decide that changes to the Food-Growing Strategy are necessary we will publish a revised version of the strategy on our website or by other electronic means.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community workshop and online survey results

Appendix 2 – Greenspace Scotland 'Our Growing Community' map resource

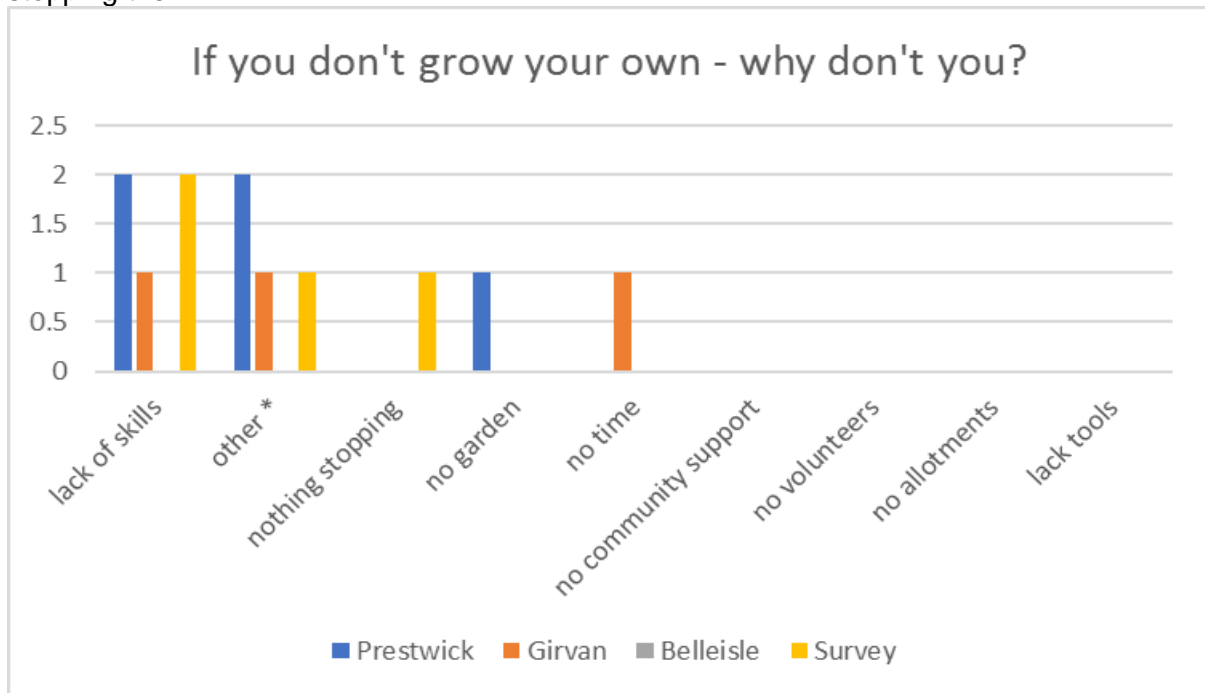
Appendix 1



Picture: Participants placed a sticky note on their main reason for growing their own food

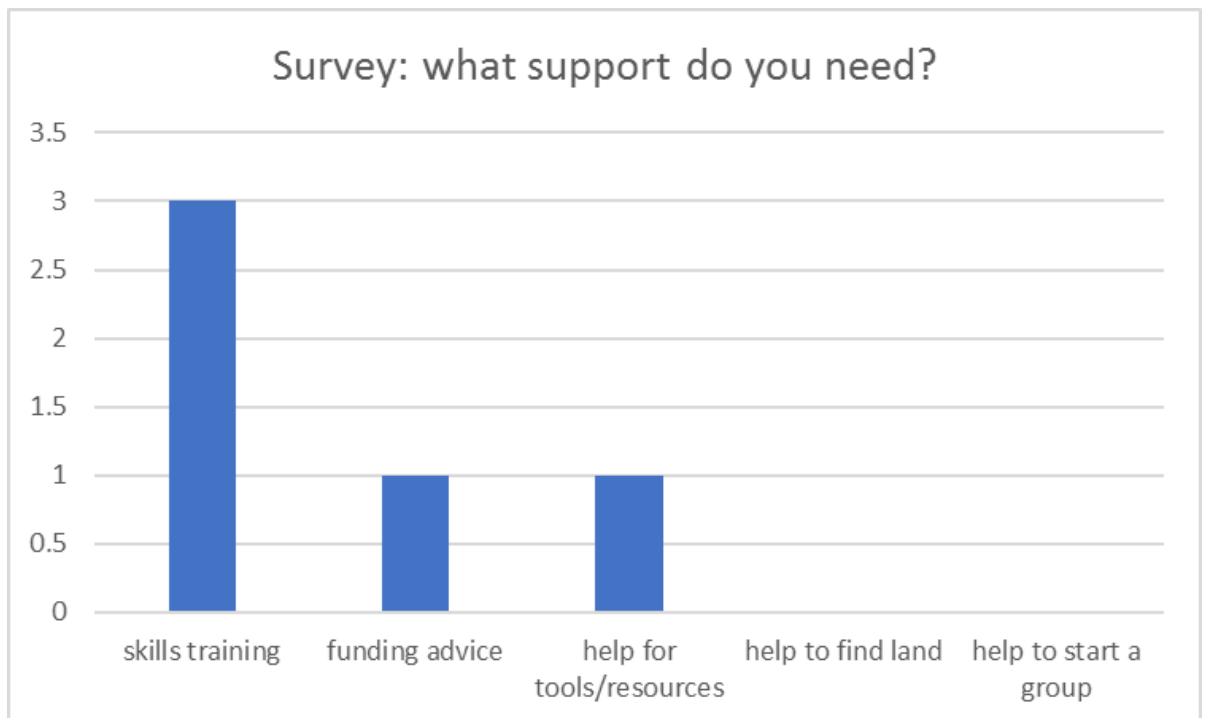
Through the workshops and survey, we enquired into why people do not grow their own food with a view to looking at these barriers and exploring how a Food-Growing Strategy could address them. The main reason given was that they did not know how to or had a lack of the

necessary skills, then that they had no garden, or had no time, or that there was nothing stopping them.



From the survey the support needed to grow your own correlated with the barriers to growing, in that help to feel confident about growing skills was the main support need identified.

The survey responses are shown in the table below:



Participants at the community events were asked why they are involved in growing. The main reasons were better tasting food, enjoyment, and to spend time outdoors.

Appendix 2



At the workshops, participants were asked to place a dot in the main site that they grow on.

1. Policy details

Policy Title: Food Growing Strategy	Lead Officer Kenneth Dalrymple
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2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community, Groups of People or Themes	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
The whole community of South Ayrshire	N/A	Y
People from different racial groups, ethnic or national origin.	N/A	Y
Women and/or men (boys and girls)	N/A	Y
People with disabilities	N/A	Y
People from particular age groups for example Older people, children and young people	N/A	Y
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people	N/A	Y
People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process to change sex	N/A	Y
Pregnant women and new mothers	N/A	Y
People who are married or in a civil partnership	N/A	Y
People who share a particular religion or belief	N/A	Y
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights, Rurality and Deprivation.	N/A	Y

3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (high, medium or low)
Eliminate discrimination and harassment faced by particular communities or groups	Low
Promote equality of opportunity between particular communities or groups	Low
Foster good relations between particular communities or groups	Low
Promote positive attitudes towards different communities or groups	Low
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Low
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Low

4. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full EIA must be carried out on all high and medium impact policies)		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Rationale for decision: Although the food growing strategy will have a positive impact this will feed into the proposed wider reaching South Ayrshire Food Strategy which will have a more significant positive impact with regards to some of the equality themes.			
Signed : Service Lead, Neighbourhood Services			
Date: 23 October 2020		Copy to equalities@south-ayrshire.gov.uk	