

Conwy County Borough Council

Environment, Roads & Facilities Allotment Strategy 2019 - 2024

Conwy County Borough Council is committed to increasing the provision of allotments throughout the County to support our communities in this healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.



Foreword

Allotment gardening is very popular in Conwy and our communities are more aware of the benefits that 'A Good Life' type activity can bring to their lives. Allotments are no longer just a hobby or pastime. They contribute to healthier lifestyles providing increased physical activity and social engagement as well as delivering affordable home grown fresh fruit and vegetables, essential for a healthy diet. This provides an enormous sense of wellbeing which positively impacts mental as well as physical health.

The desire to be more environmentally responsible in our communities coupled with the need to adopt more sustainable lifestyles has also contributed to the growth in demand for allotment gardening.

Conwy County Borough Council is committed to increasing the provision of allotments throughout the County to support our communities in this healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.

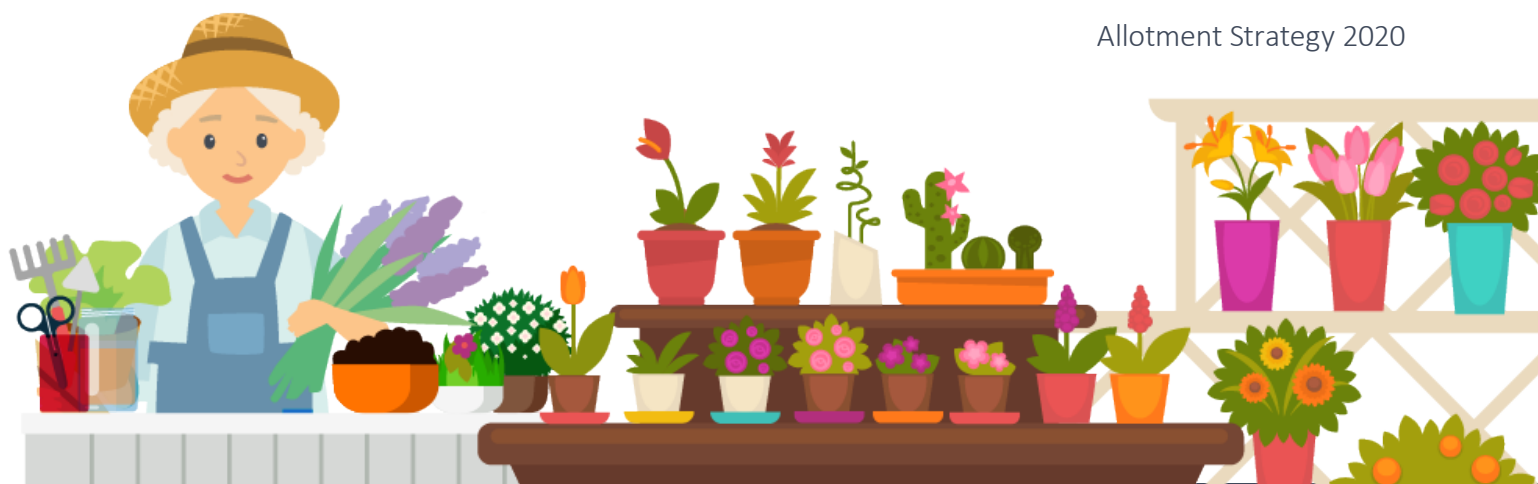
As Cabinet Member for Conwy's Environment, and a resident of Conwy myself, I wholeheartedly support this commitment and I am therefore delighted

to introduce Conwy's revised allotment strategy.

In revising the strategy a consultation exercise with allotment users, the wider community and other key stakeholders has been undertaken. The strategy outlines what Conwy County Borough Council intends to do over the next 5 years to provide the people of Conwy with an allotment service that continues to meet their needs and expectations, and prepares for allotments of the future. The strategy recognises the changes and challenges ahead in delivery of the objectives. This includes the availability of suitable land to meet demand and seeks to find innovative ways to overcome such challenges or to seize opportunities when they present themselves.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the team who have made improvements to the allotments service as a result of the first Allotment Strategy. This revised strategy will continue to develop the allotment service, with the needs and wants of its communities at its centre, and reinvigorate the focus of Conwy's allotments service.

Cllr Greg Robbins
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Transportation



Introduction

Allotments offer our residents the space to grow flowers, fruit and vegetables and the chance to build a community. The wider benefits of allotments are; healthier lifestyles from growing fresh produce and the physical activity of gardening; and increased mental wellbeing through the social aspects of working alongside other tenants, learning new skills and being outdoors.

This strategy links to a number of other strategies:

- Small holdings and Allotments Act 1908, 1925 and 1950;
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;
- Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board Local Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023;
- Local Development Plan
- Conwy County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2017 – 2022;

The Allotment Strategy 2011-2016 outlined the councils approach to the 4 aims of:

1. Ensuring high quality service provision
2. Promoting the allotment service
3. Promoting sustainability
4. Implementing robust management procedures.

The changes implemented through the 2011-16 strategy were delivered with a significant increase in the number of plots available and the addition of 3 new sites. New software to manage the service was implemented alongside the development of management procedures. This strategy follows on from the previous strategy and outlines how the service will be developed over the next 5 years.

Conwy has a total of 13 allotments sites, 12 of which are managed by Conwy County Borough Council and 1 which is managed by an allotments association. There are 413 allotment plots across the sites. Current demand for allotment sites means that research into available land and appropriate locations is on-going. Demand may continue to grow as the profile of the service is raised through delivery of this strategy and as there is a national drive to live more sustainably.

Get in Touch

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Allotment Policy

Our allotment policy was updated in 2019 and details the Council's aims for the allotment service in Conwy and acts as the driver for the outcomes laid out in this strategy. The full Policy can be found on the Council's website. The policy will be reviewed regularly in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date.

Conwy's Vision for the allotments service:

To evolve the allotments service with sustainability at its heart, encouraging community cohesion and healthy lifestyles whilst continuing to meet the demands of our communities.

Outcomes:

The outcomes of this strategy show where Conwy's allotment service will be in 5 years.

Outcome 1: Endeavour to meet the needs and expectations of our allotment holders.

Outcome 2: Improve the engagement and collaboration opportunities of the service to all.

Outcome 3: Encourage sustainable and biodiverse allotments and practices.

Outcome 4: To have self-sufficient allotment associations.



Strategic Links

Small holdings and Allotments Act 1908, 1925 and 1950;

The Act places a duty on local authorities to provide allotments for residents who live within the local authority boundaries. The Act provides local authorities with the power to purchase land for allotment provision.

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015

The Act places a duty on public bodies to deliver services in a sustainable way, working to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by setting and publishing well-being objectives and taking reasonable steps to meet those objectives.

Conwy & Denbighshire Public Service Board Local Well-being Plan 2018-2023

This 5 year plan sets out the local objectives the Public Service Board will take to improve the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being for the local area.

Corporate Plan 2017-2022

This 5 year plan sets out the Council's key priorities to support the needs of the citizens who live in, work in and visit the County Borough of Conwy, contributing to delivering the Conwy & Denbighshire Public Service Board Local Well-being Plan.

Carbon Management Strategy 2019-2024

This 5 year Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to becoming a carbon neutral Authority and details the plans for reducing emissions and the associated negative impact on the natural environment, protecting it for future generations.

Local Development Plan

This is a plan for the development and use of land within the County Borough and will guide the location of new development until 2022.

Annual Service Plans

Each Council Service has a plan to detail the specific actions they will undertake during the year to develop the service and to achieve Corporate Plan priorities.



Outcome 1

Endeavour to meet the needs and expectations of our allotment tenants.

Current demand for allotment sites means that research into available land and appropriate locations is on-going. Demand may continue to grow as the profile of the service is raised through delivery of this strategy. The replacement LDP requires authorities to develop a strategic and long-term approach to the provision of community facilities including monitoring the demand for allotments and identifying land for allotments in areas where demand is highest.

Managing the expectations of our allotment tenants and the expectations put upon them can be achieved through the effective communication between the Council and our tenants. The results of the 2019 allotment survey showed that communication from the Council was considered one of the top 5 most important aspects when it comes to managing our allotments. 80% of respondents agree that an allotment Forum meeting between Council representatives and allotment tenants would be beneficial.

What have we done?

Since the last strategy we have increased the number of allotments plots to 413. We have developed 3 additional sites and expanded others (Old Colwyn and Llanfairfechan) in order to help meet the demand for allotments from our residents.

A consultation survey was run in 2019 aimed at all of our residents. The results of which are detailed throughout this strategy and fully in Appendix 1.

Our allotment Policy has been updated with the revised aims informing the outcomes of this strategy.

What are we going to do?

Continue to investigate land that can be utilised for allotments.

Establish regular allotment forum meetings between allotment tenants and representatives from the Council, including agreeing a terms of reference.

Develop service standards to communicate what our allotment tenants can expect from us and what we can expect from them.

Establish and publicise an allotment inspection programme and associated improvement notices.

Survey our allotment sites so that they can be mapped and plots clearly identified.

How will we measure our progress?

- No of allotment sites fully surveyed and plotted onto a map.
- % increase in the number of allotment plots.
- No of allotment forum meetings held.
- % change in the number of vacant plots
- Publication of allotment service standards

Outcome 2

Improve the engagement and collaboration opportunities of the service to all.

During the 2019 consultation survey 85% of respondents, that don't already have an allotment said that they would be interested in having one. There are a number of groups in Conwy that share our goal of helping our residents to grow their own. Collaboration between us as a council, our allotment tenants and these organisations will help develop opportunities for our residents. We want to encourage open communication with our allotment tenants so that we can provide a space for innovation as we move forward with the allotment service together.

To improve working together it is important that information is shared. Having implemented a new digital allotment management system to streamline the management of allotments, we have an opportunity to share the use of this system. It is also vital to maintain our communications and we will look to not only improve our digital interactions but the use of more basic methods as well, such as the use of the notice boards at each site.

What have we done?

Implemented a new digital allotment management system

Maintained tenant and Council interactions

What are we going to do?

Develop a dedicated allotments web page with clear information for residents and our current allotment tenants.

Encourage collaboration between allotment tenants and the Council to promote innovation.

We will engage with local community growing initiatives to encourage collaboration between them and allotment tenants.

Hold regular allotment forum meetings.

Develop a satisfaction survey to be sent to allotment tenants every year to tell us how satisfied they are with the service.

Provide access to the allotment management system to allow tenant and potential tenant's easy access to the allotment site information.

How will we measure our progress?

- Publication of updated web pages for the allotment service
- Media interest in initiatives around collaborative projects
- No of allotment forum meetings held around the county
- % satisfaction achieved from the results of the annual satisfaction survey



Outcome 3

Encourage sustainable and biodiverse allotments and practices.

In May 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency. This means that we are committed to taking action on climate change and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Allotments have a positive impact on the environment through the growing of fruit and vegetables and are therefore important to our mission to become carbon net-zero by 2030.

Allotment gardening also contributes towards social wellbeing providing opportunities to meet people with similar interests, develop and learn new skills and encouraging a healthy lifestyle in the outdoors.

During the consultation survey held in 2019 the reasons the majority of respondents stated they have an allotment or would like an allotment were to produce home grown food, to be outdoors in the fresh air and to enjoy the process and sense of achievement of growing your own.

It is also important to recognise that practices change over time and that new and innovative ways of creating biodiverse and ecologically sustainable sites will enhance what we have.

What have we done?

Provided raised beds at our Tan Y Bryn and Towyn allotment sites. Some of the raised beds have been rented by local charities some of whom support disadvantaged people.

We hold a Green Flag for our Tan Y Bryn allotment site and work hard to maintain it year on year.

To complement the traditional allotment plots we have created community growing spaces which are to be completed in 2020.

What are we going to do?

Promote the benefits of allotment gardening both on the environment and on social well-being.

Create social inclusion opportunities at our allotment sites, including during the planning stages of any new allotments.

Update our allotment tenant's tenancy agreements in order to implement a no pesticide or herbicide rule to encourage biodiversity and ecological sustainability at our allotments.

Encourage sustainable methods of allotment gardening such as rainwater harvesting, companion planting and predator/prey relationships.

Develop biodiversity areas within our allotments sites that encourage pollinators.

Maintain our current Green Flag at Tan Y Bryn allotments and work towards obtaining more Green Flags for our allotments.

Develop a satisfaction survey to be sent to allotment tenants every year to tell us how satisfied they are with the service.

How will we measure our progress?

- No of plots made available to tenants with a disability
- No of plots utilised by charities
- % of allotment holders that have received an updated tenancy agreement
- No of biodiversity areas established at our allotment sites
- Media published projects around allotment innovation and the environment
- No of Green Flag allotment sites

Outcome 4

Self-sufficient allotment associations

Self-sufficient allotment associations will enable tenants to work together to manage their allotment sites. The results of the 2019 survey showed that many of our tenants are experienced allotment gardeners with 73% of them having rented an allotment plot for more than 2 years.

The benefits to this includes the opportunity for allotment associations to access grant funding that may not be available to the Council. Self-governance will allow for a great level of independence, reducing bureaucracy whilst encouraging innovation at allotments. Allotment associations tend to be a community within a community and can readily influence the wider community through local knowledge and interest, thereby improving the benefits of having a local allotment.

Self-sufficient allotment associations can ensure that their allotment site is managed in a way which suits the particular site and the wider community. Independence means that they can set their own fees, charges and rules, providing they comply with the legislation, rather than have them imposed by the Council allowing for greater flexibility.

What have we done?

All allotment tenants have been provided with a tenancy agreement that provides clear guidance on what they are required to do to manage their allotment plot appropriately in accordance with Council requirements.

Discussions have taken place with some allotment sites to set up allotment associations and information has been shared but to date we still have only 1 self-sufficient allotment association which is at Llandudno.



What are we going to do?

Create management documentation templates needed for the development of self-sufficient allotment associations to help with the transition to self-sufficient allotment associations.

Develop guidance and assistance on the management of allotment plots for use by allotment associations.

Provide guidance on grant opportunities available to allotment associations/tenants.

Communicate the guidance produced to allotment tenants at the allotment forums and explain the benefits of self-managing allotment sites.

Produce contracts between the Council and the allotment association outlining what can be expected from each party.

How will we measure our progress?

- No of independent allotment associations established
- No of grant funding applications submitted by or on behalf of allotment tenants

Appendix 1

Allotment Consultation 2019

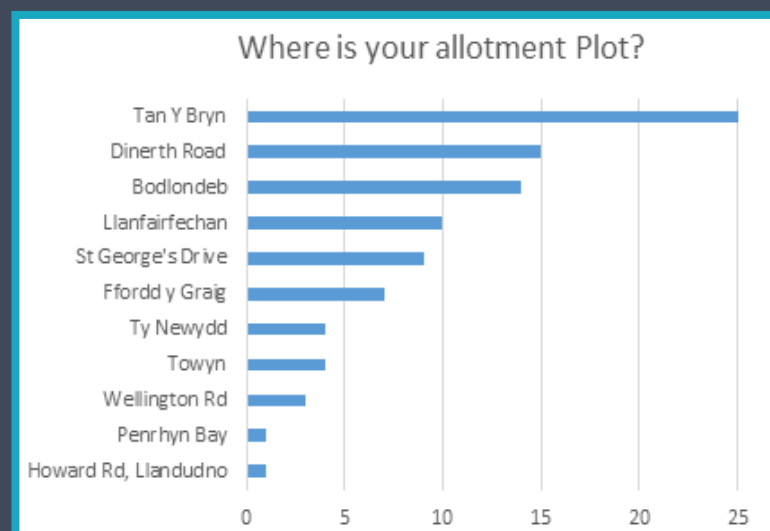
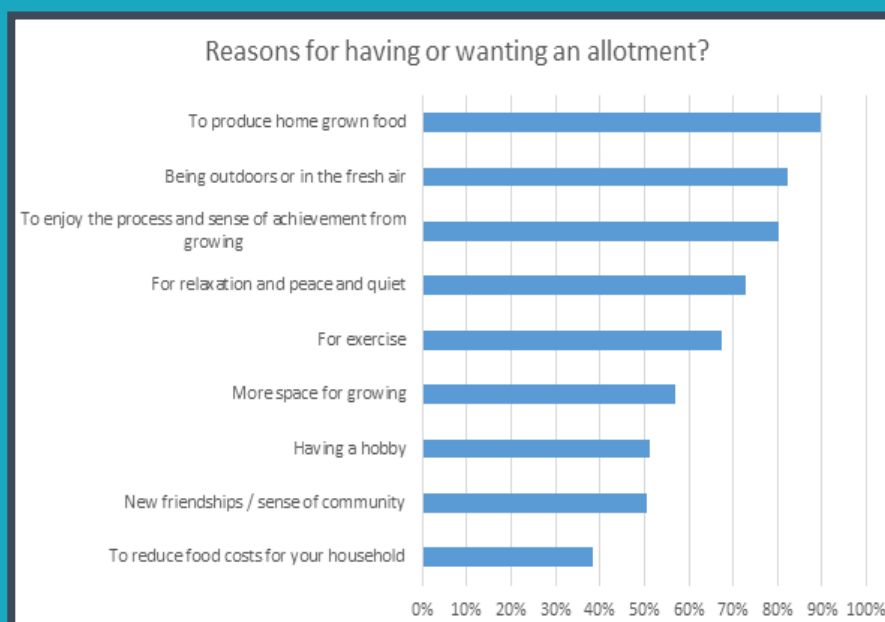
An allotment survey was sent to all allotment tenants and put on the council's website to be completed by anyone with an interest in the service.

A total of 107 people responded to the survey with 93 of them being allotment tenants.

Of the 14 people that said that they didn't have an allotment plot 85% said that an allotment plot would interest them.

Why would you like to have an allotment? Or if you already have an allotment, why do you want it?

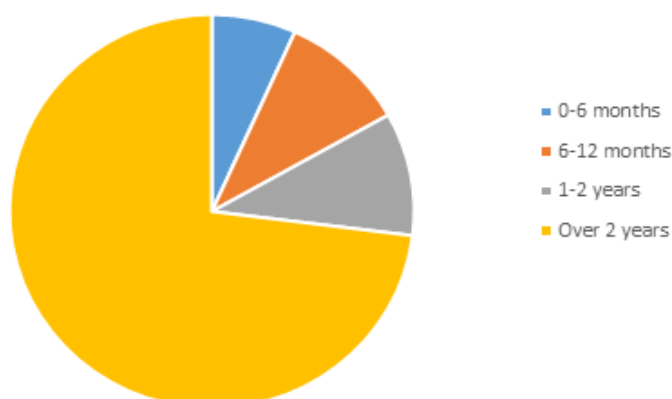
The respondents were asked why they would like to have an allotment or why they enjoy having one if they are already a tenant. To grow home grown food was the reason chosen by the majority of respondents with 90% as shown in the graph below, this was closely followed by being outdoors in the fresh air and enjoying the process and sense of achievement from growing both with 82% of respondents.



Where is your allotment plot?

The majority of allotment tenants who responded to the consultation came from Tan-Y-Bryn allotments in Rhos-on-Sea, as shown in this graph.

How long have you had an allotment?



How long have you had an allotment?

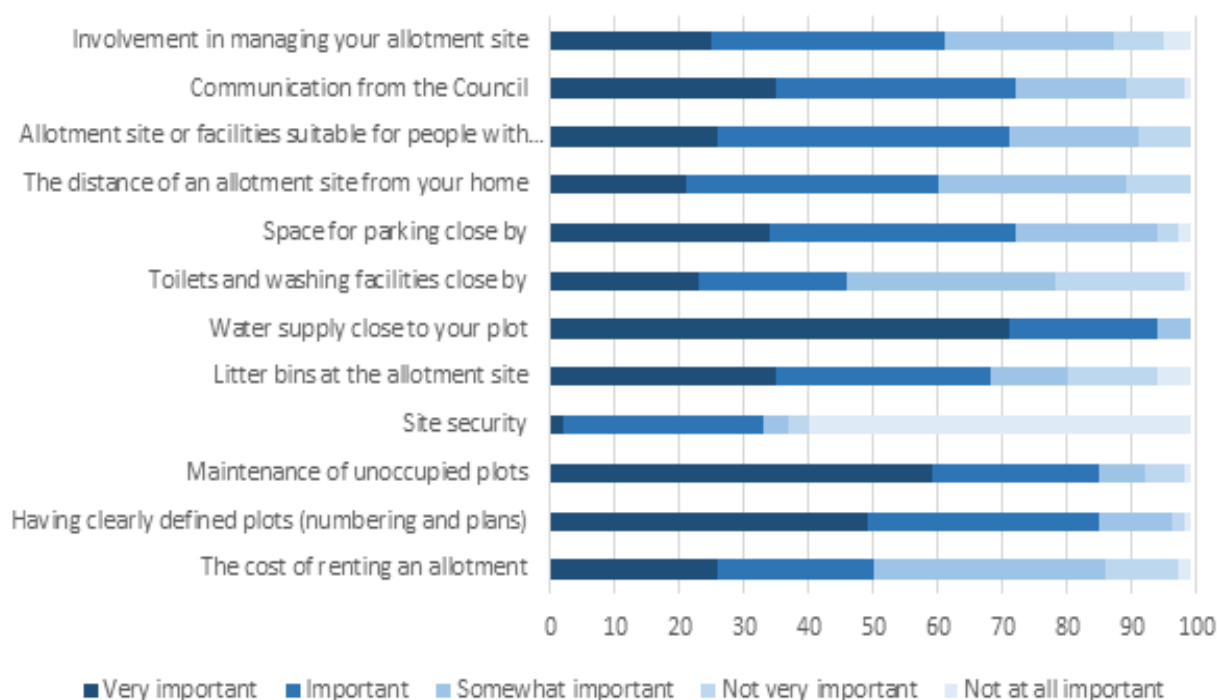
The majority of our tenants that responded to the consultation have had their allotment plot for more than 2 years as shown in this chart.

How important do you think each of these is at an allotment site?

Respondents were asked to rate how important they felt 12 different aspects were to an allotment, shown in the graph below. The aspects rated as most important by respondents were water supplies close to plots, maintenance of unoccupied plots and having clearly defined plots.

The aspects selected by respondents as being less important were site security, toilets and washing facilities close by and the cost of renting an allotment.

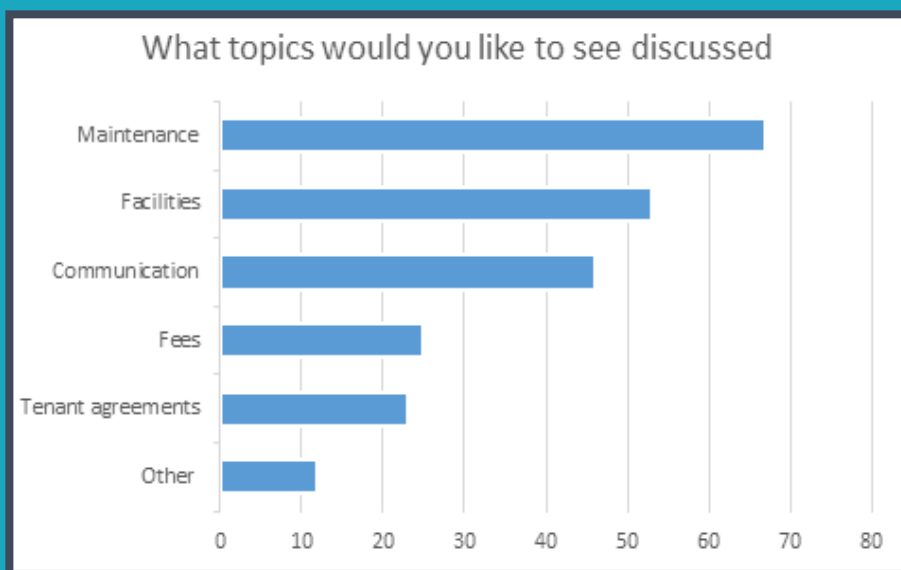
How important are the following



What topics would you like to see discussed at allotment forum meetings?

Respondents were asked if they felt it would be beneficial to hold regular allotment forum meetings and 80% of respondents agreed.

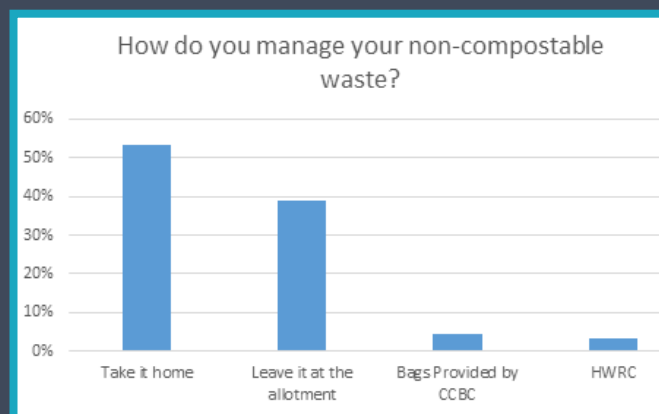
When asked what topics tenants would like to see discussed at allotment forum meetings the majority said maintenance chosen by 30% of respondents. 23% said they would like to see facilities discussed and 20% said communication between tenants and the council. This is shown in this graph.



Do you compost waste from your plot?

We asked respondents to tell us how they deal with the waste that they produce at the allotments. The majority of respondents stated that they composted their green waste at 84% of these 96% said that they compost the waste at their allotment.

When asked about non-compostable waste 52% stated they take this waste home with them and 38% said that they leave it at the allotment, as shown in this graph:



How do you normally travel to your allotment?

This chart shows the methods of transport used by the allotment holders that responded to the survey. The majority, 60% use their motor vehicle. 28% of respondents stated that they travel on foot to their allotment, 9% by bike and 3% by bus.

