

SEEDING OUR FUTURE



Round Table Online Discussion: September 23, 2020

1. PURPOSE OF MEETING

The aim of this session was to gather inputs from local individuals and community organisations on where there is a need for further action to address food security and related food poverty issues in and around Bridport, in the context of Climate Change. Another Round Table is scheduled with producers and retailers for October 20.

The guiding principles are to build on existing initiatives; involve and strengthen local producers and retailers; and give producers a fair price for their goods, while making them widely available and affordable.

2. WHO ATTENDED – *See annex for list of participants.*

The session was attended by twenty people. Participants included representatives or leaders of several relevant community organisations, including Bridport Local Food Group and Transition Town Bridport, and a range of individuals with interests and expertise in such areas as education, health and nutrition. We also had Simon Platten, head of Tamar Grow Local, and Caroline Richards, Dorset Food and Drink Co-Ordinator: these are organisations which Seeding our Future (Sof) has been talking to about collaboration and possible help with grant funding applications.

3. BACKGROUND TO THIS EVENT

There has been work on local food in Bridport for years, and there are many independent retailers, local ecological producers and community enterprises. The Bridport Local Food Group (BLFG) is effectively an umbrella group and stages the annual Food Festival; there is the Cookery Kit, Discover Farming, Community Orchard & allotments, various food poverty projects and educational initiatives, and much more. In the past there have been some overarching projects e.g. Local Food and Land Trust, and Food Future Bridport, which included a map, a website, and ran campaigns.

Seeding Our Future has published a research report Growing Through Climate Change, and a Briefing focussed on arable producers, and begun research into who produces what and where in the county. There are now four 'Allotment Ambassadors' sharing climate-friendly tips. SoF held an online seminar with TTB and BLFG in June 2020, which raised the need to address systemic change and the interrelated issues of poverty and health, which led to this roundtable discussion. <https://futurescanning.org/local-communities/>

4. FORMAT

The main part of the session was an open discussion on a number of specific questions about potential initiatives: the key points are summarised below.

5. FOOD POVERTY

We spent some time on this issue, with inputs from people actively involved in a couple of the current initiatives. Some of the main points were as follows:

- There are a number of food poverty initiatives in the area, including food banks and garden glut stalls. Will Austin, Bridport Town Clerk, recently convened a meeting between the main groups.
- Important to see people facing food poverty as having some agency, not as helpless victims. Ways of enabling them would include more land and training to help them grow some of their own food, and cookery classes on affordable food from local ingredients.
- Perhaps recipe or cooking tips could be included in food bank provisions?
- We need a long-term, systemic approach to enable change from within low-income areas.
- Engage Magna Housing.
- Research with users of food banks and also others who are in poverty or have low and variable incomes could help to direct future efforts.
- The National Food Service was mentioned as a good role model, where people cook and eat together, rather than just receiving supplies from a food bank. Another relevant project is Tomorrow Today Street.
- Tony Gibbins and the Friendly Food Club could help organise cookery workshops locally (various restaurants have also offered this e.g. Red Brick Café, Soulshine, Olive Tree).
- The main way in which the climate change aspect of food security could interface with actions to address food poverty and hunger is through awareness and cookery skills.

6. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

This topic was about the general public, as distinct from the food poverty issues above. The sharp increase in demand for growing your own food, as well as the demand for courses since the onset of COVID-19 was noted, as was the large number of skills and produce-sharing groups on social media.

Our discussion was around education in the general, informal sense, with the main aims of motivating behaviour changes to buying more local good food, and diet changes which could increase climate resilience (e.g. more local flour and legumes, less meat). We need to be sure we are talking about enhancing our skills in relation to Local Food rather than to 'fine dining'.

There was strong support in the discussion for the value of face-to-face contact, and informal events which were participatory, entertaining, recreational and highly accessible. Even under current guidelines, there is some scope for this, e.g. in small groups, visiting allotments, engaging children and young people, making use of the mobile Cooking Kit, and we can be planning for events in the Spring. Suggestions included making use of advertising techniques, reference was made to a Glut project in Exeter. This topic relates closely to premises, see below.

7. PREMISES

The discussion recognised the value of physical spaces to enable a number of food initiatives. In particular:

- A welcoming location would be ideal for some of the education ideas, preferably with a teaching kitchen for cookery sessions.
- As well as the possibility of being in the centre of town, for more outreach the location could also be in Skilling or Court Orchard.
- Given the costs of premises and maintaining activities, short-term pop-up spaces should also be considered.
- There was a note of caution over creating something new as opposed to better joining together what already exists.
- In our online poll, there was also some interest in the idea of a shared warehouse which could have both communal and private sub-let spaces.

- Increasing access to land for new entrant producers e.g. County Farms, Growing Co-Ops (Robin Carter)

8. WEBSITE

Our discussion recognised a number of benefits which a website could deliver: not only about suppliers and retailers, but also about healthy cooking, nutrition, availability of both teaching and small batch production kitchens, plus events and classes, as well as information about and linking existing community initiatives. Preferably this would be an expansion of an existing website, such as that of BFLG Bridport Local Food Group.

9. NEXT STEPS

This event will feed in to SoF's work related to a local food hub or network: Alan will re-draft the 'hub' concept as a result of the meeting. The event will also feed in to the [discussion with retailers and food producers](#) to be held on 20th October.

Concerning poverty –bearing in mind the Town Council's initiative to bring together existing groups working on food poverty, SoF will seek to link with these groups in the respect to awareness and skills about climate change and local good food.

We hope people will continue to let us know what help they could contribute and what they are and can be doing next.

Seeding Our Future will continue to issue occasional E-Newsletters to share information about what is happening in relation to food security. To keep in touch with the ongoing discussions as they develop please [subscribe to the Newsletter](#), and pass the word on.

ANNEX – List of Participants

Alan Heeks	Seeding Our Future founder, Deep Adaptation Advocate
Candida Blaker	SoF, environmentalist, farmer and grower, formerly Food Future Bridport
Caroline Richards	Dorset Food and Drink Coordinator, 190 members; Df&D also partners with Farmers Markets and is increasingly working on the field to fork links.
Jo Sage	Melplash Agricultural Society Chair; Meadow Farm; Project food – teaching cookery – free courses.
Josef Davies-Coates	Establishing a zero waste and food buying Co-Op with existing retailers
Kathy Dare	Chair of Bridport Local Food Group (BLFG), annual Food Festival, mobile Cooking Kit
Mary Buesnel	Home Education, involved with Trill Farm, HOME; Food Studies at Exeter Uni. Nutrition.
Peter Garlick	BLFG Treasurer. Education.
Peter Wilson	BLFG; education; food poverty, runs glut project at St. Swithuns
Simon Platten	Tamar Grow Local
Rachel Millson	SoF Allotment Ambassador (Symene), Home Educator, Red Brick café
Raja Jarrah	SoF; Climate Change consultant, Neighbourhood Plan and BTC Climate Emergency Plan.
Richard Toft	Energy Local Bridport; Youth Centre. Links between food & energy.
Robert Golden	Film maker; HOME in Bridport & Edible Garden. Poverty.
Rose Allwork	Chair BTC Climate sub-Committee; educator.
Sam Wilberforce	Chair Transition Town Bridport
Sarah Wilberforce	Transition Town Bridport; Edible Garden at St Mary's School. Glut stall
Scott Lighten	Portland Transition Towns, XR, Portland in Planet, Tumbeldown Farm (Weymouth)
Sue Beckers	Retired GP; Friendly Food Club. Reverse diabetes by eating real food.
Tina Ellen Lee	HOME in Bridport; Opera Circus. Large network.

Apologies:

Carrie Gamble	Food Bank; Cupboard Love; Harmony Project
Rosie Russell	Rights Respecting Town
Teresa Perrella	producer, gardener; Edible Garden project @ St Mary's Primary School
Veronica Hudson	environmentalist, farmer, artist
Bob Middleton	Social worker, cook
Charlie Francis- Pape	
Kate Michell	
Fiscus Taylor	