

Report to Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item:

A.3

Meeting Date: 22nd July 2021
Portfolio: Communities, Health and Wellbeing
Key Decision: No
Policy and Budget Framework: Yes
Public / Private: Public

Title: SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES - FOOD CARLISLE FROM BRONZE TO SILVER
Report of: Darren Crossley, Deputy Chief Executive
Report Number: CS 29/21

Purpose/ Summary:

An update is provided to the Panel on the progress of Food Carlisle, a Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Partnership, who are working towards achieving silver SFP status. Carlisle City Council are one of the partners of Food Carlisle.

This report provides the panel with information on the ongoing work which Food Carlisle is currently undertaking. Work resumed in January 2021 following the appointment of the Coordinator.

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel supports Food Carlisle in working towards the Silver Sustainable Food Places award.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	22/7/2021
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Sustainable Food Places Partnership

Sustainable Food Places is a partnership programme led by the Soil association, Food Matters and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. Sustainable Food Places is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund. It has become one of the most rapidly expanding social movements of modern times. The Partnership programme brings together pioneering food partnerships from across the UK, which are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. The aim of the partnership is to work across all aspects of the food system to solve some of today's most pressing social, environmental, and economic issues.

1.2 Food Carlisle

1.2.1 History and Aims

Food Carlisle was a founding member of the Sustainable Food Cities (now Sustainable Food Places) Network in August 2013. We developed a Charter and action plan to advance this work and projects throughout the city and gained our Bronze award in 2018. This project was jointly funded by Sustainable Food Places and Carlisle City Council.

Food Carlisle strives to be a beacon of good practice to inspire others. We are creating a city where we work in partnership to empower change towards a vibrant and inclusive food culture. We aim to encourage every setting to serve healthy, sustainable, delicious food, and make it accessible for all. We are starting a local food revolution and aim to share our knowledge and experience with other interested parties who recognise the need for change.

Food is not only at the centre of some of our greatest problems but is also a vital part of the solution, with every one of us having an impact on our local food system. With good local food we can achieve better health, reduce the impact of poverty, and build a more sustainable local economy and society. The Carlisle Food Charter was developed with key partners, stakeholders, and communities, and sets out what we want to achieve in Carlisle, so that everyone benefits from having “good local food for all”. We want as many people and organisations as possible to endorse the Charter and proactively work with us in making Carlisle a fantastic food city with a flourishing food culture.

1.2.2 Importance of Food in 2021

Following the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit, food is at the forefront of people's minds. The public has recognised the need for increased self-sustainability, and most people have put weight on because of lockdown, which will ultimately pressurise the NHS further in years to come, as levels of obesity soar.

Furthermore, there is increased awareness of the climate emergency, with Glasgow hosting COP 26 later this year, and an additional benefit of becoming more self-sustainable is reducing the carbon footprint of the food we consume. One way of doing this, and increasing the quality of food eaten, is to support local suppliers. We need to stem the tide of supermarket consumerism, encouraging citizens to

take an interest in the provenance of their food, grow some fruit and veg and support local producers. Collectively, these will support the local economy, create closer knit communities, encourage people to utilise allotments, gardens, and community spaces, thereby improving their physical health and mental wellbeing. We are extremely lucky to live in an area surrounded by farms and quality growers, which we must support, or they will disappear. Furthermore, residents will take pride in where they live and get to know their neighbours, making Carlisle District a better place to live.

1.2.3 The Journey to Silver

A further successful bid for funding to SFP in late 2020 enabled Food Carlisle to embark on the journey from Bronze to Silver Award status. Matched funding from Carlisle City Council allowed for the creation of the post of Food Carlisle Co-ordinator, initially for one year, and Emma Mackie was appointed to the post in January 2021.

The journey from Bronze to Silver involves establishing cross-sector food partnerships to drive the transition to a healthy, sustainable and more equitable food system. There are six key objectives which need to be acted on in order to progress to Silver status:

- Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
- Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
- Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
- Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy
- Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains
- Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and ending food waste.

1.2.4 Current Projects

1.2.4.1 Resilience Grant Projects

Food Carlisle aims to include everyone in this fundamental shift. Following the Carlisle Food Charter's guiding principle of "good local food for all" and securing modest funding from Sustainable Food Places for long term food resilience projects, we have started a community "no dig" allotment in a land locked City Council site within Riverside housing. We have secured support from several organisations:

- 80 m³ of composted food waste was kindly donated by A.W. Jenkinson Forest Products
- horse manure from local stables
- an abundance of healthy seedlings and invaluable advice from the Green Man Market Garden at Bothel
- support, advice and plants from Cumbria Organic Gardeners and Farmers.

Not only are allotments beneficial for user's mental health and wellbeing, community gardens are increasingly viewed as an untapped but vital link in the production of sustainable food for all. Hopefully, with some input from nearby residents, any surplus produce grown on the site will be donated to our Affordable

Food Hubs in Carlisle. We are currently growing a variety of vegetables to support the amazing work the Food Hubs are already doing, especially with increased demand during the pandemic. The aim of the project is to evaluate methods of soil restoration, demonstrate good practice as well as support people in need. We are also supporting another community allotment in Denton Holme, which is growing food for the Affordable Food Hubs, by helping them to purchase tools, a shed and contribute towards their allotment rent.

Unfortunately, an undesirable side-effect of Covid has been the increased reliance of residents on food banks. Food Carlisle were successful in the food resilience grant application from Sustainable Food Places, to support the community with longer term food resilience. We are consulting Affordable Food Hubs and Food Banks in the District regarding what further support they require to assist them to becoming more sustainable. We are helping establish links between excess produce and affordable food hubs, as well as supporting local food networks with this grant funding.

Food Carlisle recently organised a Plant, Food and Wellbeing Fair in Bitts Park, which was populated with local stall holders and very well supported by the general public. Positive feedback was received from a number of the stall holders, who were delighted to be able to interact with people after some relaxation in Covid restrictions. This event was supported by the City Council and the resilience grant funding.

1.2.4.2 Local Food Network

Food Carlisle has recently become the North Cumbria hub for the Open Food Network and hopes to support local producers who lack facilities to sell to local people to reach a bigger market. OFN already operates in North Lake District, with whom we are currently collaborating so that the range of produce can be expanded as well as providing joint support. Regular contact with a number of local producers, veg box suppliers and small shops has provided the impetus for us to examine ways to maintain and improve its visibility and reach. Veg box supply and ordering from local producers boomed during the pandemic and we will continue to support local businesses and short supply chains to ensure this growth is sustained.

1.2.4.3 Community Growing

Food Carlisle continues to support Brampton and Longtown Rotary's Incredible Edible project, which utilises City Council land to grow fruit and vegetables, tended and harvested by the general public. Going forward, Food Carlisle will support the City Council in developing a "growing license" so other community groups can apply to take on a plot of land to grow fruit and vegetables. Food Carlisle is now the NW network Co-ordinator for "Good to Grow", an online platform supporting food growing in the UK, aiming to get more people involved in community gardens. Gardens can register for free to promote themselves locally to volunteers and organisations, have access to cheaper insurance and take part in coordinated events across the country such as Good to Grow Day, and there are plans to collaborate with Food for Life as well. Currently there are two large allotments registered, and they both took part in Good to Grow Day. Encouraging allotments and community gardens to sign up to the network gives us a better oversight of what food is being grown in the Carlisle District, where and the level of community involvement.

1.2.5 Healthy Weight Declaration

Work undertaken by Food Carlisle aligns with the goals of the Healthy Weight Declaration. Under SugarSmart Carlisle we ran the “Fizz Free February” campaign, to encourage people to give up fizzy drinks for their health, as well as the health of the planet. The Graphics team produced some fact cards and worksheets were sent to parties which had pledged to be “Sugar Smart” previously. Food Carlisle aims to secure additional pledges throughout the year and will be taking part in Sugar Smart September. The project was presented to the Smile4Life team at North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, who look forward to future collaborations.

Following discussions with community centres, we are planning a pilot trial for healthy food and drink provisions, reducing the availability of HFSS foods. If successful, this model can be expanded to other areas of procurement.

At our Plant, Food and Wellbeing Fair, all the stallholders were local to North Cumbria, selling locally made goods, and rather than have a burger van on site, we asked a local caterer to provide healthy options. Free fresh fruit was handed out and freshly-made small portions of pizza (using local ingredients with fat and sugar content minimised), was also offered.

Open Farm Sunday at Susan’s Farm was attended by Food Carlisle, to raise awareness of food waste and promote healthy eating. Surplus produce, which would normally have gone to landfill, was offered to the general public. Information leaflets were handed out, with contacts for food hubs, healthy living ideas and local producers. Food Carlisle hopes to attend more events like these to promote the link between healthy living and a healthier planet, which creates a positive impact on the local food system.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Support Food Carlisle

It is proposed that the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel supports Food Carlisle in working towards the Silver Sustainable Food Places award. We require backing from the Council to transform catering and procurement policies, ensuring the supply chain is locally sourced where possible which would ultimately have less of an impact on the planet. This would help us advance to achieving the silver SFP award.

3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

3.1 Policy SP7 Valuing heritage and cultural identity

8. *“Key cultural assets encompassing... local food and drink...”*

Working with artisan producers, particularly of products directly related to the landscape and climate, to improve long term resilience and ability to withstand the impacts of events such as Covid 19. We have a proposed future project to link food and heritage sites.

3.2 Policy SP8 Green and Blue Infrastructure

Justification 3.76 that green and blue infrastructure networks *“also constitute an important mechanism for building resilience against and countering the impacts and causes of climate change.”*

Justification 3.78 that G and BI *“improve the quality of life through tackling health and wellbeing inequalities and deprivation’ and enhance ‘sustainability and resilience through presenting an opportunity to future proof the district”.*

Food Carlisle is actively encouraging, providing a small amount of financial assistance and instigating the setting-up of community gardens for food production on unused land in a way that cares for the soil and will provide fresh high quality local vegetables and fruit to those least able to afford it on the doorstep.

3.3 Policy SP9 Healthy and Thriving Communities

1. Creating high quality and inclusive environments that support people in making healthy choices.

Our recent Plant Food and Wellbeing Fair held in Bitts Park was aimed at just that. See the main text for further contributions. We are also working with some of the affordable food hubs on a sustainable model which effectively subsidises high quality local food becoming available to those least able to afford it together with reducing the amount of good food which currently ends up in landfill

6. Protecting and promoting the role of community food growing spacesin providing social and mental health benefits and access to healthy, affordable locally-produced food as part of Carlisle’s role as a Food City

Refer to the discussion of Food Carlisle’s role in policy SP8 above.

Justification 3.92 *“Carlisle District is a founding member of the Sustainable Food Cities network which strives to create a city where good food flourishes and where we work in partnership to empower change towards a vibrant and inclusive food culture. As part of the commitment to sustainable development, sustainable food production will be promoted in consideration of its contribution to health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, local commercial enterprise prosperity and strengthening communities...”*

Please refer to the main text for a brief outline of Food Carlisle’s current activities on all these aspects of sustainable food production.

3.4 Policy EC8 Food & Drink

Justification 4.36 *...“to facilitate the creation of a vibrant and viable food and drink offer across the District.....through enabling appropriate growth of food and drink related leisure services which....will complement a centre’s retail offer, the District’s visitor offer and support the evening economy ...”*

Food Carlisle is absolutely committed to encouraging a high quality yet healthy food and drink offer, with the emphasis on locally produced food through a variety of initiatives such as accreditations and awards.

3.5 Policy EC9 Arts, Culture, Tourism and Leisure Development and Policy EC11 Rural Diversification

Justification 4.4 *“...sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that aid rural diversification...”*

Food Carlisle is working with some rural producers to create a district-wide sustainable local food offer aimed at both tourists and local residents.

3.6 Policy IP5 Waste Minimisation and the Recycling of Waste

Justification 6.24 *The principles for sustainable waste management are clearly established at the national level.*

Again, Food Carlisle is absolutely committed to reducing the amount of food which ends up in landfill or is otherwise needlessly wasted. We are highlighting the amount of perfectly good food which often never even reaches the retail outlets for which it is intended. Our stand at Open Farm Sunday recently generated an enormous amount of interest and amazement amongst all generations at the types and amount of food currently destined for landfill.. We are also promoting gleaning of eg potato fields.

Justification 6.25 *“Carlisle CC currently aims to have at least 50% of all household waste disposed of sustainably either through recycling or composting.”* (This was by 2020, we do not have up-to-date figures).

Our no-dig community garden aims to be a trial ground for various composting techniques and different ways of using green waste particularly. We are working with Cumbria Organic Gardeners and Farmers and Master Composters from Garden Organic.

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**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL –

PROPERTY SERVICES -

FINANCE –

EQUALITY –

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE –