

Appendix A:  
Draft Food Growing Strategy  
April 2023

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## **1. Introduction**

East Renfrewshire's Food Growing Strategy has developed against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing cost of living pressures. In the face of these existential threats community food growing might seem a peripheral concern but evidence from across Scotland shows food growing at community level directly address many current issues. Experience shows that food growing develops individual confidence and community cohesion, supports healthy and sustainable lifestyles, reduces carbon emissions and enhances biodiversity. The objective of this strategy is to ensure that food growing in East Renfrewshire can maximise these benefits for our residents.

Key to delivering this strategy will be the participation of existing growers and those residents and communities who want to start growing food. This document puts in place a proactive framework which will facilitate and support groups who want to start food growing or expand existing enterprises.

Section 119 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (The Act) requires East Renfrewshire Council to prepare a food-growing strategy which identifies land which could be suitable for allotment sites and land that could be used for community growing. Section 119 also requires that when numbers on the waiting list for a Council allotment surpass 50% of the total number of allotment plots then the food growing strategy should describe how the authority intends to increase the provision of allotments or other land for community growing. In East Renfrewshire this 50% trigger point has been reached, requiring the Council to address demand for food growing space. This will require Council services to work collaboratively with an understanding that food growing can make an effective contribution to the Council's overarching outcome of creating a fairer place where our resident's well-being is first and foremost.

Interest in food growing has increased rapidly in the last few years. In East Renfrewshire more people than ever want to be able to plant, pick and plate their own food. Compared with neighbouring authorities the local food growing scene is small with the vast majority of growing happening at the two allotment sites. East Renfrewshire Council owns and manages nearly 500 open spaces equating to over 345 hectares of land. For this strategy to succeed new space for food growing will have to be found. This will require innovative thinking to ensure this valuable land resource delivers maximum benefits with the most efficient use of resources. While new sites must be chosen with care, establishing food growing on a poorly performing open space will give much greater social and environmental return. Likewise, food growing can make good use of vacant and derelict land, even if on a temporary basis. Food growing does not necessarily require intensive resourcing; in Neilston vegetables are cropped from disused flower beds; while the highly productive Water Works orchard in Barrhead flourishes in a semi-wild state. This strategy encourages innovation and supports ambitions for growing food at all scales and locations.

The simple process of food growing gives people a shared sense of purpose, connection and endeavour that is every bit as important for their well-being as the nutrition contained in the food itself. East Renfrewshire has a high rate of need for food bank parcels and community food growing can contribute in small ways to improving equality and food dignity. The actions contained in this document are tailored towards ensuring that fairness, health and well-being, climate and the nature crisis are central outcomes.

## **2. Developing the Food Growing Strategy**

The strategy was developed in collaboration with food growing groups from across East Renfrewshire. A working group was established with representatives from the two allotment associations Dunterlie Allotments and Eastwood Nursery Allotments, the food growing activists Incredible Edible based in Neilston, Green Guardians at Woodfarm Community Centre and Voluntary Action ER. Other organisations contacted for their views include: Barrhead Housing Association, ERA (East Renfrewshire Additional Support Needs Parents Action Group), Recovery Across Mental Health (RAMH) and all of East Renfrewshire's primary schools and secondary schools.

The Council will consult on this draft during summer 2023 before adopting the final version of the strategy.

### **Strategic context**

The strategy emphasises the contribution that community food growing makes to the following policy areas: the climate crisis; health and well-being; sustainable places; skills and learning; community cohesion and the nature crisis. The development of the food growing strategy has been informed by these different agendas and the strategy will itself inform these policies at local level.

### **Scope of the food growing strategy**

In June 2022 the Scottish parliament passed the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act. The Act enshrines in law the Scottish Government's commitment to Scotland becoming 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. The Act lays out legislation for a national food and drink policy- "Becoming a Good Food Nation". The legislation also requires Local Authorities to develop their own Good Food Nation Plan. These local plans will set out clear outcomes, indicators and policies across a range of areas relating to food including the environment, health and the economy.

The Community Empowerment 2015 (Scotland) Act, Section 119 places a duty on every local authority to prepare a food growing strategy. The key requirement for food growing strategies prepared under the Community Empowerment Act are that they should:

- Identify land that could be used for allotment sites;
- identify land that could be used by the community to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers;
- describe how the authority intends to increase the provision of allotments or other land for community, should the authority be required to take reasonable steps to do so\*; and
- when detailing how the authority intends to increase provision of allotment sites or growing areas of land in its area, a description of whether and how this will apply to communities which experience socio economic disadvantage.

\* At this time East Renfrewshire Council is required to take reasonable steps

### **3. Policy background**

#### **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**

The National Planning Framework 4 became a statutory part of the development plan for East Renfrewshire on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2023. Food Growing and allotments are promoted in NPF4 under the following policies: Policy 23 Health and Safety and as part of National Development number 7; *The Central Scotland Green Network* which supports delivery of NPF4's Liveable Places strategy. Local food growing supports NPF4's key principles of compact local living and tackling the climate and nature emergencies.

#### **Local policy**

Food growing in the community supports the delivery of outcomes set out in Fairer East Ren Plan the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 to 2024. In particular the two outcomes of "residents are as healthy and active as possible" and "East Renfrewshire is environmentally sustainable"

The East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) sets out a long-term strategy and a policy framework to guide future development, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and regeneration. The plan aims to create thriving, attractive and sustainable places and neighbourhoods. The LDP2 promotes the development of food growing spaces and allotments as a healthy contributor towards the creation of attractive and sustainable places. There is currently one proposal for allotments listed in LDP2, this is Policy D8.14 for land at Double Hedges in Neilston.

There are two Locality Action Plans in place: the Auchenback Locality Action Plan and the Arthurlie and Dunterlie Action Plan (2017 -2027). A third action plan is emerging in Neilston. The Arthurlie and Dunterlie Plans both identify what local people see as priorities for their areas, priorities include "the need to improve green spaces with events such as planting activities with young people". The Auchenback Plan includes the following outcome: "Residents of Auchenback have a healthy diet based on locally grown produce."

The Food Growing Strategy will support objectives in the Council's emerging Get to Zero Strategy and Action Plan.

The East Renfrewshire Openspace Asset Management Plan 2022 notes that the Council is committed to identifying new land suitable for a variety of food growing approaches.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires that every Council undertakes an openspace audit and prepares an open space strategy. The Planning Service commenced preparation of these documents in partnership with other Council services, early 2023. The audit process provides a good opportunity to better understand what land might be available or suitable for food growing.

#### **4. Food growing in East Renfrewshire: key facts**

##### **Allotments**

East Renfrewshire has two allotment associations the largest is Eastwood Nursery Allotments in Giffnock which has 61 plots. The associations run independently and manage their own waiting lists and the day-to-day organisation of their sites. Dunterlie Allotments in Barrhead were awarded Lottery Funding and have just completed an expansion programme increasing the number of plots from 8 to 18, this has reduced pressure on waiting lists. Dunterlie also offer compact raised beds for people who prefer a small growing space. Dunterlie plan future expansion but the Eastwood Nursery Allotments have limited space to expand.

##### **Community Gardens**

Neilston Development Trust have a community garden space at The Bank in Neilston where fruit and vegetables are grown.

There is a large community orchard of 200 fruit trees at the Water Works in Barrhead which operates as an open resource where people are welcome to pick their own fruit. There is a small community orchard in the new community park at Low Borland Road in Waterfoot.

East Renfrewshire Autism Support Network Parents Action Group have a growing area for young people at the Water Works. They plan to expand their activities in 2023 with the addition of a growing tunnel.

The Conner Road young person's accommodation has a small vegetable garden where food is grown and cooked by the vulnerable young people. Barrhead Housing Association have various initiatives to support community growing by their tenants.

Recovery across Mental Health (RAMH) have a long-established therapeutic garden space in Barrhead where vegetables are grown.

Incredible Edible Neilston specialise in transforming under used public realm into productive growing areas. They have repurposed town centre planters to grow vegetables for local distribution. They have created an edible lane by clearing an overgrown right of way and planting it with fruit trees and bushes and are currently developing a new growing space in disused lock-up garages.

Incredible Edible run a composting scheme in Rouken Glen Park, collecting food waste from local business and hot composting this into compost for distribution to food growing projects.

##### **Social enterprises**

The good food social enterprises Locavore and Tenement Veg grow commercially at Neilston and Rouken Glen Park. Locavore offer volunteer placements at their Neilston market garden site. Tenement Veg deliver horticulture training days in conjunction with Young Enterprise Scotland at Rouken Glen Park. Harvested vegetables are harvested and sold in outlets in Glasgow.

##### **Schools**

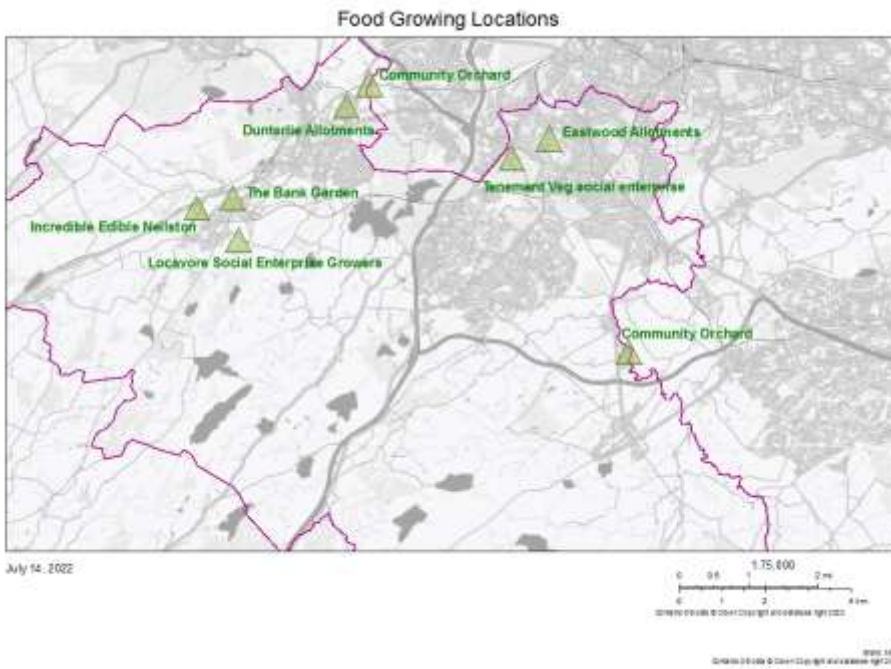
The majority of East Renfrewshire's primary schools and early year's centres are very active in food growing producing an impressive array of crops each year. Food growing and the cooking of produce is embedded in the education curriculum. The Council's eco schools programme is well established and the experience of food growing is used by pupils as accreditation towards achieving the John Muir Bronze Award. All the Council's recently built schools were designed with integrated growing spaces. A survey of secondary schools showed that food growing activity was patchy but

that all the secondary schools expressed a strong interest in developing food growing spaces in the future.

Busby Primary School have a unique vertical garden which they built with the help of a world-renowned landscape artist. Pupils were involved in the design and planting of the edible wall and grow an assortment of plants including edible species like strawberries and herbs. The wall provides the additional function of cooling the school building during periods of hot weather.

Pupils at Isobel Mair School currently have use of a plot at Eastwood Allotments, pupils complete a "grow, cook, eat class" in collaboration with the West of Scotland College. Pupils will shortly start food growing in planters at the new Greenwood Business Centre, an innovative project integrating growing space into business park landscaping. Parents and staff have indicated an interest in establishing a new growing space where school leavers can achieve accredited horticulture qualifications and skills for employment.

Figure 1: Food Growing Locations



## **5. Demographic background**

In 2021/22 it was estimated that 4,122 food parcels were distributed through East Renfrewshire's two distribution centres – the equivalent of 429.1 parcels per 10,000 individuals. East Renfrewshire's rate was higher than that of the Scottish (360.5) and UK (324.0) averages.

75% of resident households have access to a garden, while 25% of households live in flatted accommodation. This 25% are particularly dependent on community growing space if they wish to grow.

East Renfrewshire has very low numbers of community growing spaces in comparison with neighbouring authorities. The Council manages 345 ha of open space but less than 1 ha is dedicated to community food production.

## **6. The Benefits of Food Growing**

### **Covid 19 recovery**

The Covid pandemic has left a legacy which may not yet be fully understood. The East Renfrewshire HSCP Strategic Plan 2022- 2025 notes the negative impacts of Covid-19 on mental health and wellbeing. Evidence indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on increased social isolation, distress, anxiety, fear of contagion, depression and insomnia in the general population. Studies have concluded there will be significant longer-term impacts on mental health and wellbeing. A number of key groups are at higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes. These include front line staff, women, and people with underlying health conditions, children and young people (up to age 25). Locally it is known that families and people provided with support have reported worsening mental wellbeing.

The HSCP Plan concludes that two years of disruption there is likely to be an increasing need for lower-level support and wellbeing activities to address the decline in fitness/wellbeing, particularly for older residents and those with disabilities or long-term conditions. Rebuilding residents' confidence and resilience will also be an essential element of ongoing recovery, and may be a long-term task.

### **Health Benefits**

Evidence from across Scotland shows that community food growing is an effective way to provide the type of lower-level wellbeing activities suggested in the HSCP Plan. Gardening activities provide low-impact occupational exercise which many people find it easier to undertake compared to formal sports or structured fitness classes. Research indicates that people eat more healthily when they are involved in growing their own food.

Growing plants is known to be therapeutic, growing can reduce stress levels and provide mental health benefits particularly when the garden environment offers a "safe" space and supportive social environment.

Currently there are very limited opportunities for East Renfrewshire residents who might benefit most from gardening or growing their own food. RAMH have a therapeutic garden space in Barrhead for RAMH service users but there is no such provision in the east of the district. Prioritising food growing space and activities for people with additional vulnerabilities is a priority of this strategy and will require increased cross working across services to deliver.



### **Place making**

High quality green spaces play an important role in creating sustainable places. When green spaces are also growing space, these positive impacts are multiplied. A diverse green environment dramatically improves the way people feel about the place where they live. Growing spaces foster a sense of community and joint purpose which can reduce levels of isolation and loneliness. Active participation in the production of food engenders a sense of agency and control, where people feel they can affect their neighbourhood in positive ways.

### **Environmental benefits**

Wildlife friendly gardening provides niche habitats and diverse sources of nectar for pollinators in built up areas. Eastwood Nursery Allotments provides a green link between Eastwood Park and Woodfarm.

Local food production contributes to the Get to Zero targets through reduction of food miles, packaging and the composting of waste.

### **Skills and learning**

Both allotment associations are active in the community organising open days, working with local schools and sharing their skills and knowledge. The social enterprise Locavore offer volunteer opportunities at their market garden and Tenement Veg run training days at Rouken Glen. Learning new skills supports people looking to build their employability and self-confidence. A study on the social return on investment from community food growing demonstrated a return of £3.65 for every £1 invested.

### **Benefits summary**

- Community food growing brings people together and reduces isolation;
- Food growing teaches new skills and develops confidence and self-esteem;
- Enhances the environment by creating positive use of spaces and improving biodiversity;
- Reduces food inequality by making fresh locally grown food available to local people; and
- Contributes to get to zero through reduction of food miles and composting of waste.

## 7. Meeting demand for food growing

There are two streams of demand. Demand from groups wanting to create community growing space and demand from individuals wanting an allotment plot for personal use. The level of demand for community growing space is difficult to establish but there is a clear picture of demand for allotment plots.

As of March 2023, the total number of people on the waiting list for an allotment was 65. This total is greater than 50% of the total number of plots available, when a waiting list total is greater than 50% of the total number of plots it is sufficient to trigger section 112 in Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act. This part of the Act requires the Council to take reasonable steps to provide sufficient allotments to keep the waiting list at no more than half the current number of allotments.

- Total number of plots 79
- Total on waiting list 65
- 50% of total number of plots 40 = trigger point for Section 112

Numbers on waiting list at each allotment association

- Dunterlie 18 plots (0 on waiting list)
- Eastwood Nursery 61 plots (65 on waiting list)

Section 112 of the Act states no person should remain on the waiting list for more than five years. Turnover of plots is very slow with approximately two plots becoming available per year suggesting that the wait for an allotment at current turnover rates is likely to be decades.

Section 112 also states that when the numbers on the waiting list for an allotment reaches the 50% trigger point then the food growing strategy should describe how the authority intends to increase the provision of allotments or other land for community growing. The 9 actions under 'Objective: *Identify more spaces for food growing*' have been drafted to address this specific requirement of Section 112.

When taking steps to meet demand for allotments the Council should have regards to making plots that are reasonably close to where people on the waiting list live. As a guide this is suggested at within a 3-mile radius or within a 20-minute journey on public transport. Using these criteria, the small size of East Renfrewshire would allow the majority of residents to reach an allotment site located in the urban areas of the district.

The community Engagement Act Section 119 requires that when detailing how the authority intends to increase provision of allotment sites or growing areas of land in its area, the food growing strategy should include a description of whether and how this will apply to communities which experience socio economic disadvantage. What is known from the waiting lists is that demand is highest in the Eastwood side of the authority where levels of socio-economic disadvantage are low. Demand in more disadvantaged areas is not fully understood and requires further research. Potential food growing sites have been identified across the Council area with three potential sites in areas of greater disadvantage.

Demand does not need to be met exclusively through the expansion of allotment sites. Innovative projects such as Incredible Edibles Neilston have re-purposed disused flower beds to grow vegetables. Creative rethinking about how the Council uses its many open spaces offers good possibilities.

The consultation on this draft will be used as an opportunity to gather more information on current demand for growing space.

## **8. Monitoring & Review**

The engagement exercise will be undertaken using Commonplace the Council's online engagement tool. Following analysis of comments, the finalised strategy will be adopted. The engagement will have a focus on establishing levels of demand for food growing and barriers to food growing.

Section 120 of the Community Empowerment Act requires that the food growing strategy is reviewed and updated every five years. Annual monitoring of the demand for allotments will be undertaken as stated in 'Action 1.5: *Produce an annual allotment review detailing waiting lists and waiting times.*'

## 9. Vision & Objectives

The vision and objectives were agreed by the food growing strategy working group.

### Vision

*Our vision is that East Renfrewshire residents are able to enjoy locally grown food and be able to grow their own their own fruit and vegetables in a diverse range of food growing spaces.*

**Commented [MC1]:** You haven't mentioned a working group at section 2 of the report. Worth being clear in section 2 that a group was established and explain representation

### Objectives

#### 1. Identity more spaces for food growing

Rational.

The length of the waiting list for a plot at Eastwood Allotments requires that the Council take reasonable steps to identify more land for food growing. Dunterlie has recently expanded and reduced its waiting list but anticipate demand will grow in the future. Identifying land with potential for food growing is the first and critical step to expanding food growing in East Renfrewshire.

#### 2. Increase awareness of the benefits of local food and encourage more people to grow their own.

Rational

The community food growing sector is small in East Renfrewshire. Raising awareness of healthy eating and lifestyles, awareness of how local food reduces food miles and carbon emissions, and how food growing spaces can be good for biodiversity will help grow the sector. Partnership with the Heath Improvement Team will be important if those who will benefit most are to be included. Building confidence and filling knowledge gaps will be important for widening participation.

#### 3. Increase access to locally grown food

Rational

Encouragement of a local food economy, supporting and connecting local food producers, local food businesses and consumers. Local food systems can allow for shorter supply chains meaning that are fewer steps and less 'food miles' travelled between the primary producer of the food and the person who eats it. The Food Dignity Network based at Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire already coordinate action to make good food accessible to everyone.

### Objective 1: Identify more spaces for food growing

A list of possible food growing sites is provided in Appendix 1. These sites have the potential to be used for food growing but at this stage no feasibility work has been undertaken to establish if food growing in these locations is possible.

Actions to deliver Objective 1

**Action 1.1** The council will utilise the Open Space Audit\* and Open Space Strategy\* to identify sites on council owned land with potential for food growing.

Action by: East Renfrewshire Strategic Planning Team

Complete by: December 2023

\*These are statutory documents which identify the council's land portfolio, current land-use and management and aspirations for future use and management.

**Action 1.2** Identify potential food growing spaces in Local Development Plan 3.

Action by: East Renfrewshire Strategic Planning Team

Complete by: 2028

**Action 1.3** Undertake research to establish the level of demand for food growing space

Action by: Environment Department ERC

Complete by: December 2023

**Action 1.4** Produce an annual allotment review detailing waiting lists and waiting times.

Action by: Environment Department ERC

Complete: Annual report every January

**Action 1.5** Schools without growing space will be encouraged and supported to identify new opportunities for growing food within their grounds.

Action: Education Department

Complete by: 2025

**Action 1.6** Work with Barrhead Housing Association (BHA) to identify growing spaces in their estate.

Action: BHA

Complete: 2024

**Action 1.7** Support ERA (East Renfrewshire Additional Support Needs Parents Action Group) to develop community growing space at Water Works

Action: ERA, ERC

Complete by: 2024

**Action 1.8** Support Dunterlie Allotment Association (DAA) to expand their site.

Action: DAA, ERC

Complete by: 2025

- Action 1.9 Identify sources of funding for establishing new food growing space.  
Action: ERC/Food Dignity Network  
Complete by: ongoing
- Objective 2** Increase awareness of the benefits of local food and encourage more people to grow their own
- Action 2.1 Cross reference the Food growing Strategy with the Get to Zero Strategy which directs the Council's drive to net zero.  
Action: ERC Environment Department  
Complete by 2024
- Action 2.2 Work with Isabel Mair School identify to identify opportunities for their senior pupils and school leavers to grow food and achieve horticultural qualifications and skills  
Action by: Isabel Mair School, ERC Vocational Programme  
Complete by 2025
- Action 2.3 Work with the Health Improvement Team to identify opportunities for food growing activity as a route to healthier lifestyles.  
Action: HSCP, Environment Department  
Complete by 2024
- Action 2.4 Pilot a community composting scheme  
Action by: Incredible Edible, ERC  
Complete by: 2025
- Action 2.5 Create web content providing information on allotments and community growing opportunities.  
Action by: ERC  
Complete by 2024
- Objective 3** Increase access to locally grown food
- Action 3.1 Develop the food with dignity partnership through enhanced collaboration, promotion, networking and sharing experience.  
Action: Food with Dignity  
Complete by: ongoing
- Action 3.2 Publish a Good Food Nation Plan as required by Section 10 of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022  
Action by: ERC, Food with Dignity Group  
Complete by: As required by Good Food Nation Act regulations

### 10. Appendix 1: Land with potential for food growing

Section 119 of the Act requires the council to identify land which could be used for allotment sites or community growing space. The table lists sites on council owned land which might be suitable but would require investigation and feasibility to establish if the ground is suitable for growing crops. The list is not definitive.

Number	Site	size	location	Current use	Food growing interest	Facilities	Opportunity
1	Water Works	1 Ha	Barrhead	Vacant and Derelict (part)	yes	Shed Bothy Compost toilet	Expand existing activity
2	Cowan Park Bowling Club	2000 m	Barrhead	Disused bowling green	unknown	Water, building, toilets	community growing
3	Hurlet Depot	1 Ha	Barrhead	Derelict	No	none	Social enterprise
4	Neilston Lock ups	100 sq. m	Neilston	Vacant hard standing	yes	none	community growing
5	Gleniffer View Field	0.75 Ha	Neilston	Disused field	Yes	none	Allotments
6	Rouken Glen Walled Garden	0.5ha	Giffnock	Formal garden	yes	Water, toilets	Community growing/training centre
7	Clarkston Health Centre	400 m	Clarkston	Atrium	yes	toilets	Therapeutic
8	Busby Glen	1 Ha	Busby	Green space	yes	none	Orchard
9	Capelrig Open Space	1 ha	Newton Mearns	Green space	no	none	Allotments
10	Arthurlie Family Centre	1300 sq. m	Barrhead	Greenspace	yes	Arc centre	Community growing space

Figure 2: Food Growing Potential Sites

