



The Planting for People Proposal.

During the City Development Board Meeting of 10th June 2010, a proposal relating to the use of derelict land for community gardening was put forward. This proposal came about because the Environmental Focus Group, of Dublin Community Forum, has noted the useful inclusion within the draft Dublin City Plan of a new policy to support the provision of community gardens upon unused land. Specifically this states that policy GC15 is:

"To support the provision of community gardens/allotments/ local markets/pocket parks, where feasible and in particular as temporary uses on vacant, under-utilised or derelict sites in the city"

In order to actualise the aims of this policy the Environmental Focus Group's Planting for People Proposal is that:

Dublin City Council should initiate the necessary steps to provide for the short term leasing of both public and private unused land to suitable community groups, and community projects.

- Following on from the success of the Dublin City Guide to Community Gardening booklet, people who want to contribute to society by setting up a community garden within their community need to be enabled to do so.
- A land lease system is already successfully used in Paris (the Green Hand Charter), and this enables derelict and unused land to become community gardens and/or allotments until such time that it is developed.
- Using derelict land/unused land in such a useful way will build social capital in a affordable manner.
- There is a latent need for the public to access unused land for gardening activities, as evidenced by a waiting list of over 500 persons for Dublin City Council allotment plots.

This can best be achieved via the creation of a community charter, separate from, although mandated by the local authority. This charter shall allow for the licensed use of unused land, employing the following code of practice:

- In exchange for the support from the Local Authority in securing the site, preparing the site, and testing the soil, the license shall require that the community group that acquires temporary use of the site maintain it appropriately, acquire necessary insurance, provide supervised access to the public, and do not engage in for profit activities.
- Making use of the DERELICT SITES ACT, 1990, land owners can choose to pay the relevant Dublin Local Authority to maintain derelict and unused land, or alternatively make it available for community gardening, and other community projects.
- The terms of such a license should not compromise the ownership of the land, or cause any hindrance to future development.
- The nature of such a short term license should include a mandatory annual hiatus in use, and occupation of such sites that are licensed to community groups.

The Environmental Focus Group wishes to bring this proposal not only to the attention of the city council, but also to landowners and stakeholders across Dublin. Organisations who own, manage, or maintain significant tracts of unused land within Dublin will be instrumental in providing the support, and cooperation to advance this attempt to improve community development, and the green infrastructure of Dublin.

Regards
Robert Moss
Environmental Focus Group Chairman.