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Our Reference: 202400394845
Your Reference: -

29 January 2024

Dear Ariane Burgess,

Thank you for your letter of 22 January referring to the recent dissolution of the Scottish Allotment and Gardens Society (SAGS) and the impact on the Tripartite Group.

As you will be aware, the Tripartite Group was established with the original aim of developing constructive dialogue around Part 9 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and to monitor the early stages of implementation.

The terms of reference of the group were first reviewed in April 2021 in recognition that the original objectives had been achieved. A further review was conducted by the remaining members in November 2023, after the Scottish Government was notified of SAGS' forthcoming dissolution. Following this review and subsequent discussions, the remaining members agreed to disband the Tripartite Group.

The well-established working relationship between officials and the local authority members of the Tripartite Group continues on an informal basis and will maintain an important link between local authorities and the Scottish Government for allotment related issues. Good Food Nation officials are continuing to explore alternative ways to support local authorities to meet their legislative requirements from Part 9, including the proposed workshops you mention. With support from APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence), we have contacted all 32 local authorities to gauge interest in future workshops and will be looking to organise these in due course.

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As noted in our response to your report in December 2022, the Scottish Government continues to acknowledge the importance of knowledge transfer and collaboration between those involved in community growing. We continue to give careful consideration to the need and remit of a national partner forum.

As part of the proposed workshops, we will consult with local authority colleagues to identify their requirements from such a group. Careful consideration of the costs associated with establishing and ongoing facilitation of such a forum will be particularly pertinent given the ongoing budget challenges faced by all levels of government.

This financial year, the Scottish Government has awarded a further £19,800 to GrowGreen Scotland. This money was, in part, to continue supporting the Community Food Growing Forum. We encourage any group, whether they are allotment organisations, community gardening or food growing groups, to engage with Get Growing Scotland and the Community Food Growing Forum. Scottish Government officials have a good working relationship with stakeholder groups such as Grow Green and Social Farms and Gardens. Given the dissolution of SAGS and subsequent loss of a national body, we will continue to engage with representatives from these key stakeholder groups to ensure the voices of allotment holders and community food growers are heard.

Yours sincerely

GILLIAN MARTIN

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