

Waternish Community Garden Ideas and Community Thoughts

04 November 2021

A steering group have been set-up to look at the viability of developing land at the back of Waternish community hall which was a playground into a community garden.

The land is owned by Highland Council who are open to considering a long term lease for a group to develop and run a community garden.

Speaking with Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations, the steering group believe a SCIO legal structure would be the most appropriate for the group and have commenced work to identify community needs, opportunities for funding and produce a set-up plan and timeline to take the garden from an idea to reality.

In order to gauge community interest the steering group have approached a people connected to the Church of Scotland and local primary school as well as local residents. Initial conversations have been positive with people supporting the plan for a community, particularly in a covid-19 world where outdoor activities are the preferred option for infection control protocols.

Visits to other initiatives. We visited Viewfield Collective and had a long chat with the manager there. Also the Mens' Shed in Broadford where the guys were very helpful and informative. We have also had helpful contact with the Rural Skills initiative, run by U.H.I, and researched other Community Gardens online.

To further define what the community would like to see in the Garden, the steering group with the support of SLCVO held a drop in session on the 30th October at the village hall which was attended by Councillor John Gordon. Although small numbers came along to the session they were very positive about a community garden. Participants were asked to note their ideas for a garden, who would benefit, who the garden could work with and what is needed.

Their responses and conversations with community members have been collated below.

What activities would you like to see in the garden?

- Fruit trees/orchard (dwarf trees easy to harvest),
- Fruit plants and cages
- Disabled access raised beds
- Rose garden
- Bug Hotel
- Maze
- Play equipment i..e sand pit, swings, big games
- Mud Kitchen
- Wood fire pizza oven
- Picnic area It would be lovely to have somewhere outside to meet friends for picnics
- It would be good to have somewhere for children to meet and play
- Communal and social spaces to meet with people

- Benches
- Log seating
- Covered area for wood crafts and weaving
- A men's shed
- Social spaces for people to meet and chat

How would a community garden benefit the community and visitors?

- Therapeutic benefits of working outside with the soil
- Social interactions
- Mental well-being
- Bring people together
- Learn from one and other
- Get to know new people
- Produce food for local people – reduce food miles and carbon footprint
- Visitors would set a local point of view?

Who would use the garden?

- Families with children
- People who are lonely
- People whose garden space is limited

What groups could the garden work with?

- Local restaurants and food places – reduce food miles
- Atlas Arts seed stewardship programme
- Local schools
- Dark Skies
- Home Farm care home
- Tigh Na Drochaid

What does a community gardener need?

- Time and patience
- A sense of humour
- Gardening gloves
- A garden
- Equipment
- Seeds
- Funding

Next Steps

The steering group need more people to help with the set-up the community garden including:

- a minimum of three people willing to take on the responsibility and role of charity trustees, as the Highland Council require the group to be incorporated to take on a lease for the ground. **ACHIEVED**
- Volunteers to help fundraise and seek funding from local and national funders **IN PROGRESS**
- Volunteers to help lead the land preparation for the garden **IN PROGRESS**
- Volunteer to help support the taking on of a lease from the Highland Council **IN PROGRESS**

It is recommended that a number of promotional activities take place such as newsletter articles, posters, talks with local groups etc to encourage more people to join the steering group and the group set a deadline for this, as without more support the garden will not progress.

SLCVO can help the current steering group use the findings so far to develop a promotional article that can be used to encourage more participation, as well help the group develop a set-up plan timeline for the project.

SLCVO Skye and Lochalsh Council
for Voluntary Organisations

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