

## Allotments thrust into the Government spotlight

Allotments may sound more like parish council subject matter than something for the corridors of power in Whitehall. But it would be wrong to make that assumption when Rotherham MP Sarah Champion is around.

She has tabled an amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill - which is part of Government planning reforms - which could see more land for allotments and community gardens being made available.

There is a national shortage of allotments, which have bounced back into fashion after decades in the doldrums. It is estimated there are 90,000 wanting to sign up for a plot, nationally.

She has been working with Mike Farrell, a Rotherham resident and Chair of the National Allotment Society (NAS), to campaign for the changes. Labour's manifesto committed to promote nature recovery, through large-scale projects like riverwalks and national forests.

Sarah's amendment seeks to leverage the opportunity on offer in smaller-scale nature recovery projects. Allotments and community gardens are rich in biodiversity, creating green spaces for wildlife and pollinators.

There is also a growing awareness of the role that these sites play in improving physical and mental health, as well as tackling loneliness, as allotment sites frequently have strong communities of gardeners willing to share their skills and help others.

*Ms Champion* said: "The creation of more allotments and community gardens would generate biodiversity benefits across the country, at relative ease and low cost to the taxpayer."

"Allotments aren't just about vegetables, they are about community. They create space for educational and social projects. In Rotherham, the South Yorkshire WH Community use their allotment to host a weekly Cook and Share Luncheon using allotment grown fruit and veg, for new and old residents alike."

"With so many people on allotment waiting lists across the country, alongside a desperate need for nature recovery, my amendment represents a win-win for the Government."

*Mike Farrell* added: "The waiting lists for allotments are a direct reflection of the lack of available land. With more people recognising the health and environmental benefits of growing their own food, it's vital that we expand access to these vital green spaces to ensure that no one is left waiting."



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