



DIG IN

COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING STRATEGY 2019-2024

CREATING SPACE
TO GROW

Executive Summary

Community growing is for everyone so Falkirk Council wants to make sure that anyone wishing to grow their own fruit or vegetables can access a range of opportunities to do just that.

This strategy explains how Falkirk Council, partner organisations, business and communities can work together to support community growing across the Council area. It identifies land that could be used for allotments or more informal community growing, explains the permissions groups must get and how they can go about obtaining these, how barriers can be overcome to get projects off the ground and the types of support available to both aspiring and experienced community growers.

The strategy will be supported by a series of Action Plans for the main types of community growing. These will detail how the Council and its partners can help groups set up and develop their projects, highlight resources required to make this happen and explain how progress against actions will be monitored and reviewed.



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Community growing is for everyone, so anyone interested in growing their own fruit and vegetables should be able to do just that.

Growing should be accessible, affordable and allow our communities to use their urban spaces creatively - providing places where they can meet and grow together, where they can produce healthy food locally, and where they can share ideas for making better places, places for people.

Our vision for community growing in the Falkirk Council area is that people wishing to grow their own fruit and vegetables can access a range of community growing opportunities in their area.

1. Achieving our vision

Falkirk Council has spoken with communities, organisations and groups already involved in community food growing initiatives to help us develop this strategy.

This strategy explains how we intend to support current community growing provision, develop more sites for community use and support new approaches to growing. We are working closely with organisations including greenspace scotland, Forth Environment Link and Central Scotland Green Network Trust who are helping support this process.

This strategy shows you how to get growing. It identifies key organisations that can help you and your group and will guide you through the processes involved. The Strategy shows our aspirations for community growing and how we intend to meet our obligations under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

This strategy aims to help you get your community growing projects off the ground:

Where Can I Grow?

We will identify potential allotment sites and community growing spaces;

With partners, we will create opportunities for people to grow. For example by:

- Encouraging developers to include space for community gardens and food growing within new development;
- Changing the way our parks and open spaces are managed to provide community growing spaces for interested groups; and
- Offering community growing opportunities as part of open space and public realm improvements.

How Do I Start Growing?

We will explain clearly the permissions required for your group to begin using a space for growing, and how you can go about getting all the necessary consents.

We will work with partners to deliver a programme of skills workshops and training to help you get your project(s) off the ground.

Who Can Help?

We will provide advice and details of the different types of support available to you and your group from local organisations and other community growing groups.

What you said:

In preparing this strategy we consulted members of the public interested in community growing. Survey responses and ongoing conversations with aspiring growers highlight a need for more support to help communities and individuals participate in food growing. There is also strong support for developing a network of community food growing groups across the Falkirk Council area, and a need for:

Better access to land for community groups and individuals seeking places to grow, for example allotments, community gardens or garden share schemes. Groups need assistance with:

- Finding land they can use for growing;
- Identifying issues such as contamination; and
- Negotiating lease agreements with land owners (both private and local authority).

Better access to support organisations that can help groups, schools and community growing projects develop their project ideas into reality, as well as ongoing support. Participants want to know who to speak to within Falkirk Council, assistance with finding funding, sponsorship from the business sector, support with group governance issues as well as more general technical growing advice.

A programme of regular learning events would give new growers confidence that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables. For example many people have asked for workshops focusing on how to grow your own food, how to grow food indoors, how to cook from scratch, seed production and soil testing.

A programme of events for networking and sharing to bring people together within and around specific community projects would be helpful to new groups. Respondents also expressed a strong desire for bringing community projects from across the Falkirk Council area together to share information and experiences.

Improved communications: Respondents also highlighted a need for a network that brings people together, keeps people updated and informed, and can signpost requests for help to the relevant support agency. An online forum and a one stop shop were also suggested.

“bring
people
together
within and
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projects”

2. Community Growing Opportunities

There are several ways that individuals, schools and communities can grow their own fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers. This strategy focuses on the most common ways of doing this and, once adopted, will be followed by an Action Plan for each of these community growing options:

2.1 Allotments are defined in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 as land:

- (a) owned or leased by a local authority,
- (b) leased or intended for lease by a person from the authority, and
- (c) used or intended for use—
 - (i) wholly or mainly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers, and
 - (ii) otherwise than with a view to making a profit.

A full-size plot is 250m².

Falkirk Allotment Society manages 36 allotment plots at Bantaskin Estate and a further 8 plots at Callander Park Walled Garden www.falkirkallotmentsociety.org/

There is space for 34 community growing plots at Muiravonside Country Park. These are run by Muiravonside Community Growing Association.

2.2 Orchards are areas where there are a minimum of 5 fruit trees.

Through Forth Environment Link's Forth Valley Orchard project a number of orchards have been developed over the last 10 years across the Falkirk Council area. These include orchards at Kinneil Estate, Zetland Park and within the grounds of many of our schools.

2.3 Community gardening and food growing in public spaces

This is about using space within parks and open spaces for growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and edible flowers.

Within the Falkirk Council area, there are great examples of this at:

- Falkirk High Street pocket allotments
- Dollar Park Walled Garden
Wallace St, Falkirk
- Kersiebank Community Project, Grangemouth

2.4 Schools

There is plenty opportunity to continue developing and maintaining orchards and food growing areas within school grounds as an integral part of delivering the Curriculum for Excellence, outdoor learning, learning for sustainability and School Improvement Plans. There are lots of examples of this in the Falkirk Council area, with active community growing projects in many of our Primary Schools and High Schools, including:

- Bantaskine Primary School
- Dunipace Primary School
- St Mary's Primary School, Bo'ness
- Braes High School
- Falkirk High School
- Larbert High School

2.5 NHS Forth Valley sites

There are opportunities to change the way NHS Forth Valley land is managed to increase the amount of land within its estate that is used for community and therapeutic food growing.

2.6 Social Enterprise and Business

There are a number of ways that community growing projects can be developed through social enterprise. For example market gardening, community farming, creating a local seed bank, etc.

One local example is Sustainable Thinking Scotland Community Interest Company's project within Kinneil Walled Garden, Bo'ness.

There are also significant opportunities for engaging the area's business community and clear advantages to better connecting local growers, producers, suppliers and the food and hospitality sector.



3. Where can I grow?

Through consultation for this strategy, you said you would like help finding suitable space for growing fruit and vegetables (and flowers). You also told us where you would like to grow and what support you need to get started.

If your group wants to grow fruit and vegetables and you have a space in mind, there are lots of organisations in this area that can assist you in getting your project up and running (p.13-20).

We will help by:

Identifying potential community growing sites:

The maps at Appendix 1 show:

- Existing allotment sites and community growing spaces; and
- Places which could be developed for community growing and allotments in the future.
- There are a number of school and community spaces needing more help to look after their orchards and gardens. The priority for our support will be to match people wanting to grow with these sites before creating new growing spaces.

You may have other ideas for places where you would like to grow, and you may wish to consider leasing land from farmers or exploring a garden share model. We don't intend to be too prescriptive and have included the maps to highlight the sorts of places you might want to think about using.

Who else can help?

With assistance from Green Action Trust (GAT), the Grow Your Own Working Group maintains online resources and a database of community growing sites. CSGNT can provide advice and support on funding and project development.

Private landowners may provide space for your growing and/or allotment project.

There are under-used polytunnels at The Conservation Volunteers area within Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre in Grangemouth. These offer potential space for community growing.



4. How will we increase space for community growing and allotments?

The Council must establish and maintain a list of people requesting an allotment plot. We need to take reasonable steps to make sure that the number of people on the waiting list for an allotment is no more than half the number of Council allotments available. We are also expected to make sure that no-one is on the list for more than 5 years. We will do this by helping groups find spaces for community growing and by continuing to look at places where we can develop additional allotments.

There are 632 parks and open spaces across the Council area managed by Falkirk Council, as well as organisations like Falkirk Community Trust, the Forestry Commission and NHS Forth Valley. Some of this open space could be used for community growing or as allotment sites.

We have carried out a site audit to help us identify potential new allotment sites and areas for community growing. The maps and site schedules at Appendix 1 show where these sites are.

4.1 Developing new allotment sites

Each new allotment site in the Falkirk Council area will be run by a community management group. This group will be responsible for agreeing lease arrangements with the relevant landowner and managing the site according to an agreed set of rules. Details of people on the waiting list for an allotment plot must be shared with Falkirk Council to enable us to meet the requirements set out in the Community Empowerment Act for managing waiting lists and providing sufficient space for allotments.

Help is available through CVS Falkirk as well as other partner organisations including Falkirk Council, Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS), Social Farms & Gardens (formerly the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens) and Forth Environment Link in negotiating with landowners, and in setting up groups.

Falkirk Council and partners such as CSGNT can assist groups with securing funding to help design new allotment sites and develop infrastructure for them, such as fencing, paths and raised planting beds. Guidance on new allotment sites, design guides and plot holders guides are available on the Grow Your Own Working Group website (<http://www.growyourownsotland.info/support>).

4.2 Creating new spaces for community growing

Community growing groups will need to get landowner permission before they can begin cultivating the land. As with allotment development, there is help available for setting up groups and assisting in landowner negotiation.

4.3 Engaging and supporting community growing groups

Pages 13 - 20 detail the range of support available to new and established community growers.

Pages 10 - 12 explain the processes involved in obtaining the necessary planning consents and landowner permission.



5. How do I start growing?

This section of the strategy explains the permissions required for you and your group to begin using a space for growing.

5.1 Setting up your group

CVS Falkirk is a good starting point for working out the intricacies of setting up and running your community growing group. This organisation offers assistance and support services, advisors and training programmes to guide you through starting up and growing your group.

CVS Falkirk can also help you develop your funding applications through one-to-one sessions and can help you identify different sources of funding. Contact info@cvsfalkirk.org.uk for more details.

5.2 Dealing with planning requirements

This section of the strategy aims to give your community growing group a few useful pointers with regard to planning consent. However, there is no substitute for speaking directly with the Council's Development Management Planning Officers for advice: dc@falkirk.gov.uk or 01324 504748.

It is always best to have early discussions with the Development Management planners who will explain what information they need from you to help you get your consent and get your project moving forward.

If you are looking to change the use of the land, for example by changing an area of public open space into an enclosed allotment site, you will need to submit a planning application seeking consent to do this.

You will also need planning permission for new structures, like sheds, and possibly raised planting beds. We would prefer that this be done for the site as a whole as part of the Allotment Management Group's planning application for "change of use", rather than being done on an individual basis each time a plot holder wishes to put up a tool shed.

If there are any designations on the land that might be impacted by your allotment site, the Council will advise you about what you can and can't do. Designations to look out for include:

- The Antonine Wall World Heritage Site and its buffer zone
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings
- Designed Landscapes and Historic Gardens
- Special Landscape Areas
- Battlefield Sites
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Landscape Areas, Special Areas for Conservation, Wildlife Sites and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Value

Designations can be seen on the relevant proposals map of the Falkirk Local Development Plan

Planning consent will be required for:

- Change of use of land, for example from open space to allotment;
- Any works within a Conservation Area; and
 - Structures on site, including;
 - Outbuildings and sheds on each individual plot;
 - Communal buildings;
 - Fencing; and
 - Parking facilities.

5.3 Advice about land issues, participation and leases:

To begin growing you will need to liaise with the landowner:

- Falkirk Council has details of land in its ownership.
- If the site belongs to Falkirk Council, there is a process you need to follow to agree how you intend to use the growing space (p.12).

When you have found your potential community growing space, you should liaise with the contaminated land specialists within Falkirk Council's Environment Health Unit:

- Ask for any relevant environmental information held about the proposed site (an Environmental Information Request). Please note that there may be a charge for this.
- A risk assessment will also be required and it is likely that soil sampling will be necessary. This work should be undertaken by a competent expert. Liaise with the contaminated land team throughout this process.

Contact Falkirk Council's Community Planning team for assistance with Participation Requests under Part 3 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Falkirk Council's Asset Management team will be involved in agreeing lease arrangements for Council-owned land and can offer assistance with Asset Transfer Requests under Part 7 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

Who else can help?

Community Land Advisory Service (CLAS) can provide help finding land and agreeing lease arrangements with the landowner

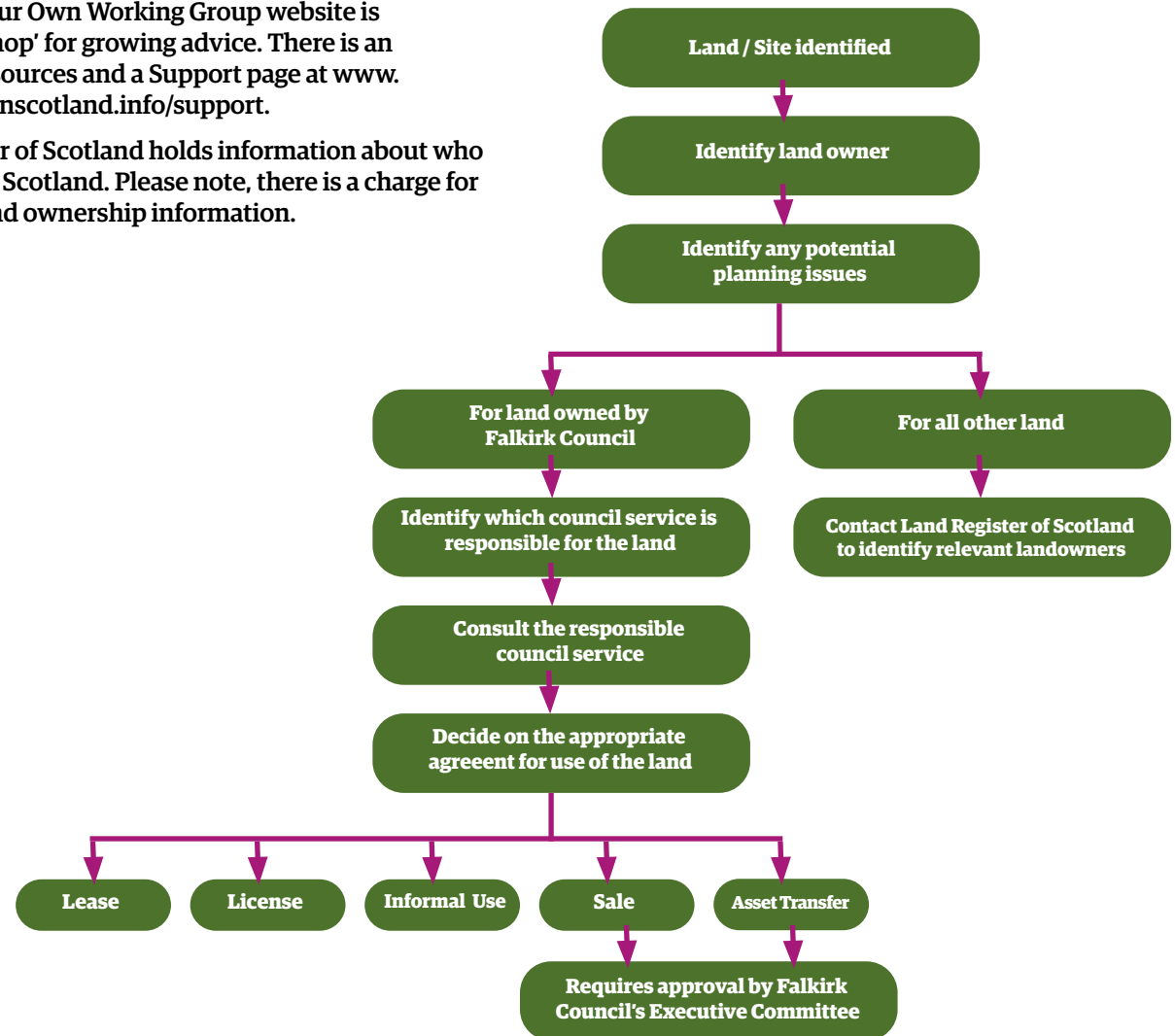
CLAS and Social Farms and Gardens have produced a landowner guide available from <https://sc.communitylandadvice.org.uk>

Falkirk Community Trust can assist with developing community growing at Helix Park, Callendar Park, Kinneil Estate and Muiravonside Country Park.

The Grow Your Own Working Group website is a 'one stop shop' for growing advice. There is an Advice & Resources and a Support page at www.growyourownsotland.info/support.

Land Register of Scotland holds information about who owns land in Scotland. Please note, there is a charge for obtaining land ownership information.

Dealing with Land Issues





6. Who can help me get growing?

This section of the strategy sets out the different types of support available to you and your group from local organisations and other community growing groups:

6.1 Skills training, workshops and advice

You said you would like to improve your skills, confidence, knowledge and understanding of fruit and vegetable growing.

We will help by working with partners to develop a programme of skills workshops and training to help you get your project off the ground.

More information on funding sources:

- The Conservation Volunteers
- GAT
- CVS Falkirk
- Social Farms & Gardens
- Grow Your Own Working Group (<http://www.growyourownsotland.info/support/>)

Assistance and advice on completing funding applications

- GAT
- CVS Falkirk
- Falkirk Environment Trust

Support and training:

A programme of “How to” workshops, for example composting, preserving, cooking, wildflowers and pollination and companion planting can be delivered through:

- Falkirk Allotment Society
- Forth Environment Link
- Social Farms & Gardens
- Sustainable Thinking Scotland CIC
- The Conservation Volunteers
- Buglife

Training and support to identify trees and plan, plant and maintain orchards is available from Forth Environmental Link.

6.2 You said growing should be affordable and accessible to all

We will help by:

Working with Neighbourhood Officers and Social Landlord Officers to support community growing groups using open space that is owned by Falkirk Council Housing or Social Landlords, such as Link Housing:

- Support groups in obtaining necessary landowner and planning consents;
- Support groups in submitting grant applications for their community growing project(s). For example, there are small grants available for projects that deliver improvements for Falkirk Council housing tenants (“Make a difference” grants); and
- Work with partners to deliver training workshops and networking opportunities to give groups the skills and confidence in growing fruit and vegetables.

Creating opportunities for groups to share resources to make growing affordable to more people. With our partners, we will:

- Explore the feasibility of creating a Seed Bank Social Enterprise to grow seeds and seedlings for use locally;
- Arrange a 'swap shop' event at the start of the season where groups can exchange seeds, plants and skills;
- Organise a 'sharing' event hosted by different partner organisations bringing growers together to share plants and seeds;
- Connect with organisations and businesses that can help community projects as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility commitments;
- Develop a Tool Library so groups have easy access to borrow tools, including more expensive items like good pruning tools;
- Share up-cycling and recycling opportunities, for example by connecting community growing groups with wood recycling projects; and
- Liaise with the Council's Unpaid Work team (Community Justice Service) who may be able to provide help with clearing your plot and preparing the ground for planting.

Sharing information about potential funding sources and working together to maximise opportunities for all community growing groups in the Falkirk Council area. We will:

- Explore opportunities for securing sponsorship and in-kind support from local garden centres and businesses;
- Develop partnerships to match groups needing money with organisations that can help them develop successful funding applications

Who else can help?

Business sponsorship and Corporate Social Responsibility volunteer days:

- Seek opportunities for groups to use "end of season" stock and donated materials
- Many businesses provide Corporate Social Responsibility volunteering opportunities for their staff. Business volunteers could help you create and plant your growing space.
- Assistance may be available in developing your groups Risk Register through the Institute of Internal Audits UK - Risk Auditors
- Corporate Social Responsibility volunteering commitments

GAT

Providing project development, design and delivery support, funding advice, capacity building and group support.

CVS Falkirk

Funding sources and assistance with funding bids
Capacity building for local groups and organisations

Falkirk Allotment Society

Advice on growing for new and experienced growers
Advice on running a successful allotment association
Hosting a seed / plant swap event

Falkirk Delivers

Assistance contacting town centre businesses for support (e.g. to help projects seeking volunteers, donations and end of season stock)

Street Ambassadors - monitor and report issues with Pocket Allotments, support and assistance in dealing with littering in and around Pocket Allotments

Town Centre Handyman - assistance with additional watering, litter uplift, sign installation and minor maintenance tasks

Forth Environment Link

Revive Falkirk - recycling and up-cycling circular economy project

Workshops, training and advice group community growing project

Link Housing

Support for community growing projects with Link Housing tenants, including funding

Social Farms and Gardens

Discounts for members on insurance, tools, seeds, sheds, etc.

Sustainable Thinking Scotland

Workshops, advice and support for food growing projects

Hosting a seed / plant swap event

Develop ideas for a Seed Bank Social Enterprise - with suitable partners

The Conservation Volunteers

Circulate funding sources newsletter

Men's and Hen's Shed projects - food growing and wood recycling at Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre, Grangemouth. This project can provide resources for building raised beds / planters and rustic furniture

6.3 You said you wanted help encouraging more people to get involved with your community growing projects.

We will help by:

Working with CVS Falkirk and other partners to promote projects to existing groups and potential volunteers;

Developing a range of workshops and idea-sharing opportunities to inspire groups to develop their projects; these will be open to individuals and groups:

- Deliver fun, interactive awareness-raising activities to encourage more interest and involvement in community growing projects, for example apple press equipment available locally, smoothies bikes

Creating opportunities for community growing groups to meet, socialise and share ideas:

- Develop a community growers network to encourage growers to exchange ideas and develop new ways of growing together
- Organise social events to bring community growing groups together (e.g. "Bring and Share" food events)
- Encourage existing groups to work together

Encouraging participation from people from as wide a range of backgrounds and interests as possible; we will:

- Broaden the appeal and scope of the project by encouraging:
 - Intergenerational projects and links
 - Projects that make use of the produce grown, for example wine-making and brewing, juicing, cooking and baking
 - Projects that match people with potential sites or landowners keen to explore community poultry keeping and/or bee-keeping as well as fruit and vegetable production

Who else can help?

Falkirk Delivers

- Deliver a range of high profile events in Falkirk Town Centre - this provides a number of opportunities to promote your community growing project and encourage more people to get involved.

Forth Environment Link

- Help with organising Community Meals and other social activities for the network of community growers across the Forth Valley
- Link like-minded groups together to help share ideas and resources
- Workshops, skills training and advice to new and experienced growers

Keep Scotland Beautiful

- Publication of new Creative Inquiry films to help groups plan and get started on food growing

Social Farms & Gardens

- Exchange scheme for community growing groups to visit other projects to share ideas and learn from each other
- Resources and staff with expertise to support community-led growing projects

The Conservation Volunteers

- Workshops and training sessions for volunteers
- Men's and Hen's Shed projects

6.4 You said community growing projects within schools need more support, particularly where the grounds do not belong to the school or to Falkirk Council.

We will help by:

Developing positive relationships between schools, Falkirk Council Education department and land owners to encourage sustainable and creative use of school grounds. This will help schools deliver opportunities for community growing, outdoor learning and learning for sustainability for their pupils.

Encouraging schools to actively involve members of their local communities in their orchard and community growing projects will help address issues with looking after produce during weekends and holidays. We will offer additional support and training to schools that:

- Involve local volunteers in creating and looking after their community garden or orchard;
- Work in partnership with other community groups; and
- Explain how their garden will be cared for outwith school hours and term times, for example by developing a summer growing club.

Connecting schools together and promoting the types of support available for schools and within schools

- Arrange specific community growing session(s) for schools / clusters;
- Encourage schools to get a range of departments involved, for example home economics to help schools use the produce grown in their gardens; and
- Encourage schools to link their project with their School Improvement Plan, Eco Schools activities or John Muir Award scheme.

Working with schools interested in exploring the possibility of using the Pupil Attainment Fund to develop and fund community growing projects within schools.

- This could provide additional support to those schools that have evidenced their commitment to, and would benefit most from delivering community growing and orchard projects.

Who else can help?

Bantaskine Primary School, Falkirk

- Share experience of delivering RHS Level 2 Award

Forth Environment Link

- Workshops, training and advice for school food growing projects

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

- Parent / Carer growing and cooking project

Sustainable Thinking Scotland

- “Grownness” educational programme for community growers in Bo’ness

Keep Scotland Beautiful

- Professional learning programmes and projects for educators on Food and the Environment
- Eco-Schools activity
- Sustainable development of school grounds including growing food

Publication of new Creative Inquiry films to help groups plan and get started on food growing

- Case study of supported partnering between secondary schools and local garden and chef

The Conservation Volunteers

- Workshops and training sessions for schools
- Volunteers to help create garden areas

Unpaid Work Team - Community Justice Service

- Help clearing your growing area and preparing the ground for planting.

6.5 You said we should promote the health and well-being benefits of community growing

We will help by:

Developing links with FDAMH - Falkirk’s Mental Health Association, NHS Forth Valley and other support organisations and groups to encourage community growing as one of a range of opportunities available to people suffering from poor mental or physical health

Creating more social events around food and growing. We will:

- Develop and promote a programme of community meals and pop-up restaurants to encourage more informal networking between groups and other projects

Who else can help?

FDAMH

- Support, activities, health & well-being drop-in sessions and Falkirk High Street Gardening group

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

- Kitchen garden development offers volunteering opportunities in planning, planting, growing and cooking fruit and vegetables

Falkirk Veterans

- Volunteer opportunities at Callander Park Walled Garden

NHS Forth Valley

- Professional support services
- Identifying space in NHS-owned sites for community growing

6.6 You said we should recognise and celebrate community growing as a key component of good place-making

We will help by:

Exploring the idea of an award recognising exemplar community growing projects in the Falkirk Council area; we will do this by:

- Finding out what exists currently;
- Developing an award scheme with appropriate partners if there is nothing suitable already available.
- Exploring opportunities for developing a community growing category in the Council's annual Gardening Competition.

Who else can help?

Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Falkirk

- Developing skills accredited course

Keep Scotland Beautiful

- Pocket Garden Design Competition
- National recognition, networking opportunities and support:
- Beautiful Scotland campaign
- Its Your Neighbourhood

6.7 You said we should minimise waste, including reducing food waste

We will help by:

Making sure excess food produce is made available to the community. We will:

- Develop links with food banks so excess produce is not wasted
- Develop a mechanism for making excess produce available for people to take and use
- Tell people which Pocket Allotment produce they can harvest

Exploring opportunities for groups to generate a reliable income that helps them manage their community growing projects over the long term. We will:

- Investigate ways for groups to sell food, for example soup bags using produce grown in community growing plots
- Develop a partnership approach to fundraising as well as community growing

Developing better links with local organisations (including businesses, shops and supermarkets) to reduce business waste management costs by donating excess plants, compost or other resources to local community growing projects

Developing a network for sharing and re-using materials

- Develop partnerships between community growing groups and locally run up-cycling/recycling projects
- Develop an online network for builders to pass on surplus materials to groups, e.g. wood for building planters

Who else can help?

Forth Environment Link

- FEL Revive project includes up-cycling and recycling workshops and activities as well as food waste and cooking sessions

Sustainable Thinking Scotland

- Links with Food Banks and action against food poverty

The Conservation Volunteers

- Men's and Hen's Shed projects at Jupiter Urban Wildlife Centre, Grangemouth

The Larder

- Non-referral based project providing food to those in need

6.8 You said we should encourage more biodiversity to help with pollination for better growing:

We will help by:

Developing a "Buzz in Falkirk" project with partners to encourage pollination through wildflowers and / or a bee adoption project; we will:

- Arrange workshops to help people understand effective ways to encourage pollinators
- Develop partnerships between groups, conservation charities (e.g. Buglife, Froglife, Butterfly Conservation Trust), bee-keeping societies and businesses to find suitable sites for bee keeping
- Provide assistance and advice in developing pollinator projects as part of delivering Local Biodiversity Action Plan priorities

Who else can help?

Buglife

- Volunteer opportunities and training activities to encourage pollinators

HeBees Community Beekeepers

- Trained volunteers promoting bee-keeping and helping all bees within the Forth Valley area

Scottish Beekeepers Association

- Advice on bee keeping

Scottish Natural Heritage

- Funding and advice



7. How do I find out about community growing in my area?

We will make it as easy as possible for you to find out about community growing in your area.

Our Community Growing Marketing and Communication Plan will:

- Highlight our key messages for different audiences - these include members of the public, schools and businesses new to growing as well as existing community growers, allotment groups and organisations who can help new growers gain the confidence to run their own successful growing projects.
- Explain how we intend to communicate with these groups and individuals. We will use a variety of methods to reach as many people as possible, including
- Information stands and displays;
- Short videos to promote the benefits of community growing;
- Bringing people together at events, community meals, workshops and training sessions to talk about community growing; and
- Social media channels including our Falkirk Explored Facebook page.

We will continue to promote the different community growing and volunteering opportunities available to groups and individuals and share information about where people are already growing, the types of support available and information about the many and varied community growing projects happening across the Falkirk Council area.

“easy as possible”



8. Monitoring and Review

We want this strategy to make a positive difference to our communities and the places where we live, work and visit:

- Progress against actions in this strategy will be reviewed regularly to make sure it remains up to date.
- We will carry out a full review and revision of the Community Food Growing Strategy within 5 years of its publication.

These are the outcomes we want to achieve with the help and support of our partners:

Success is....

We will know we have been successful because:

People wishing to grow their own fruit and vegetables are able to do so.

More people are growing their own fruit and vegetables.

There are community growing projects across the area.

People have the skills and confidence to grow their own fruit and vegetables successfully and sustainably.

Our programme of growing skills workshops is delivered to those in need of our help.

Participant feedback will help us evaluate each workshop to make sure our programme of events remains relevant and useful to new and experienced growers.

Groups feel supported to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

We will have a well-connected network of community growers, producers and food-related businesses across the Falkirk Council area with regular opportunities to meet and share ideas, resources, skills and experience.

We will measure success by:

Working with partners to implement and record achievements against the actions detailed in this strategy. For example we will measure and record:

- No. of participants;
- No. of growing spaces, including allotment plots; and
- Area of land used for community growing and allotment plots.

Assessing the level of demand for community growing through:

- Monitoring waiting lists - number of people on list, and the length of time each person has been on the waiting list;
- Annual online survey; and
- Recording and monitoring community growing enquiries.

Carrying out an annual skills audit to assess our growers' ongoing training and support needs to establish demand, support requirements and identify new opportunities. Participant feedback from each workshop will also inform the ongoing community growing activity programme.



9. Next Steps – Action Plans

9.1 Programme for developing our community growing action plans

A suite of community growing action plans will be developed after the overall strategy has been agreed and finalised. The action plans will detail how the Council and its partners can help groups set up and develop their projects, highlight resources required to make this happen and explain how progress against actions will be monitored and reviewed.

The Action Plans will be developed in phases following adoption of the Strategy:

Phase 1

- Allotments Action Plan

Phase 2

- Orchards Action Plan
- Action Plan for NHS Forth Valley sites
- School Gardens Action Plan

Phase 3

- Action Plan for NHS Forth Valley Sites
- Action Plan for Social Enterprise and Business

These plans will include actions for:

- Years 1 - 3 : Consolidating what we have and establishing new opportunities
- Years 4 - 6: Continuing to develop growing opportunities
- Years 7 - 10: Sustainability and meeting longer term aspirations

We will monitor progress against targets in the action plans every year to highlight achievements, address areas where improvements are needed and make sure that the Council continues to fulfil its statutory duties in terms of community growing.

9.2 Allotments Action Plan

As a priority, we have prepared an Allotments Action Plan to explain how we will set up and manage new allotment sites. This is included in Appendix 2 of the strategy, and includes:

- Short, medium and long-term actions;
- Who is responsible for delivery (lead and partners);
- Resources required, for example for contaminated land assessments, set up costs, ongoing costs for managing sites and annual reporting;
- Outputs and outcomes; and
- Monitoring and Review.

APPENDIX 1

Maps and site schedules showing identified opportunities for growing are available to view at <http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/growing>

APPENDIX 2

Allotments Action Plan

Aim	Actions			Delivery (lead and partners)	Resources	Outputs & Outcomes	Monitoring and Review Actions
	Short (2020-2023)	Medium (2023-2025)	Long (2025-2030)				
Develop a robust and fair site selection and assessment process for potential allotment sites	<p>Follow the contaminated land risk assessment process for each potential allotment site.</p> <p>Agree phasing and priority sites for contaminated land risk assessments including phase 1 desk study reports & phase 2 intrusive site surveys</p> <p>Secure sufficient funding to carry out phase 1 & 2 surveys</p>	<p>Ongoing programme to identify, assess and select new allotment sites</p> <p>Secure sufficient funding to carry out phase 1 & 2 surveys</p> <p>Carry out contaminated land risk assessments</p>	<p>Ongoing programme to identify, assess and select new allotment sites</p> <p>Secure sufficient funding to carry out phase 1 & 2 surveys</p> <p>Carry out contaminated land risk assessments</p>	<p>Falkirk Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contaminated Land Team. Planning & Environment Team 	<p>Funding:</p> <p>Cost for one phase 1 survey estimated at £750-£5,000 (depending on size of site, historical land use, etc.)</p> <p>Cost for one phase 2 survey estimated at £5,000-£50,000 (depending on size of site, historical land use, ground conditions, etc.)</p> <p>(Subject to external funding)</p>	<p>Schedule of site surveys</p> <p>Clear understanding of risks and how to mitigate/remove any significant contamination risks</p> <p>Necessary remedial works identified and implemented</p> <p>Sufficient funding secured for remedial works</p> <p>Suitable sites and opportunities for growing identified</p>	5-year review of sites and process of selection.
With partners, satisfy local demand by creating new allotments and community growing spaces suitable for everyone	<p>Determine the level of community interest in developing and running allotments at Helix South</p> <p>Discuss potential for allotments with landowner(s)</p>	<p>Develop and support local management group(s) to manage Helix allotment site</p>	<p>Provide different sized allotment plots available as full size allotments plots (250m²) are too big for some growers;</p>	<p>Falkirk Community Trust</p> <p>Falkirk Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Learning & Development Planning & Environment 	<p>Land / sites suitable for community growing</p> <p>Association/ Management group to run allotment</p> <p>Officer support for setting up and developing Helix allotment management group</p>	<p>New allotment site created and managed</p>	<p>Annual survey to determine current levels of demand for allotments</p> <p>Annual skills survey of existing allotment plot-holders and site management group(s) to determine ongoing support needs</p>
	<p>Agree procedures for lease arrangements for allotments on Council-owned land</p>	<p>Develop local management group(s) to manage allotment site(s)</p> <p>Provide different sized allotment plots to encourage more participation - full size plots (250m²) are too big for some growers</p>	<p>Provide different sized allotment plots to encourage more participation - full size plots (250m²) are too big for some growers</p>	<p>Falkirk Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management with support and advice from Legal Services 	<p>Falkirk Council Asset Management Officer time for preparing allotment leases</p>	<p>New allotment site(s) created and managed</p>	<p>Annual skills survey of existing allotment plot-holders and site management group(s) to determine ongoing support needs</p>

Aim	Actions			Delivery (lead and partners)	Resources	Outputs & Outcomes	Monitoring and Review Actions
	Short (2020-2023)	Medium (2023-2025)	Long (2025-2030)				
	Provide support for groups and opportunities for informal community growing	Provide opportunities for informal community growing	Provide opportunities for informal community growing	Falkirk Council • Community Learning & Development • Planning & Environment Forth Environment Link	Funding to secure support from Forth Environment Link Land / sites suitable for community growing	Network of community growing projects and groups across Falkirk Council area	Annual survey to determine skills level and support needs of groups involved in or interested in community growing
With partners, satisfy local demand by creating new allotments and community growing spaces suitable for everyone	Establish set up costs for priority allotment sites. Secure funding to set up priority allotment sites Seek planning consent	Implement infrastructure requirements (fences, paths, water, etc) Develop local management group(s)	Manage site - different sized plots to attract growers from all ages, abilities, growing experiences and backgrounds	Falkirk Council • Asset Management (site management) • Community Development & Learning (group development) • Planning & Environment (infrastructure delivery) Allotment Management Group(s)	Land / sites suitable for community growing Funding for site set-up works, which will include: • Weld-mesh fencing (£75 per lin. metre) • Access gate(s) (Single: £1,000; Double: £1,500) • Rabbit mesh fencing (£5.10 per lin. metre) • Plough site or build raised planting beds and import soil • Communal meeting area or shed (approx. £5,000) Falkirk Council Officer support for setting up local allotment management group(s), obtaining planning consent and implementing required infrastructure	New allotment site(s) created and managed	5-year review of sites to be allocated as allotments Rolling programme of infrastructure implementation and management

Aim	Actions			Delivery (lead and partners)	Resources	Outputs & Outcomes	Monitoring and Review Actions
	Short (2020-2023)	Medium (2023-2025)	Long (2025-2030)				
The waiting list for people seeking allotments in the Falkirk Council area is well managed and kept up-to-date with robust procedures for adding and removing people from the list.	Work with Falkirk Allotment Society to share Waiting List information Create system for recording details of people wishing an allotment and for managing the waiting list Agree procedures for contacting people on the waiting list to carry out an annual survey	Continued information sharing with allotment groups to ensure waiting list management requirements are met Carry out annual surveys with allotment holders and people on the waiting list(s)	Continued information sharing with allotment groups to ensure Waiting List management requirements met	Falkirk Council • Asset Management • Legal Services Falkirk Allotment Society Falkirk Community Trust Muiravonside Community Growers	Falkirk Council Officer time to ensure Council meets its statutory requirements (e.g. by carrying out surveys and managing waiting lists)	Up-to-date list of people wishing their own allotment plot in the Falkirk Council area Clear procedures in place for managing a waiting list of people wishing an allotment plot in the Falkirk Council area	Annual survey of people on the waiting list for an allotment to establish: • If they still want an allotment • What size of allotment they wish • If there is an alternative form of community growing they are interested in
There are robust, fair and transparent regulations for all the allotment sites in the Falkirk Council area.	Agree rules and regulations for managing allotment sites Implement rules and regulations	Implement rules and regulations Review rules and regulations and amend as necessary	Implement rules and regulations Review rules and regulations and amend as necessary	Falkirk Council • Asset Management with support and advice from Legal Services Allotment Management Groups	Falkirk Council Officer time	Simple and effective set of site rules and regulations in place and adhered to by group(s)	5-year review of allotment rules and regulations to be amended as necessary
Our understanding of demand, satisfaction and resource requirements remains realistic and up to date	Prepare an annual report for Scottish Government, reporting on: • location and size of each allotment site • number of allotments on each site • period of lease and rent payable • number of persons on the waiting list • steps taken by the Council to comply with the duty to take all reasonable steps to provide allotments to those on the list • the reasons for failure to comply with the duty • income received			Community Empowerment Working Group	Falkirk Council Officer time to liaise with relevant parts of the Council and Allotment Management Group(s) as appropriate. Falkirk Council Officer time to prepare an annual report for Scottish Government	Annual report submitted according to requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015	Annual report submitted according to requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
There is a network of allotment holders and community growers ready, willing and able to support new growers and plot holders	Skills audit of existing and new community growers Identify support and training needs of community growers	Provide a programme of support and training relevant to the needs of local growers Follow-up skills audit	Follow-up skills audit	Falkirk Council • Community Learning & Development • Planning & Environment Forth Environment Link Sustainable Thinking Scotland Community Interest Company Social Farms & Gardens	Funding for training and support for community growing groups and allotment plot holders Falkirk Council Officer time to carry out skills audit and training needs analysis	Programme of skills and training workshops Annual community growers networking event where people can meet to share their experience, skills, ideas and knowledge with other growers Programme of networking events and community meals	Workshop and event evaluation Follow up skills audit and training needs analysis

APPENDIX 3

Allotments: Part 9, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

This section of the Act updates legislation on the provision and management of allotments. It requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to provide allotments if waiting lists exceed certain trigger points and strengthens the protection for allotments.

The Act defines an allotment as land owned or leased by the Council; that is leased or intended for lease by a person from the Council area; and is used mainly for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers.

A full-sized plot is 250m² though smaller plots can be requested.

Current Provision

At present Falkirk Allotment Society manages 44 allotment plots in the Falkirk Council area (36 plots at Bantaskin Park and 8 at Callendar Park). Muiravonside Growing Area Committee manages an additional 34 community growing plots (5m by 13m) and 6 wheelchair accessible raised beds at Muiravonside Country Park.

There are also a number of community-led initiatives across the district encouraging local fruit and vegetable growing, including school orchard projects and community gardens.

There are approximately 40 people on the waiting list for an allotment plot in the Council area.

Council Responsibilities

- Any person living in the Council area may make a request to the Council to lease an allotment. A request can be made even if the Council has no allotment sites.
- The Council must establish and maintain a list of persons who make requests to it. The Council must take reasonable steps to ensure that the number on the list is no more than half the number of Council allotments and that no-one is on the list for over 5 years.
- The Council is to make regulations about allotment sites within 2 years of the provisions coming into force - consultation and advertisement are required.
- The Council must prepare a food growing strategy for the area to be published within 2 years of the provisions coming into force and thereafter to be reviewed 5 yearly. This strategy should:
 - identify land that may be used as allotments
 - identify other areas the community could use for cultivation
 - detail how the Council intends to increase the provision of allotments and community growing space
- An allotment report is to be produced annually setting out:
 - location and size of each allotment site
 - number of allotments on each site
 - period of lease and rent payable
 - number of persons on the waiting list
- steps taken by the Council to comply with the duty to take all reasonable steps to provide allotments to those on the list
- the reasons for failure to comply with the duty
- income received

APPENDIX 4

Strategic Context - meeting national and local aspirations through community growing

Community growing projects will help us fulfil our obligations under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and help deliver a range of strategic priorities across the Council area:

Good Food Nation Bill

The Scottish Government launched its 12-week consultation for the Good Food Nation Bill in 2019. This will inform the content of the bill which aims to promote Scotland as a good food nation where people from every walk of life take pride, pleasure and benefit from the food that they buy, serve and eat day by day.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Section 119 of the Community Empowerment Act places a duty on every local authority to prepare a food growing strategy for its area. This must:

- Identify land that may be used as allotment sites;
- Identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing; and
- Describe how the authority intends to increase provision, in particular in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.

National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)

This sets out, spatially, the long-term vision for development and investment across Scotland over the next 20 to 30 years. NPF3 recognises the increasing importance of land for food production within towns and cities with a desire to support more localised food distribution networks. The Central Scotland Green Network is a national development in NPF3 with community growing identified as one of the priority themes for action.

Scottish Planning Policy

The Scottish Government has stated that Scottish Planning Policy should be used to routinely incorporate new growing space into new development plans.

Local Development Plan

We are preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Council area. This will replace the current Local Development Plan which was adopted in July 2015. The new plan, LDP2, will guide the future development of the Falkirk Council area in the period 2020-2040. Seven opportunities for community growing have been identified within the Proposed Plan, some of which may be suitable for development as allotments.

Falkirk Economic Strategy (2015-2025)

Falkirk Economic Strategy sets out the areas aspirations to be a smarter, greener and more inclusive place. Investing in the spaces where our communities live creates pleasant and welcoming places for a more sustainable future for everyone, and community food growing will help us achieve our ambitions to encourage opportunities for:

- Sustainable business and energy efficiency processes;
- More sustainable forms of transport;
- A circular economy; and
- Improve the quality of our environment.

Locality Planning and Community Planning

Locality planning brings communities together with public and third sector organisations to improve resident's lives and the areas where they live. Locality planning encourages public and community partnership in decisions affecting them to provide more efficient and effective service planning.

The Community Planning Partnership's Strategic Outcomes of Local Delivery Plan (SOLD) 2016-2020 sets out key priorities for the area, which include:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Maximising job creation and employability
- Addressing the impact of poverty on children

The community food growing strategy will help meet outcome 4 of the SOLD plan: "Our population will be healthier" by helping to:

- Increase food skills and opportunities to access affordable, healthier food choices and activities in local communities;
- Increase positive mental wellbeing; and
- Reduce health inequalities.

Falkirk Greenspace: a strategy for our green network

Falkirk Council's green network strategy highlights community growing as a priority for action, with a set of proposals to achieve the key objectives of:

- Meeting increasing demand for community growing space; and
- Reviewing provision for allotments and for developing other community growing opportunities.

The community food growing strategy sets out how Falkirk Council and partners will work together to meet these objectives.

Falkirk Open Space Strategy

Parks and open spaces are vital to our health and well-being, the quality of the environment, and as valuable habitat for wildlife.

Falkirk Open Space Strategy looks at how we can change the management of our parks and open spaces to provide a high quality green network that benefits people, business and wildlife. Community growing projects will encourage more community involvement in developing creative and effective solutions to how we manage and improve our parks and open spaces in the future.

Falkirk Council Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy (2012 - 2017)

The Sustainable Development & Climate Change Strategy describes how Falkirk Council and partners will meet key sustainability principles, including "living within environmental limits". For example, a lot more of the food we eat could be produced locally by encouraging allotment provision and community growing space throughout the Council area.

Falkirk Council - Council of the Future

Through achieving our ambitions for community growing we aim to engage effectively with our communities. This is a key aspiration of our Council of the Future programme to become a more innovative, responsive, trusted and ambitious organisation.

APPENDIX 5

Background: How have we developed this strategy?

We have spoken with community groups, interested individuals, organisations and institutions to set local priorities for community food growing activity across the Council area. There were several opportunities for people to get involved:

Dig in Falkirk Pilot Pocket Allotment Project

We have worked with Forth Environment Link, Falkirk Delivers, greenspace scotland and Central Scotland Green Network Trust to engage individuals, groups and businesses to find out what would inspire them to get involved in growing projects.

To get started on this journey, the Dig in Falkirk pilot project in Falkirk High Street has helped raise awareness of community growing. This project aims to inspire and encourage people to become actively involved in growing projects in their own areas - using and looking after spaces to improve the quality of their environment and to give them somewhere to meet up with others and grow their own produce.

Community Food Growing Survey

Working in partnership with Forth Environment Link, an on-line survey helped us explore local attitudes to community growing. This gave people a chance to tell us what is stopping them from growing and what support would help them get started, as well as helping us find out about existing community growing projects across the Falkirk Council area. We attended the Falkirk Allotment Society AGM in 2016 to tell members about the Food Growing Strategy and asked existing and potential new allotment holders to fill out our survey at the Falkirk Allotment Association open day in August 2017.

Between September 2017 and April 2018 we also spoke to people attending events in the area to give more people a chance to share their thoughts about community growing. We met people at the Helix Horsepower event, an Eco Family Fun Day, Falkirk Falkirk Producers Markets, a meet and greet 'Soup Night' and at five of our 'Dig in Falkirk' community growing workshops.

"Falkirk Grows Food" community networking and consultation event

This event brought together 63 people from communities across the Council area to share ideas about food growing and find out about the opportunities, barriers and support required to help them grow their own fruit and vegetables. People new to the idea of community growing could also connect with a wide range of existing projects. These discussions have helped us to:

- Find out about and celebrate community growing projects and individual food-related activity taking place around the Falkirk Council area;
- Encourage conversations and stimulate interest in food growing;
- Put the foundations in place to build a 'food growing' movement to boost activity and increase networking and knowledge-sharing among groups; and
- Develop this food growing strategy in response to local needs and aspirations for community food growing.

Stakeholder consultation event

Following the community event we brought together a range of organisations and other stakeholders who are in a position to help communities get growing. We wanted to build on the support requirements and aspirations highlighted by our current and aspiring community growers, to explore and agree how the organisations operating across our area can, collectively, help growing projects achieve their goals.

At the event we:

- Agreed priority actions that will help meet local needs for community growing projects;
- Heard what each organisation is doing or planning to do to support local food growing; and
- Discovered what resources are available from each organisation to help develop community growing across the Falkirk Council area.

APPENDIX 6

Groups involved in shaping the strategy

The following organisations have helped shape the Council's first Food Growing Strategy:

- Bantaskine Primary School
- Central Scotland Green Network Trust
- Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC)
- Falkirk Allotment Society
- Falkirk Community Trust
- Falkirk Council
- Falkirk Delivers
- Falkirk Trinity Church
- Falkirk Veterans
- Forth Environment Link
- Friends of the Earth Falkirk
- Greenspace scotland
- Muiravonside Community Growing Association
- Scottish Government Food & Drink division
- Social Farms & Gardens
- Sustainable Thinking Scotland Community Interest Company
- The Rotary Club of Falkirk
- The Wood Craft Folk
- Under the Trees nature group