

DUNBLANE ALLOTMENT GROUP

Dunblane Allotment Group (DAG) was formed in 2004 with the aim of re-opening the derelict allotment site at the Laighhills, which had fallen into disuse in the early 1980s. The next nearest sites are at Bridge of Allan and Stirling with long waiting lists. This has been a major development for the Dunblane community, providing a significant new amenity for the town in line with the current environmental agenda.

The 60,000 square metre site houses 53 plots of varying sizes. Work by 3 volunteers began in November 2004 and has progressed from there to a constituted organisation run by volunteers. The Management Committee meets monthly with open meetings held four times per year. Volunteers also work regularly to maintain the site and work parties are organised at intervals throughout the year to tidy up. There is a current waiting list of 17 people.

The aims of the DAG are as follows to:

- Provide a sustainable approach to allotment gardening
- Adopt organic methods of cultivation – the only allotment group in Scotland to do this
- Operate within a community development framework which is inclusive and encourages wide participation from the local community of people of all backgrounds and ages
- Encourage biodiversity within the site
- Educate the community about sustainability, biodiversity, organic cultivation

The practical achievement of the DAG have been to:

- Reclaim the site using both volunteers and professional help, cutting down and removing trees, vegetation (including giant hogweed) and rubbish
- Obtain grants from Stirling Council (£15,500) and Awards for All (£5,000) to develop the project
- Design and prepare the new site to include biodiversity features, a defensive hedge, a pond, wildflower area, bird, hedgehog and insect boxes
- Put in paths, water supply and security fencing to protect the site from both vandalism and rabbits/deer
- Organise and run a site of 53 allotments to produce locally grown vegetables and fruit
- Work with Dunblane Gardening Club to initiate and run the annual Dunblane Potato Day, the most northerly of its kind in Scotland

The work of the DAG is benefiting the community in a variety of ways, including:

- learning about organic cultivation methods
- learning about biodiversity
- learning about sustainable food production
- healthy exercise and healthy eating
- increased social contact and group membership learning how to participate and run community groups and the allotment site itself