

Local Authority State of the Market 2024

Allotment Services



Briefing 24/31
August 2024

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Local Authority State of the Market 2024

Allotment Services

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Results at a glance

(Change from 2023)

Cost

Charge less than £90 per annum to rent a 250 sq m plot (inc. water) for 2024/25	64%	Data change
Not increased the cost per annum to rent a plot during the past 2 years (beyond an inflationary increase)	77%	No Change
Do not intend to increase the price of allotment plots above inflation	30%	-7%
If the price has increased beyond inflation, the allotments service is still subsidised	58%	-11%

Number of sites

More than 20 allotment sites in the authority	53%	+11%
Plan to increase the number of allotments	53%	-1%

Waiting lists

Contain more than 1000 people	29%	No Change
Average waiting time of more than 18 months	67%	-2%

Plot size / ownership

Have reduced the size of standard plots to create smaller-sized plots	73%	-17%
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Concessions

Offer concessionary / discount prices	64%	-2%
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Biodiversity

Promote planting pollinator-friendly species	70%	+14%
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1 Purpose of the report

Each year APSE undertakes a survey on the state of the market in local authority allotment services. The survey is distributed to officers and elected members across the UK and includes a series of questions covering a diverse range of topics – from cost and waiting lists to amenities and strategies.

Where possible, this report adopts a comparative analysis with previous APSE state of the market surveys. This allows for the identification of trends in the sector, as well as the challenges, opportunities, and issues that local authority parks and greenspace teams are facing. The results of the survey are shared with local authorities and other organisations to help them better understand the needs of the sector.

In recent years, the findings of APSE's local authority allotment surveys have attracted national headlines, featuring in BBC Breakfast (2022)¹, The Times (2023)², and Gardeners' World Magazine (2024)³.

1.1 Methodology

APSE conducted a survey of its member local councils between May and July 2024.

Respondents were relatively evenly spread across APSE's six areas of activity: APSE Scotland, APSE Wales, APSE Northern Ireland, APSE Northern, APSE Southern and APSE Central.

1.2 Allotment authorities

While some allotments are provided by private individuals, charities or trustees, the majority are provided by local authorities. All allotment authorities have power to provide allotments. They also have a duty to do so if there is a sufficient demand for allotments (section 23, Allotments Act 1908).⁴

¹ <http://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2022/the-pressure-on-plots-apse-on-bbc-breakfast/>

² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/could-an-allotment-cut-the-cost-of-your-weekly-food-shop-tr3rzfwst>

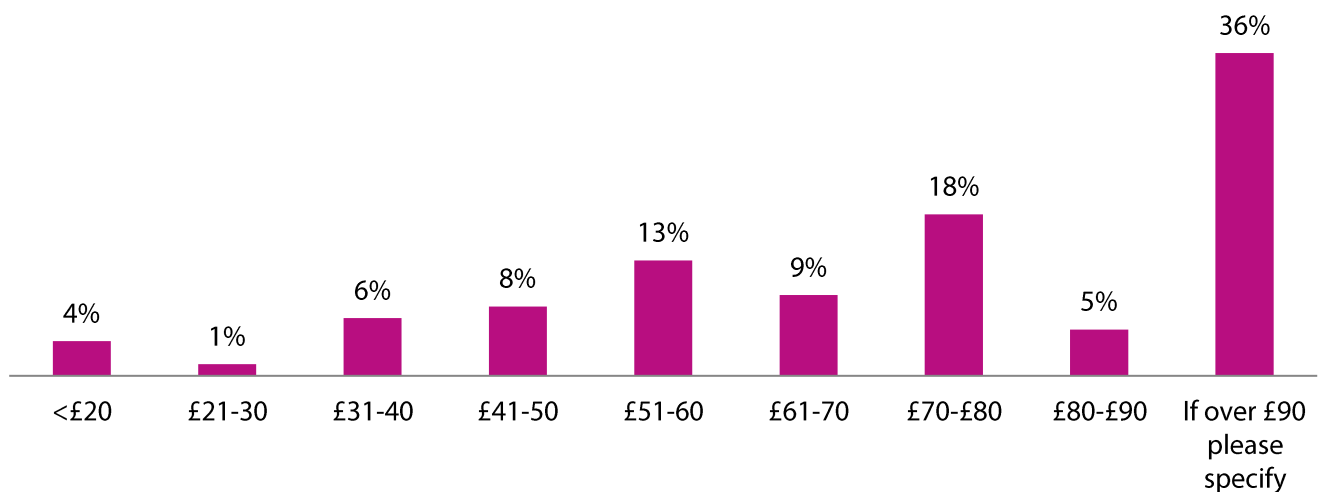
³ <https://gb.readly.com/magazines/bbc-gardeners-world-magazine/2024-01-18/6589edfca0bc61d3ac40b842>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36/section/23>

2 Cost

2.1 What is the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot in 2024/25?

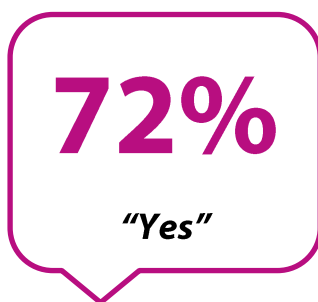
(Note: if you have different costs according to size of land, please use the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water)



The uneven charging regimes for allotment plots across the UK can be attributed to several factors. These include variations in land availability and the level of demand for allotments in different regions. Furthermore, differences in maintenance costs and amenities provided by each allotment site can also contribute to the disparity in charging regimes.

2.1 reveals the uneven charging regimes in place for allotment plots across the UK. Using the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water, almost a fifth of those surveyed charge less than £50 a year, whereas over a third charge over £90. For those authorities charging over £90, the figures recorded range from £95 to £218. It is of note that, except for two authorities, all those who recorded charging over £90 are based in urban areas. It is also worth noting that the hitherto upper limit of £70 has, this year, been replaced with £90 in order to accommodate the rise in charges of recent years.

Regarding those authorities pricing allotment plots at <£50 per annum, there has been a 10% drop since 2023 (29%) and a 27% drop since 2019 (46%).

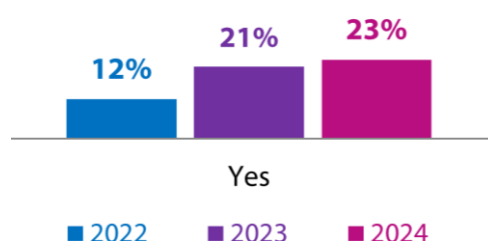


Is cost directly related to the area of the allotment (e.g. square meters)?

72% of those surveyed report that cost is directly related to the area of the allotment, which is a 3% increase on 2023 but a return to the figure reported in 2022. These figures show the size of an allotment is still the determining factor for charging criteria, and that this has remained steady for the last three years.

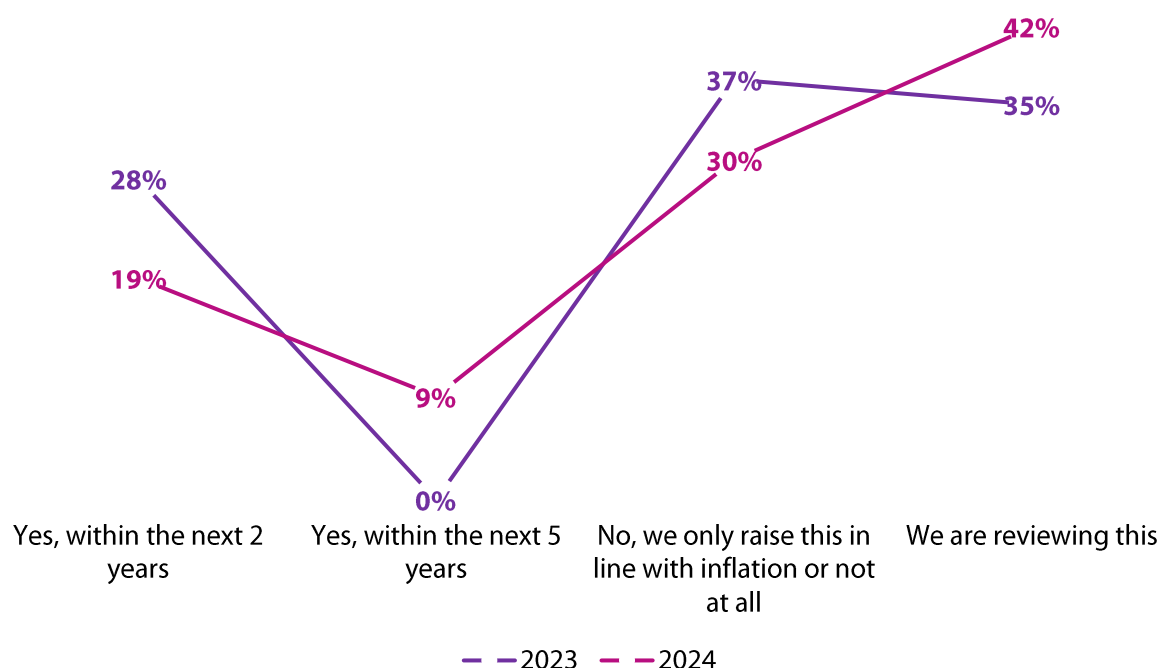
Has the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot increased (beyond an inflationary increase) during the past 2 years?

With regards to levels of increased costs, 23% of respondents stated they had increased costs to rent a plot above the standard level of inflation, a 1% increase on the number reported in 2023, and an increase of 11% on 2022. As raised in the 2023 report, this trend *“suggests moves to at least make the provision of allotments cost neutral.”*⁵



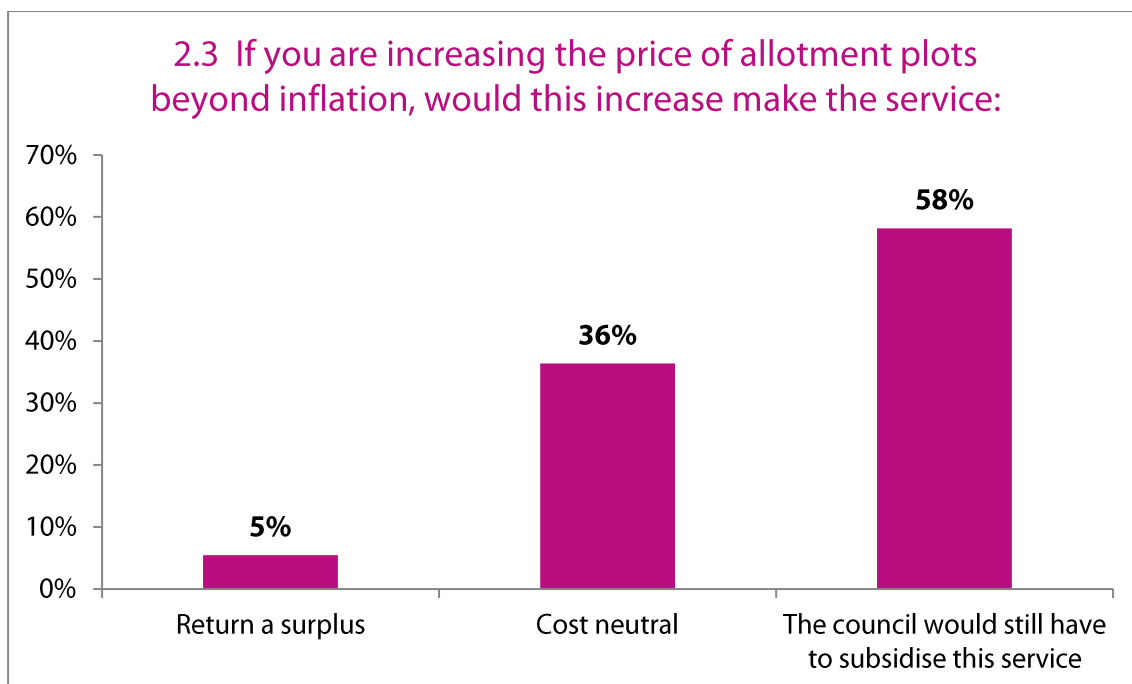
⁵ <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2023/23-37-state-of-the-market-survey-allotments-2023/>

2.2. Are you intending to increase the price of allotment plots beyond inflation?



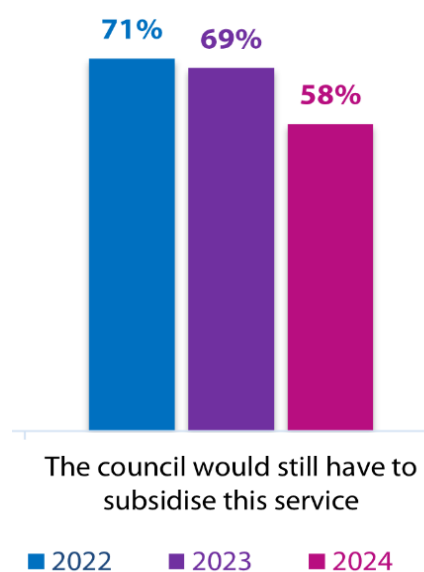
On the issue of allotment price increases, 2.2 reveals the picture this year remains fairly consistent with the findings reported in 2023. When plotted against the findings from last year, there has been a 9% decrease in the number of respondents intending to increase the price of allotment plots over the next two years (from 28% to 19%). However, there has been a corresponding 9% increase in the number of those surveyed intending to increase the price of allotment plots within the next five years.

There has been a 7% decrease in those authorities reporting they will “only raise the price of plots in line with inflation if at all” with a corresponding increase in the number of those “reviewing” their pricing. With just 5% of authorities reporting they are making a surplus from their allotment service, it can be argued the rise in plot prices is driven predominantly by the need for local authorities to cover the growing cost of maintenance, waste disposal and water.



2.3 reveals that, for those local authorities increasing prices beyond inflation, 58% will still subsidise their allotment service, though this continues to trend downwards from 71% in 2022 and 69% in 2023. There has also been a 12% increase in those authorities reporting the price rise will make their allotment service cost neutral (37%).

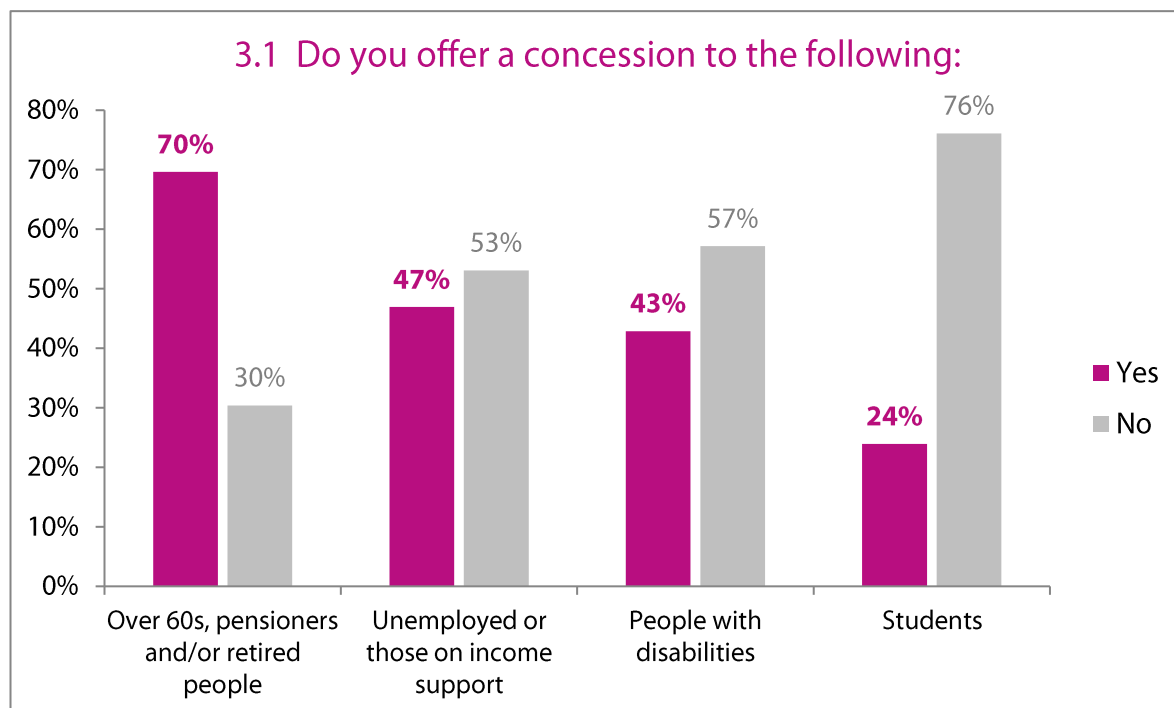
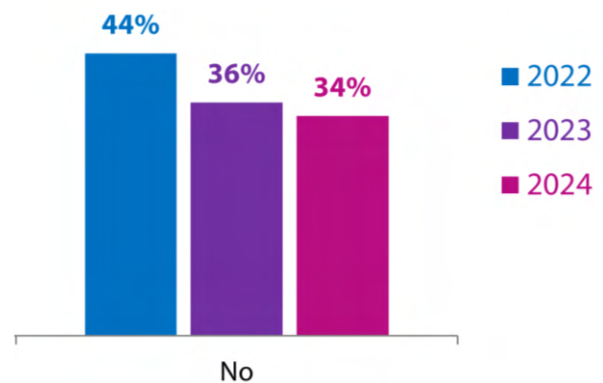
For an increasing number of authorities, it is becoming harder to justify subsidies for allotments amidst soaring costs for statutory services such as adult social care and children's services. This means there is growing pressure on allotment services to be cost neutral.



3 Concessions

Are concessionary / discount prices offered?

The 2024 results show the number of councils not offering concessionary / discount prices continues to trend downwards – from 44% in 2022 to 34% in 2024. Even with the squeezing of subsidies, as of 2024, two-thirds (66%) of UK allotment authorities maintain a concessionary/discount regime – a recognition of the health and wellbeing benefits the service brings to vulnerable groups in the local area.



3.1 reveals "Over 60s pensioners and/or retired people" remain the most likely recipients of concessionary prices with 70% of respondents offering discounts to this protected group (an increase of 3% from 2023). There has also been a 5% uptick in those offering discounts to "People with disabilities" from 2023. However, there has been a decline in the number of allotment authorities offering concessionary prices to the "Unemployed or those on income support" (-13%) and "Students" (-8%).

3.2 % of concessions

	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	Over 50%
Over 60s, pensioners and/or retired people	8%	11%	24%	8%	49%	0%
Unemployed or those on income support	4%	9%	13%	4%	65%	4%
People with disabilities	5%	5%	14%	10%	62%	5%
Students	0%	18%	36%	9%	36%	0%

When setting a concession, 3.2 shows the 40-50% range remains the by far the most popular - amongst authorities when applying the discount to protected groups. The 20-30% range is the second most common.

Some of the comments with regards to concessions include:

"25% concession to those on means tested benefits."

"50% discount offered to those on council tax reduction or universal credit housing element."

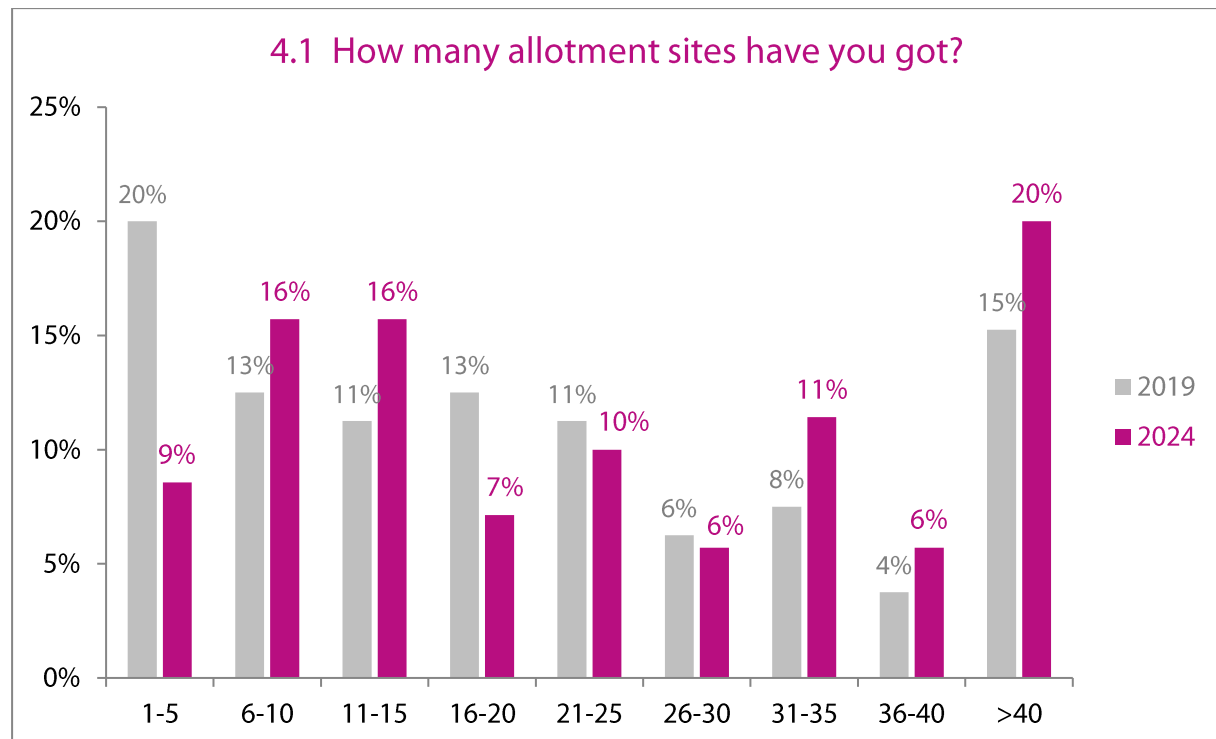
"Senior citizens on pension credit get 50% discount."

"No concessions as we think prices are very low."

"Allotment associations develop their own management rules governing such matters."

"25% discount for anyone on means tested benefits."

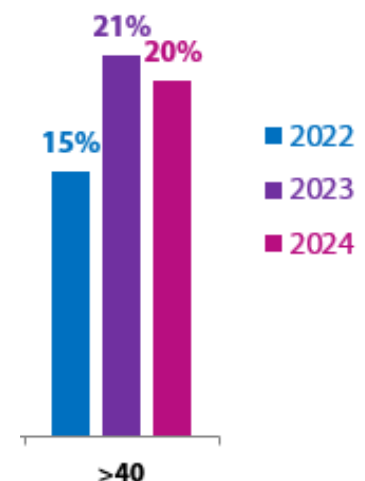
4 Number of sites/plots



The findings from 4.1 have been cross-referenced with the 2019 findings as this was the last pre-COVID survey and, as a result, the last survey before the general surge in demand for plots.

By plotting against 2019, one can observe authorities are being proactive in trying to meet demand. In this instance, by increasing the number of allotment sites in the local area: 37% of authorities now possess >30 allotment sites as opposed to 27% in 2019.

There has also been a 5% increase in the number of authorities in possession of >40 sites from 2022.



53%

"Yes"

Does the council have plans to increase the number of allotments?

Though a slight drop on last year (54%), a majority of those surveyed intend to increase the number of allotments in their local area to help meet demand.

If you plan to increase the number of allotments, what will be the method of provision?

	2022	2023	2024
Direct provision by the council of additional plots	73%	75%	50%
Provision by builders/developers as part of a housing/planning policy	50%	30%	56%
Provision by community groups supported/facilitated by council	41%	45%	37%
Provision by other council departments (e.g., Education, Social Work) as part of a healthy lifestyles/eco-schools/health type project	32%	20%	8%
Other	18%	5%	13%

In contrast to 2023, this year's findings show direct provision by the council is no longer the main source of new allotments. The 25% drop in the numbers reporting "Direct provision by the council of additional plots" is accompanied by an almost equal rise (+26%) in the numbers reporting "Provision by builders/developers as part of a housing/planning policy."

Comments noted that ongoing resource constraints continue to hinder council capacity to directly provide new allotments. Therefore, incorporating allotments into broader urban planning frameworks and negotiated planning permissions – requiring private developers to include allotments as part of new housing developments – can ensure the continued creation of allotment spaces without straining public resources. However, the risk with this approach lies in ensuring developers maintain these sites and do not let them fall into a state of dereliction. Comments noted that where this occurs, the local authority is expected to step in and take responsibility for the site.

The National Allotment Society have recently produced a set of practical, design-led and policy-based guidelines for planners and developers who are looking to include allotments in new developments.⁸

⁸ <https://thenas.org.uk/uploads/NAS%20Development%20Brochure%202023%20LR.pdf>

5 Plot size

73%

"Yes"

Have you reduced the size of your plots to create smaller-sized plots to allow waiting lists to be reduced?

Almost three-quarters of those surveyed report reducing the size of their plots to create smaller-sized plots. This is a 17% drop on 2023 but still 9% higher than reported in 2022. Comments noted that, though reducing waiting lists is the overriding reason why plots are being downsized, smaller plots are also emerging as a better option for beginners and those in full time employment. It is also acknowledged in the comments that plots are only downsized when made available:

"Half plots are offered as starter plots."

"Splitting a full plot in half helps the waiting list but we also do it as we have found our applicants demographic changing. It used to historically be your retired couples applying, now it's younger people who work and have families to look after. They therefore don't have the same available time for an allotment."

"The size of our plots vary and there is no standard size. Where appropriate we split plots to allow a reduction on the waiting list."

"When a plot becomes vacant we usually downsize the plot."

"Our standard plot is still 10 rods but we have sectioned these up into 5 rod, 4 rod and even down to 2 rods depending on demand and ability of plot-holders."

"We offer full and half plots, as well as starter plots (quarter)."

"Any full size plots are split in half when they become available."

"Some large plots have been turned in to starter plots that are manageable to working families."

"I would say it was more the case that we ended up splitting plots in response to the demand for smaller allotments and because working people / busy families often do not manage or want a large allotment. 20 years ago, the average age of an allotment holder was over 60 and they were mostly retired people but this is no longer the case and many do not want (or cannot manage) a large plot."

If you have reduced plot size to create more allotments how has the public reacted?

The response from those surveyed paints a generally positive picture:

"Reacted well as some people do not have the time to take on bigger plots and it gives people the chance to keep a plot by reducing the size."

"Beneficial. Increased numbers of applicants can be accommodated, with many applicants unable to take on a full plot and may find it intimidating as a new allotment plot holder. This has been particularly useful for people living alone, couples, or those with small families."

"We have only done it where tenants are happy with reducing so haven't enforced it as a rule."

"Mixed views - some of our tenants like larger plots, whereas others like smaller plots - it is best to have a variety within reason."

"Some of the older plot-holders expressed concerns about losing full plots. However they were fine when we explained our reasons and that if the demand dropped/ demographic changed etc we could put them back."

"It is positive as a lot of our residents wanting plots don't want anything too big and it is treated as there back garden growing patch. They welcome it as gets more people on a site."

"Some still think 100sqm (half) is a large area, others still want a full plot."

"Most are in favour of this, smaller plots are easier to manage, more chance of success for new growers."

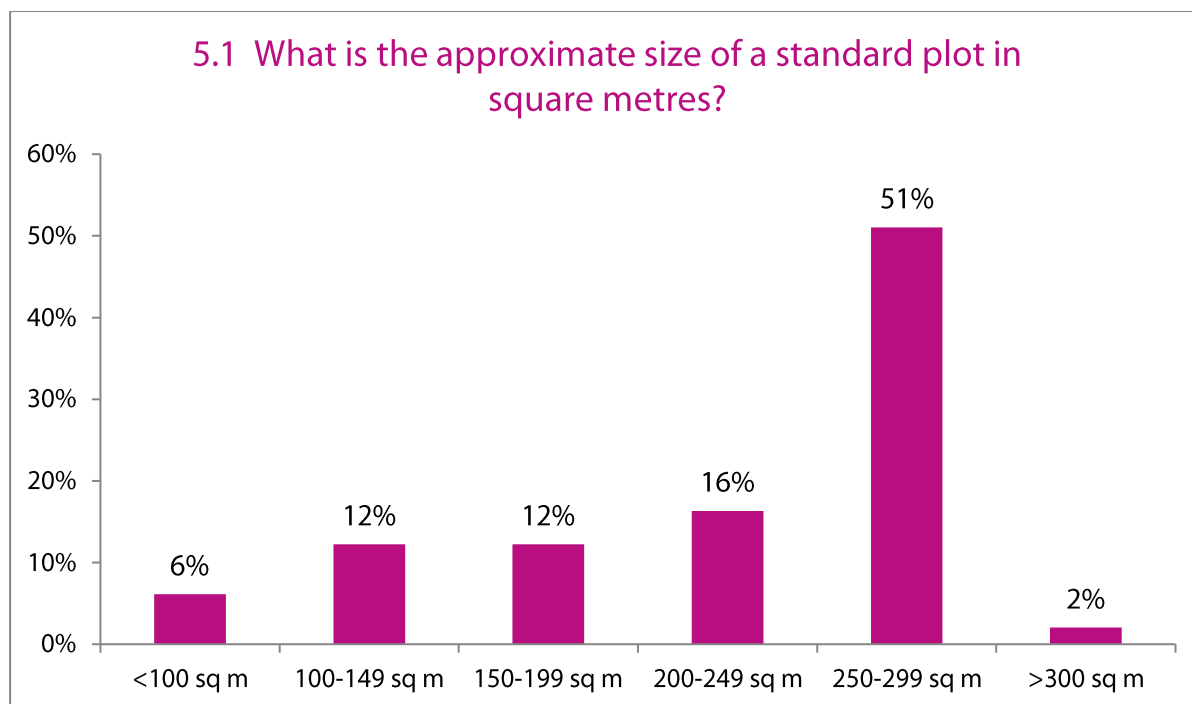
45sq.m

Smallest plot

What is the size of your smaller plots?

The smallest plots of those surveyed range from 45sq.m at the lowest end to 125sq.m at the highest end. In the comments, these smaller plots are referred to as "micro plots" or "kitchen garden plots."

They are also recognised for their use as starter plots; regarded as far easier to manage for novice gardeners.



5.1 reveals the majority of those surveyed identify “250-299sq.m” as a standard plot. Although there has been an increase in the number of authorities reducing the size of plots to help meet high demand in recent years, less than a fifth of authorities regard <149sq.m as a “standard” plot. So, it is important to acknowledge that the recent trend by authorities towards downsizing vacated plots is not overstated.

6 Plot ownership

43%

"Yes"

Do you restrict plot ownership to a person or a household? i.e. one plot per household?

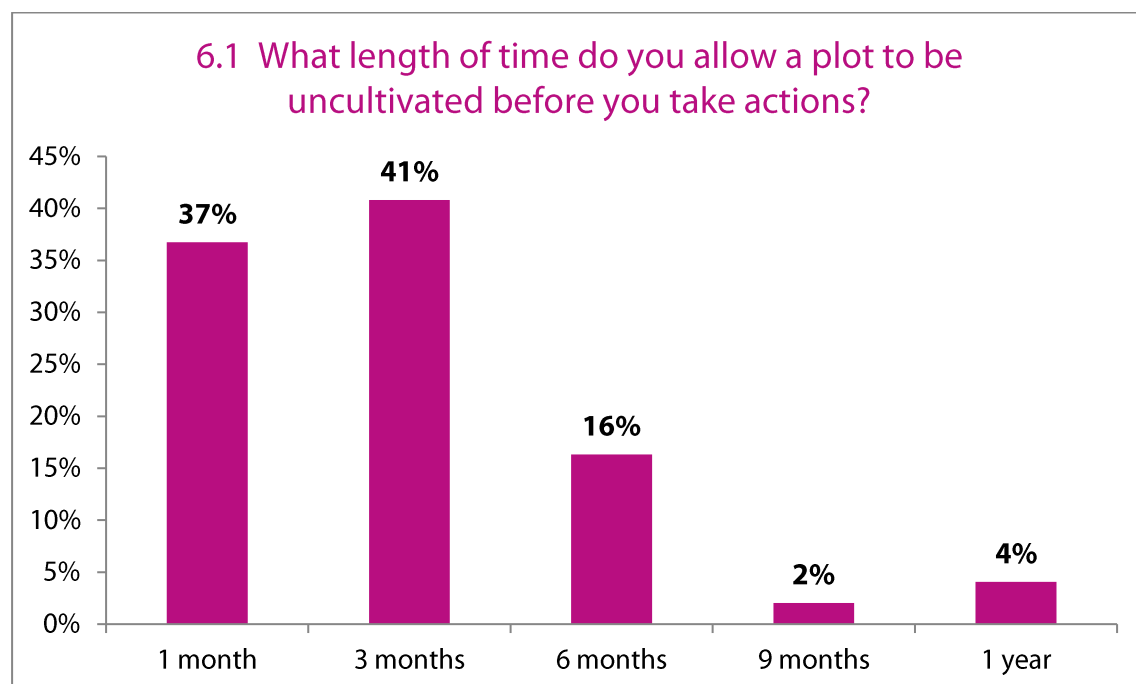
Over half of the authorities surveyed do not restrict plot ownership to a person or household. This figure has remained steady since 2018.

62%

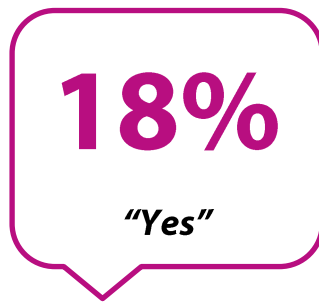
"No"

Can plots be passed on to families and friends?

Most of the authorities surveyed do not allow allotments to be passed to families or friends. When asked whether plot-holders were allowed more than one plot, many of those surveyed commented that, historically, this had been allowed. However, a growing number of authorities report phasing out multiple plot holdings in order to meet the high demand.



6.1 reveals just 22% of authorities allow allotments to remain uncultivated for more than 3 months before taking action. As well as posing safety hazards, overgrown and neglected plots can attract pests and vermin. Furthermore, by enforcing a policy on plot maintenance, councils encourage plot-holders to actively use their allotments or to relinquish them if they are unable to maintain them. This ensures plots do not remain idle while there may be waiting lists for new plot-holders.

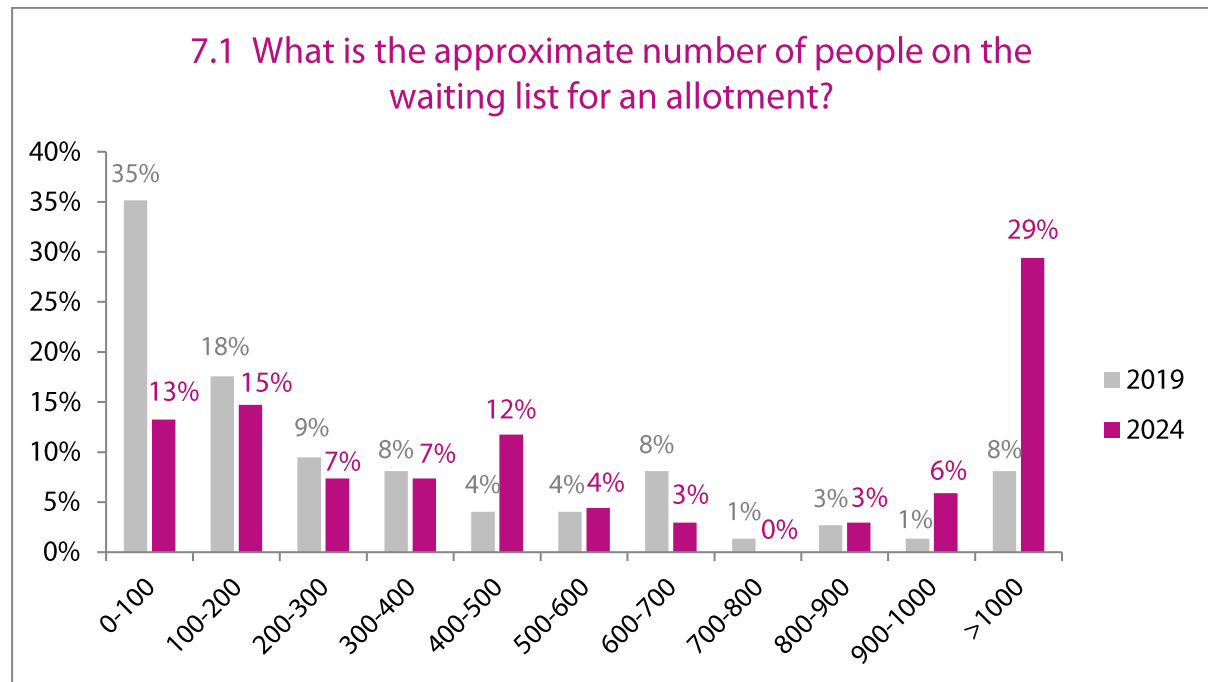


Are plot-holders required to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their plot effectively?

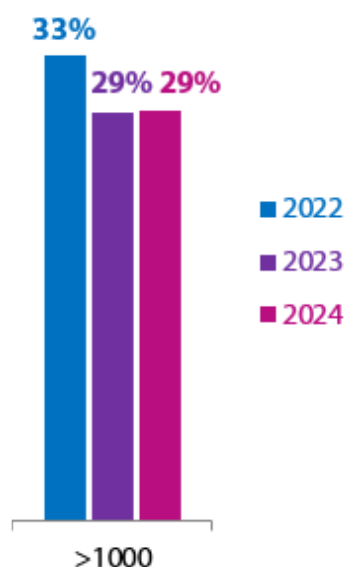
Just 18% of authorities require plot-holders to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their plot effectively. With lengthy waiting lists across many UK authorities (as covered in [7](#)),

it follows that those who do secure a plot are unlikely to be flippant about ensuring it is managed properly.

7 Waiting lists



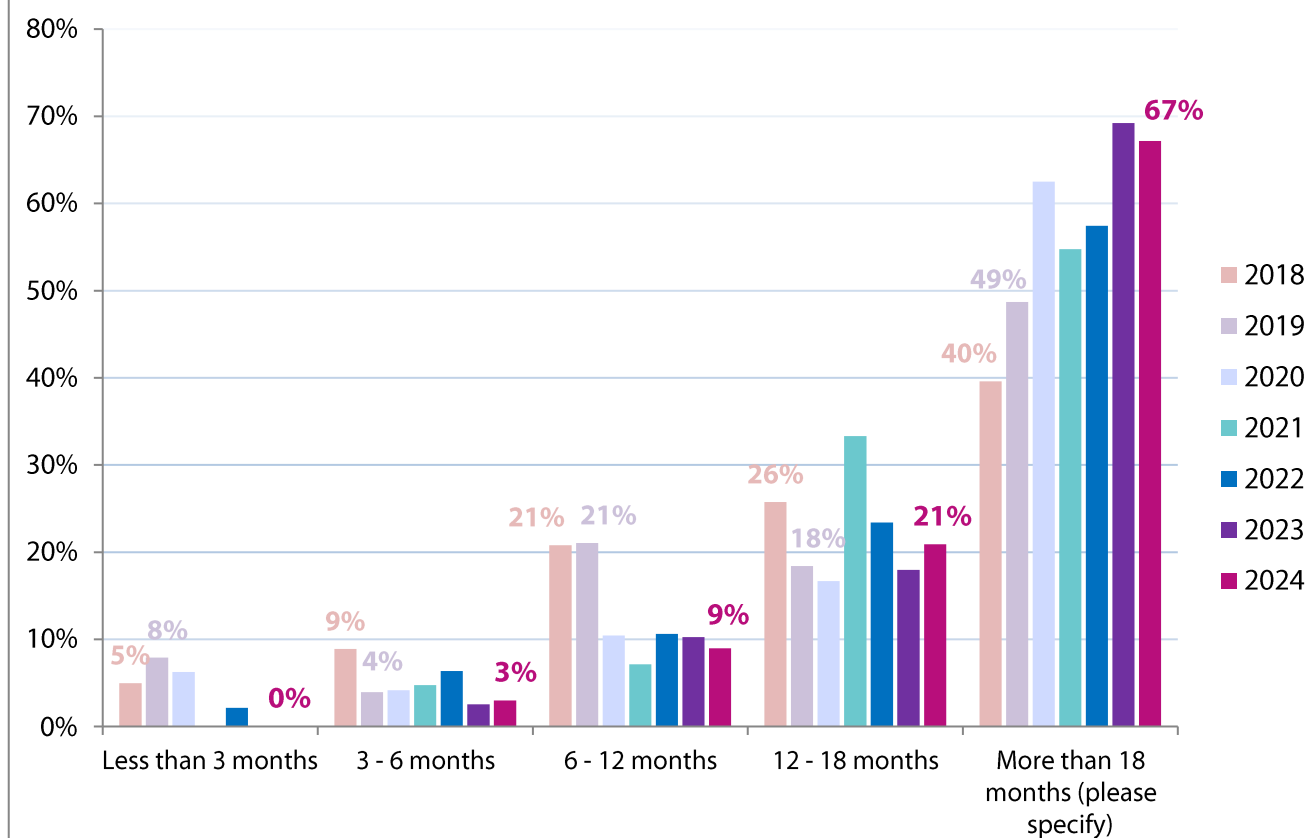
Waiting times for allotments has made national headlines in recent years as the demand for plots has rocketed, especially in the wake of COVID. 7.1 shows just how acute demand has become in the last 5 years, with a more than three-fold increase in the number of authorities reporting over 1000 people on their waiting list for an allotment.



When comparing with the previous two years, it should be noted that the number of authorities reporting over 1000 people on their waiting lists is no longer increasing, remaining the same as last year and with a modest drop from the record high of 2022 (33%). This year is also the first year since 2020 (66%) in which a majority of authorities are reporting fewer than 500 people on their waiting lists (54%).

The reasons why demand is now stabilising can perhaps be explained by the changes to the number of sites being provided by allotment authorities as well as changes in plot sizes. Both of these adjustments are covered in more detail in [5](#) and [6](#).

7.2 What is the average waiting time to receive an allotment plot?



67%

Waiting time of more than 18 months

0%

Waiting time of less than 3 months

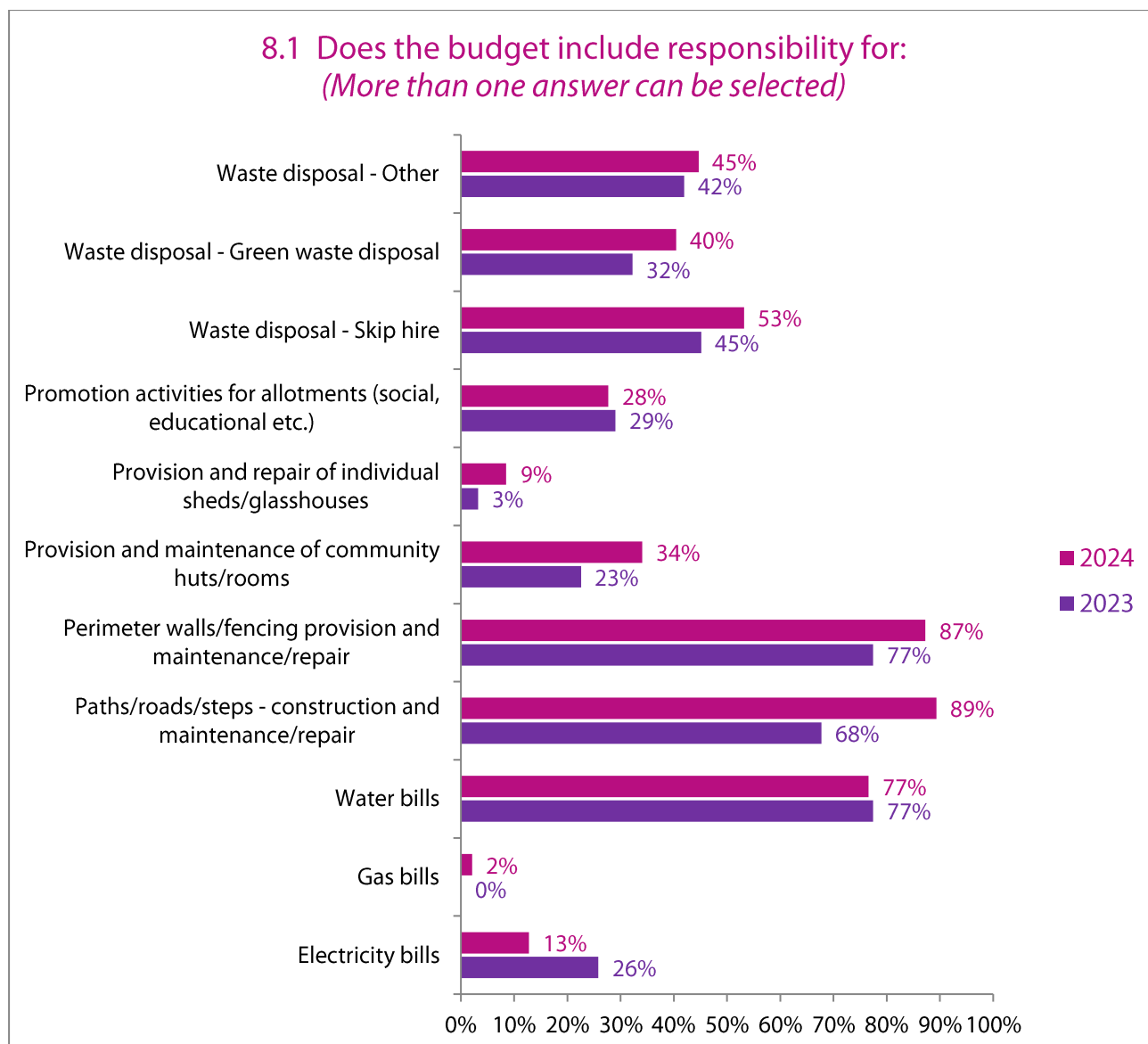
77%

New tenancies restricted to people living within the local authority area

The average wait time for an allotment plot has come down from the record high of 2023, but still remains high at 67%. This compares with 49% in 2019 and 40% in 2018. It is also notable that, for a consecutive year and the third time in four years, there are no authorities reporting average waiting times of less than 3 months.

Despite authorities splitting plots to create smaller plots, which many people are willing to take in order to reduce their waiting time, demand remains very high. Therefore, it is unsurprising that 77% of respondents stated that new tenancies are restricted to people living within the local authority area.

8 Budget



In 8.1, it is noticeable that, broadly speaking, the responsibilities placed on local authority allotment budgets have increased since 2023. Council responsibility for infrastructure has increased:

- Paths/roads/steps - construction and maintenance/repair (+21%)
- Perimeter walls/fencing provision and maintenance/repair (+10%)
- Provision and maintenance of community huts/rooms (+11%)

It is possible many of the infrastructure costs are no longer able to be borne by allotment associations even where sites are jointly managed; income from rents are no longer sufficient to cover expensive works associated with infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

However, allotment holders do appear to be taking a greater responsibility for electricity.

9 Strategies

46%

"Yes"

Does the council have an allotments strategy?

Less than half of authorities report having an allotment strategy. For those authorities who do not have a strategy, some report that allotments are covered in their local plans (see below). In Scotland, authorities report that their food growing strategies – a statutory obligation under Part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – incorporates allotments.

46%

"Yes"

If not, is the council planning to develop one within the next two years?

For those authorities without a strategy in place, almost half report they plan to develop one within the next two years. APSE's own training course – "Managing Allotments in Local Authorities" – equips allotment managers with the tools necessary for designing a successful strategy. You can learn about the course [here](#).

43%

"Yes"

Does your Health and Wellbeing strategy recognise the value of allotments?

The health and wellbeing benefits of maintaining an allotment plot are well-documented. 43% of authorities surveyed report their health and wellbeing strategies recognise the value of allotments.

64%

"Yes"

Does your Local Plan include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites?

Allotments are recognised in para 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as having a role in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles.⁹ Para 124 of the NPPF also asks that *"Planning policies and decisions should: recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife.. and food production."*¹⁰ For this

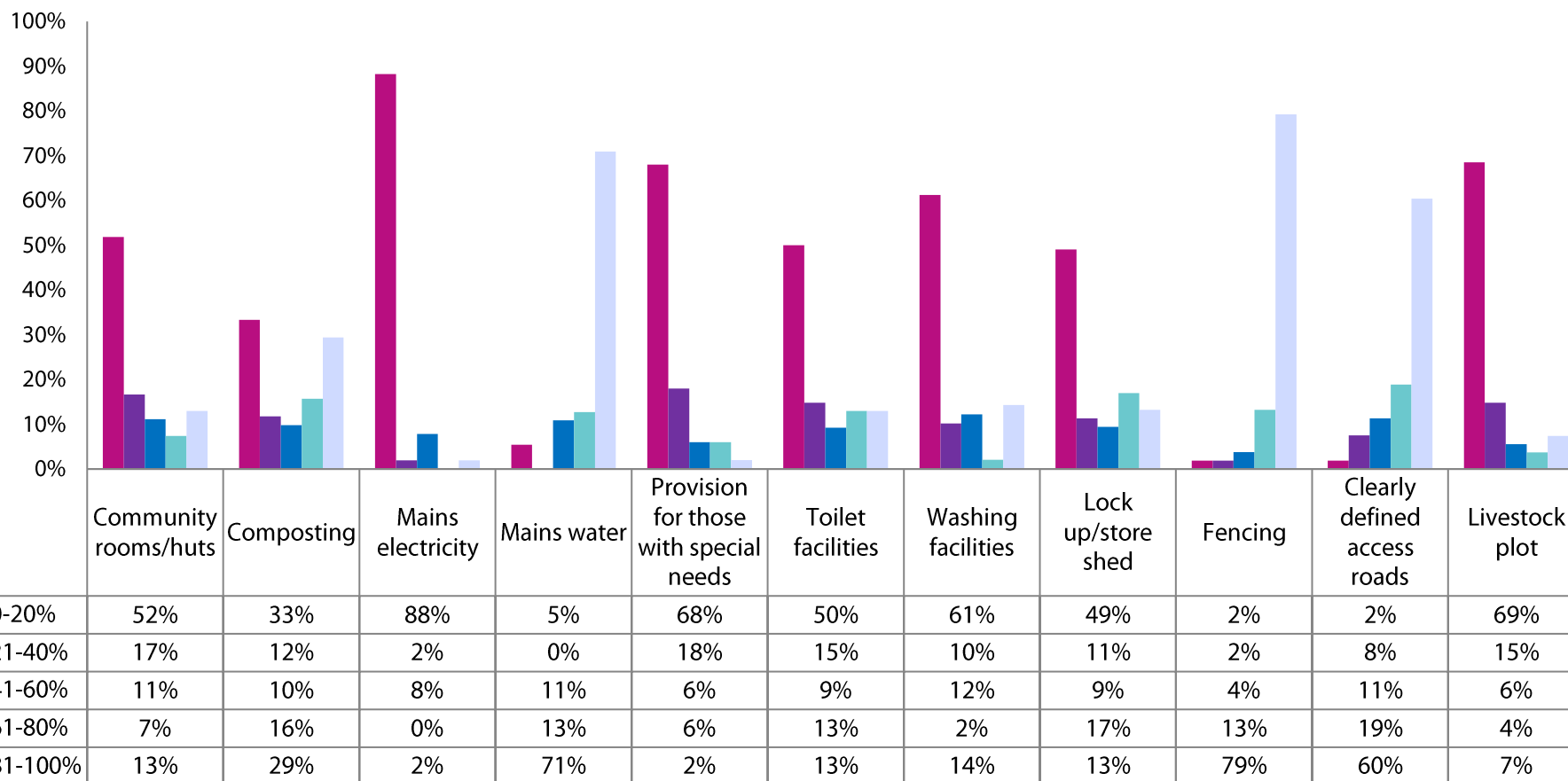
reason, close to two-thirds of authorities report their Local Plans include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/11-making-effective-use-of-land>

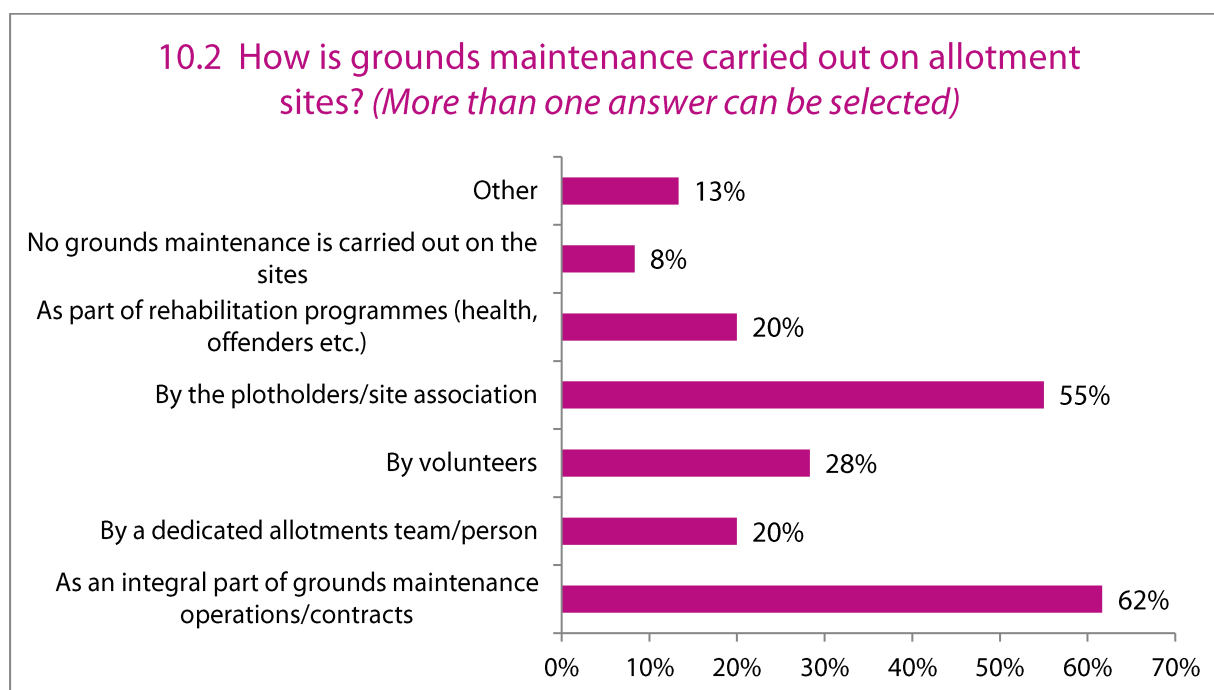
10 Amenities

10.1 What is the approximate percentage of allotment sites with:



10.1 provides a breakdown of the facilities included on allotment sites. Some key observations:

- 71% of authorities provide mains water to 81-100% of sites.
- 31% of authorities provide community rooms/huts to 41-100% of sites.
- 26% of authorities provide toilet facilities to 61-100% of sites.
- 60% of authorities provide clearly defined access roads on 81-100%.
- 79% of authorities provide fencing to 81-100% of sites.



10.2 reveals that, for 62% of authorities, grounds maintenance at allotment sites is carried out as an integral part of grounds maintenance operations/contracts. 20% of authorities employ a dedicated allotments team/person to carry out grounds maintenance; the figure has not dropped below 20% since 2020.

Across the UK, many local authority allotment sites continue to be handed over to allotment associations as part of self-management initiatives. In 10.2, it is revealed that 55% of authorities report that site associations are responsible for maintaining sites. One benefit of this approach is that, at a time of acute local authority budget pressures, associations often have a better chance of raising funds than local authorities. These funds can then, in turn, be invested into the sites.

However, echoing the point raised in 4, there is a risk that non- local authority management of sites culminates in poor management. Even if backed by a robust legal structure, as noted by the South West Counties Allotment Association (SWCCA): *"There are negatives to self-management especially if it is accepted at the wrong time with little support: plot-holders stop turning up for meetings; nobody has the time to do plot inspections; plots become abandoned and, more often than not, one over-worked person ends up trying to cope with all the tasks required to run the site."*¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://allotmentsstockport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/a-guide-to-self-management-2.pdf>

11 Biodiversity/Sustainability

In May 2024, the four UK administrations published a joint UK Biodiversity Framework which aims to coordinate efforts to meet the UK's international obligations.¹⁷

In England, the Environment Act 2021 places a 'biodiversity duty' on public authorities. This means that, as a public authority, you must:

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.¹⁸

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.¹⁹ The Welsh Government is currently reviewing responses to its 'Environmental principles, governance and biodiversity targets: White Paper'²⁰ whilst Northern Ireland's new Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir MLA, has spoken of the need to develop a new Biodiversity Strategy.²¹

Pursuant to the above requirements, local authorities across the UK look to their allotment sites as sources of biodiversity conservation and enhancement:

*"Growing your own food helps reduce your contribution to climate change whilst supporting local access to affordable and healthy food. In addition, allotments are often green corridors and habitats for wildlife, supporting our urban biodiversity. Allotments can also act as nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, helping with both carbon sequestration and flood risk reduction...It is beneficial to both growers and the local wildlife to consider biodiversity when establishing and maintaining allotment sites."*²² **Perth and Kinross Council**

"Allotments, along with parks, playing fields, woodlands and private gardens make up an areas 'green infrastructure'. This green infrastructure helps to alleviate and adapt to the effects of climate change by:

- *Providing areas where heavy rain and flood waters can soak away.*
- *Absorbing carbon dioxide (a major greenhouse gas).*
- *Providing plants that reflect sunlight and offer shade, to help reduce temperatures.*
- *Reducing 'food miles' by growing food locally on allotments sites."*²³ **Salford City Council**

¹⁷ [UK Biodiversity Framework](#)

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

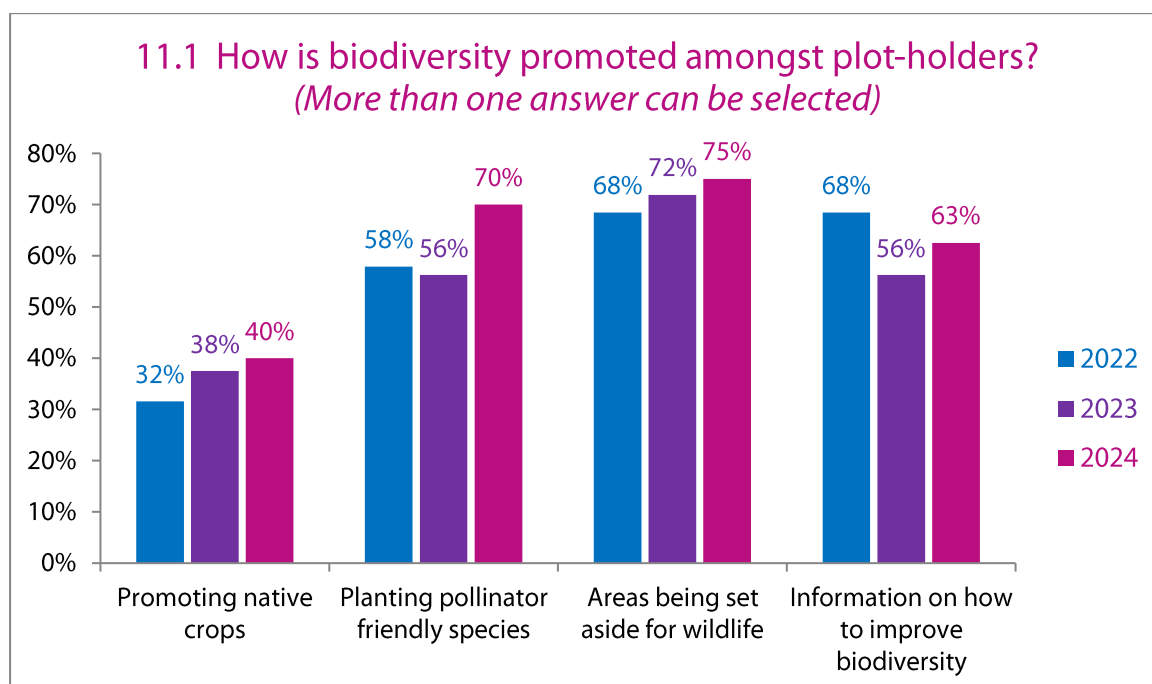
¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/biodiversity-duty-reporting-templates/>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.wales/environmental-principles-governance-and-biodiversity-targets-white-paper>

²¹ <https://www.agendani.com/environment-minister-andrew-muir-mla-towards-a-strong-green-economy/>

²² <https://www.pkclimateaction.co.uk/files/Enhancing-allotments-for-biodiversity.pdf>

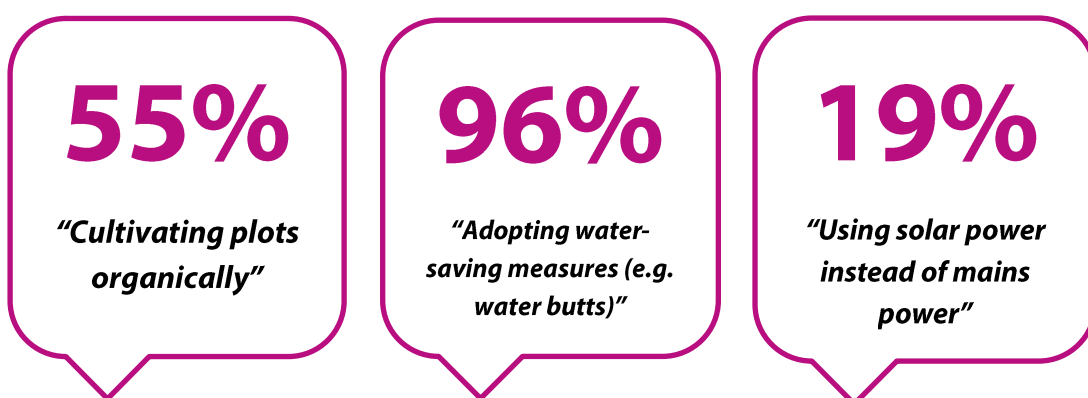
²³ https://services.salford.gov.uk/solar_documents/item%207.3.1%20allotments%20strategy%20and%20policy%20-%20final%20revised.pdf



11.1 reveals authorities have stepped up their biodiversity promotional activity amongst plot-holders in 2024. The steepest increase has occurred in 'planting pollinator-friendly species' which has risen by 14% from 2023; an encouraging trend amidst the ongoing UK decline in pollinator habitats. There have also been modest increases in the number of authorities 'Promoting native crops' and establishing 'Areas set aside for wildlife.'

Glasgow City Council have led the way in raising awareness of how allotments can support wildlife in urban areas. More information about how the Council is influencing the behaviour and practices of plot-holders can be found [here](#).²⁴

How is environmental sustainability promoted with regards to site management?



²⁴ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2020/biodiversity-and-allotments-gardening-in-harmony-with-nature/>

12 Conclusion: Councils managing high demand though waiting times may have peaked

Allotments and community growing initiatives have a long-standing tradition in the United Kingdom, tracing back to the 19th century when they were first established to provide urban workers with access to green spaces and fresh produce. Today, their importance has transcended mere horticultural interests, encompassing environmental sustainability, social cohesion, physical and mental health, food security, education, and economic advantages. Evidence of allotments achieving greater prominence in the national debate can be found in the headlines it has generated in recent years across the print and broadcast media (see [1](#) for references).

APSE has long acknowledged and advocated for allotments to be considered vital components of a sustainable and resilient environment. One can now see this consideration reflected in the environmental programmes of all four UK administrations. The question is whether these commitments at a governmental level are translating into meaningful support and results on the ground; a question this survey is designed to answer.

This survey has found the following:

1. Average wait times remain high but may have peaked in 2023

The multifaceted benefits of allotments and community growing have not gone unnoticed by the public, and waiting lists and times remain stubbornly high. This year, there has been a modest drop in the number of authorities reporting average waiting times of more than 18 months. Therefore, the 2023 survey results may represent a peak in demand as the sector-wide move to reduce standard plot sizes begins to take effect.

2. Rental costs are increasing with more allotment services expected to be cost neutral

The increasing costs for allotment plots can be attributed to several factors, namely increases in maintenance and infrastructure costs as well as budget cuts. Many of the costs associated with maintaining allotment sites such as water supply, fencing, pathways, and waste management, have increased above inflation in recent years. Local councils have had to pass these costs on to plot-holders through higher rents.

The majority of allotments services continue to be subsidised by the local authority. However, there has been a rise in the number of allotment services achieving cost neutrality – this means formerly subsidised allotment services are having to make up for the shortfall in funding by passing these costs on to plot-holders. It should also be stressed that rental fees for local authority allotment plots remain lower than those for private plots – offering good value for money.

3. Plot size reductions prompted by high demand are generally met with approval from existing plot-holders

Owing to demand, many councils are now opting to reduce plots that become available following their vacation. Reductions in size are generally met with approval, both by new and existing holders. Not only does this approach reduce waiting times for prospective allotment holders, but new plot-holders also tend to find smaller plots less daunting and easier to manage, making it a more practical option for those with busy schedules or limited experience. Existing plot-holders have found the approach has helped introduce more young people into sites; providing opportunities for intergenerational interaction where knowledge and skills are exchanged between older and younger generations.

4. Allotments prove fertile ground for promoting biodiversity and sustainable practices

APSE's latest poll with Survation found 68% of people think their local community will need to respond to the effects of climate change on the local environment in the next 10 years.²⁶ One of the foremost contributions of allotments and community gardens is their positive impact on the environment. Not only do they improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and producing oxygen, they also contribute to flood resilience through improved soil permeability. This year's survey found authorities have stepped up their efforts to raise awareness of biodiversity and sustainable practices such as conserving water resources and planting pollinator-friendly species. Not only do allotments contribute enormously to community health and wellbeing strategies, they also represent an incredibly useful tool in local and national climate adaptation strategies.

5. We need to continue to make the case for local authority allotments

The new Labour government plans to build 1.5 million homes over the next five years. In the 2024 King's Speech, the Government announced that their flagship Planning and Infrastructure Bill will *"accelerate the delivery of high-quality infrastructure and housing."*²⁷ The Bill will also *"use development to fund nature recovery."* Specific measures around horticulture or community growing were absent in the Speech.

In the wake of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, one can expect enormous pressure to be exerted on councils to convert allotment land for more profitable uses, like housing or commercial development. Though it is vital we alleviate the acute housing pressures being felt across the UK, it is important that existing allotment sites are protected from development unless improved alternative provision is made. Failure to do so risks jeopardising the health and wellbeing of our local communities, as well as national and local climate change mitigation targets.

²⁶ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/research/current-research-programme/public-attitudes-to-local-council-services-2023/>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024#:~:text=My%20Ministers%20will%20get%20Britain,industry%2C%20skills%20and%20new%20technologies.>

13 How can APSE help?

Report author and APSE Principal Advisor, Matt Ellis, will be presenting the findings of the survey at an online meeting during National Allotments Week on Thursday 15 August. APSE member councils can sign up for the event for free. [Click here to reserve your place.](#)

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Advisory Group network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

13.1 Training

APSE Training has also designed a special interactive online course for those who work in allotment services:

- **Managing Allotments in Local Authorities** - This course provides an introduction to the key issues and principles of allotment management. If you are looking to move towards a more senior position, or you want to grow the skills to understand, develop, and cope with the demands faced by managers, this course will provide a robust overview. You can book your place on the course [here](#).

13.2 Benchmarking for your parks service

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your greenspace service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



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