

Report of the Bridport Food Matters Stakeholder Event

2 March 2023, at 6pm in the WI Hall, Bridport

Introduction

On Thursday 2 March 2023 Bridport Food Matters (BFM) brought together a wide range of food-related stakeholders from the Bridport area to discuss plans for a new community food hub.

From diverse community groups and local businesses, such as the town's surplus food offers, farmers, growers, producers, retailers, schools, cooks, statutory organisations, activists and more, over 40 representatives attended the event to discuss the plans over a bowl of hearty freshly made veggie soup. See [here](#) for photos.

1. Opening remarks, Bridport Town Mayor, Ian Bark

The Bridport Town Mayor, Ian Bark opened the meeting by reminding attendees of the United Nations Committee on Food Security's definition of 'food security'.

Food security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Sadly, there are ever-increasing numbers of people whose daily reality is far from that UN definition. Food banks, glut stalls and soup kitchens, he said, all provide valuable support in times of need. But they are only a short-term solution.

The climate crisis is, of course, a major cause of food insecurity and this problem is set to worsen as the global population increases to a predicted 10bn by 2050. Farmers, governments and scientists, thus, face the challenge of increasing food production without exacerbating environmental degradation.

Bridport is surrounded by AONB, agricultural land which has the potential to produce vast amounts of nutritious food. A food hub will create a system whereby food products arrive, are processed and distributed direct to all the community including those most in need. It is essentially a hub with multiple input and output spokes attached.

Of course, none of this happens by magic. In reality it takes vast amounts of time, effort, and money. This meeting is set to explore some of the answers as Bridport moves towards achieving food security for all.

2. What are we proposing? Candida Dunford Wood, Acting BFM Chair

We recognise that there are many organisations which have been working on different aspects of the food chain and food security for many years. BFM has been in existence for 4, addressing some aspects of food security including adapting to climate change, and has held several events related to a possible food hub of some sort.

The community food hub has become the main focus of BFM — evolving and expanding from a primarily virtual to a physical and practical hub space, where a range of food initiatives can come together with community consumers under one roof.

The purpose of this event is to share our thinking about it, as well as to hear from stakeholders about how it could work, and how we can collaborate.

The proposed Hub will include a café with a prep kitchen, a people's supermarket, room for community food initiatives. Some of these would be existing food offers — e.g. the Waste-Not-Want refill shop, and hopefully community projects such as free- and other food surplus stalls. It will also enable information exchange – where links can be made between different local food projects, and knowledge and experience can be shared. These span a buy-grow-cook-eat cycle, in a way which mutually reinforce each other.

This will be one element of the town's collective efforts towards creating greater resilience and food security. Food is at the heart of community cohesion and helps build our town's and its people's resilience.

Our food hub Vision

The hub will be a welcoming, inclusive, community-driven, creative and social space, open to all:

- a vibrant gathering place — for discussion, information, skills, ideas, connections,
- a place which embraces, integrates and empowers different sectors of our community
- a place that can address the inter-related pillars of sustainability – economic, environmental, and community.

Mission

- enable more people in the Bridport area, especially those with less-than-subsistence incomes, to access and enjoy good quality, affordable food which is healthy for people and for the planet;
- to build independence, community resilience and food security.

Why a community food hub?

- The urgent need to address food poverty, food security and resilience, in the face of the ongoing inter-related economic, cost-of-living, health and climate crises
- The need to communicate both challenges and solutions, and for us all to be open to changing our behaviour
- The need for community, to overcome isolation, to integrate different sectors of Bridport society, and to build the heart of a community around healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all
- The need to connect up the dots, bring things together and build on what exists — to reach a range of people in a variety of ways, so we're more than sum of our parts.

Read BFM's Aims and Objectives in detail [here](#).

3. What will the hub include? Luana Wilson, Waste Not Want

This is a project with food and people at the very heart. All aspects are being approached with an inclusive and judgement-free nature and the intention to increase local food supply and bridge the gap between food production and consumption.

We have been researching and taking advice from other projects of a similar nature up and down the country, such as: Tamar Grow Local, Unicorn Grocery in Manchester and Nature's Nutrition in Bideford. We will shortly be visiting Turning Heads in Torbay.

To deliver our aims, we need a multi-pronged approach:

- The first is a physically, financially and culturally accessible **people's supermarket**, supplying nutritious, natural, low-waste and refillable food, household and bathroom options, and with an emphasis on fresh and local supply where possible.

This is a development on WNWN which will be rebranded as a community-owned, not-for-profit to further inclusivity. We are looking at approaches for the supermarket, such as a varied pricing structure, a subscription model, or a combination of both.

The hub will also include:

- **A community café** – affordable and healthy, supplied by local and surplus produce
- **A kitchen** – which could be used for teaching, preserving, prep kitchen, etc.
- **Workshop/ event area** – which could be used by food-related groups: as a space for cooking classes, workshops, training, skills and other small-scale community events. Space for a range of **community food projects** to use
- Potentially a **growing space**? To feed the café & for sharing skills.
- **Information** provision and exchange about what's going on about sourcing, growing, buying and cooking local produce and good-value, high-quality, nutritious food; climate resilience resources and support.

We hope we can foster a self-supporting hub for everyone including those most in need.

4. Where have we got to? Sarah Carney, BFM Secretary

BFM is in the process of setting up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Our constitution has been designed to be as flexible, democratic and inclusive as possible. It will allow us, for instance:

- to exist for the benefit of the whole community of Bridport and the surrounding area
- to make membership free and equal — all Bridport area residents will automatically be associate members
- to ensure that the organisation is controlled/managed by our users and the local community themselves. All those who wish to be full voting members need merely to sign up to membership – it will be one-member-one vote and thus, a fully democratic and inclusive community hub run for the community by the community.
- to have 'network' members — stakeholder businesses and organisations and charities which support the aims of the group and participates in its activities.

The CIO will be the umbrella organisation overseeing and managing the hub itself.

Where we are now

Our main problem is finding a premises — a permanent, ideally, high-street building from which to operate the community hub.

In the meantime, we want to get on with the job by holding various pop-up events at every opportunity we can find, such as within the BFM marquee at the Bridport Local Food Group's annual Bridport Food Festival and at the Christmas Cheer market, as well as engaging with various sectors of the local food community, and researching other examples of food hubs etc.

5. Stakeholder feedback

Over a meal of home-made soup, each table of attendees were asked to discuss a number of questions. They fed back at the end of the session and participated in a question-and-answer session and further discussion. The collated feedback follows:

How do you think you / your organisation could collaborate with us (and vice versa)?

- Food draws people together — Communal cooking — teaching cooking skills to bring families and people together (using the Food Festival cooking kit).
- DIY Take Away Club — people cook together led by a guest chef and take away the product — learning together
- Cooking equipment library
- Tamarisk Farm — would be delighted to be hosted by the food hub to expand the educational stuff they already do at the farm as well as increase access to the farm. To facilitate the intersection of education and learning and exploring the symbolic aspect of food, eg linking people and connecting through food. An example is what happens at St Swithin's re: the intergenerational teaching of parents with children, bonding and learning together
- Springtail Farm — has fresh produce which could be used for events at the hub and are open to other ways of collaboration on events and farm educational workshops.
- United Diversity Bridport members are working on Incredible Edible which has lots of overlap
- Teaching/encouraging allotments for self-sufficiency instead of lawns growing in all spaces available.
- Tina Ellen Lee, Home in Bridport — offers to organise pop-ups involving the arts; the International Democracy Weekend in September which is to focus on climate change and food security; plus concerts and events. They do a lot of work with young people and put on events, so could do a pop-up event around climate change. They are hugely interested in inclusivity and bridging the gap and really want to help.
- Jon from the Edible Garden and Home Allotment — collaboration in terms of opening up possibilities of bridging the gap between the 'haves and have nots' and creating inclusivity
- Collaborate in trying to change planning laws for agriculture, land opportunities and training
- Bridge to Better Food — [Building Better Food Systems Conference - Landworkers Alliance](#)
- Totally Locally Bridport — information sharing with local indi businesses.
- Bridport Community Orchard – constitution says that anyone can pick the fruit and allows them to look after and plant fruit trees. There's also the potential for fruit swap and community juicing.
- Fruit collection from households with trees
- Sharing crops/surplus/learning opportunities/volunteering time
- Possible collaboration between Bridport co-housing
- Anna Vogel, Red Brick Café — offers to help set up the community café, running cooking workshops and healthy eating initiatives
- Bridport Local Food Group — offered BFM a tent at the Bridport Food/Beer Festival on Saturday 17 June 2023.

- Link and collaborate with established projects to develop ideas around the hub (eg the glut stall, community fridge and Seed Swap)
- Support with fundraising
- Thomas Fowler, Dorset Children's Services are looking to set a children's/family hub and have funding.
- Link with Local Welfare Assistance — [Local Welfare Assistance - UK Benefits Guide](#)

What opportunities / barriers can you foresee for this endeavour, and how can these be met / overcome?

Opportunities

- If there is no single premises for all the activities, consider splitting them up across venues
- Include as much of the wider community as possible, schools particularly. Local students as well as the growing older population
- Opportunities for training/food businesses
- Glasshouses in Bothenhampton could be available
- A shift in thinking — enabling a 'right to grow' in public spaces. Turning lawns into allotments. (Ref. Incredible Edible, and Rachel Millson's community composting project linked to BFM.)
- Could you take the endeavour to existing spaces to get the ball rolling, e.g. schools, businesses who offer their premises for one-offs?
- Create visibility with investment following.
- [Expanding the community food sector](#) – Tim Crabtree report from 2012

Increasing food supply destined for Bridport:

- The need to find a way of not competing with existing farms and farm shops — finding, instead, a way to work together to support them: increase demand and supply and a more direct relationship between the farmer and the consumer. BFM is working on this via this event, and with 'Feeding Bridport Direct' – access to land for New Entrant producers on long-term leases. To create a mosaic of food producers who could supply Bridport directly. There are local people desperate to find access to land. This already involves several interested landowners.
- Could we approach local landowners for growing space. e.g. Colfox's have land opposite St Catherine's.
- Common Ground, near Lyme Regis, has several 1-acre plots available.
- Land trusts buying and leasing agricultural land.
- Pymore Lane County Farm — tenancy renewal coming up. It is going to be split up into smaller pots. A proposal from BFM could secure a plot.

Barriers

- Challenge of finding an affordable, central-enough premises which also has growing space — overheads and funding
- Problem of engaging with people — communicating with people who would not naturally engage with this kind of initiative
- How will you get to people in need? How do we take into account of people's circumstances, accessing things. There's an unspoken, psychological element which is an implicit part of the exchange.
- How to uphold dignity of all in how food is shared

- Taking into account people's circumstances and the psychological impact on their sense of dignity
- Needs to be more peer-to-peer — ideas like 'teaching people to cook' are paternalistic — everyone is a teacher and student
- Feelings of empowerment vs disempowerment
- Building relationships and trust
- Lack of awareness/experience in fresh food
- Tension between paying the farmer a fair price for sustainable food and making it affordable
- How can good, well-paid jobs be part of this?
- Existing stakeholders' fear of takeover
- Issues of distribution — benefits and problems of centralised systems
- Need for investment in artisanal food production.
- Major problems of land and labour
- Danger of going over old ground, work already being done, community memory?
- NFU — a lot of networks already exist, e.g. with milk. We don't produce enough for ourselves because of land restrictions and labour resource (finding staff and the money to pay them). Land, energy and continuity of supply are big problems.
- Caution against putting all your eggs in one basket. There is also merit in strengthening the existing diverse network.

How do groups which offer surplus or free food work together?

- The glut stall, community fridge and the foodbank already work together even if it's not from one place. Although the aims of these groups are similar, the glut stall takes food that would otherwise be wasted, whereas the Cupboard Love foodbank cannot do that. Cupboard Love's main aim is to reduce food poverty and the glut stall is food waste. Anybody can use the community fridge or glut stall whereas there's a referral system at the foodbank. The operational differences need to be addressed — for instance, by hosting the different offers on different days of the week.

Do you have any suggestions for premises / pop-up events / workshops?

Premises

A number of empty shops and other premises were suggested, which could be suitable for short – term or longer-term rentals. We have investigated some and will look at others.

Venues for pop-ups

- Go to where people are with pop-up events: Bucky Doo, Skilling, Court Orchard
- Creating a regular, consistent presence of pop-ups in Skilling and Court Orchard, using gazebos. Pop-up tent at the allotments in Skilling
- Temporary structures in Borough Gardens
- Fisherman's Green, West Bay
- Extending the warm hub spaces for pop-ups
- Bridport Co-housing common room; could do pop-ups in town too.

Nature of pop-ups and events:

- 'The great cook'
- People's kitchen-type events
- Collectively cook surplus food
- Pay-what-you-like meals

- Opportunities to co-create something tangible as a group or equal peers
- Any workshops that help to teach each vital skills; educational workshops
- Craft and other wellbeing enterprises

Any other comments / suggestions

- A time-bank element to the food hub, so people offer their time to subsidise costs
- A financially inclusive scheme
- Affordable housing for agricultural workers is a huge problem
- Look at the Common Ground Project, Lyme Regis
- Speak to Foundry Lea developers about the creation of allotments.

6. Concluding remarks and next steps:

BFM will endeavour to ensure sure that the proposed community Food Hub fills a 'gap', and does not duplicate what is already on offer. We'll seek to refine our key 'message'.

We will continue to help various food initiatives to link and to network (via E-News and Website, etc.), simply by being an information-sharing facility.

Although we perceive the mutually enhancing benefits of having a range of food offerings in one space, enabling the Buy-Grow–Cook–Eat cycle, we'll investigate the extent to which the hub needs to be in one location. We will be mindful of where the hub would most appropriately be located, and will further research a number of suggested venues.

We'll follow up with people who have kindly offered support and collaboration – and are overwhelmed by how many offers have been presented! We will bear in mind suggestions about our proposed pop-up events: we intend to hold these in a number of locations, with partners, over the coming months. We are already developing some plans with HOME in Bridport, and with the Community Shed/ seed swap.

Bridport Food Matters has been offered a tent at the Bridport Food Festival (17th June). Anyone is welcome to join us there to engage people with what you are doing, or help out.

We look forward to continuing the conversations and collaborations with a range of organisations.

Many thanks, BFM team.

Attendees

Victoria Ashford, Beach and Barnicott
Ian Bark, Bridport Town Mayor
Debra Bates, Cupboard Love Food Bank
Chloe Broadfield, Tamarisk Farm
Horticulture
Thomas Carolsfeld, Springtail Farm
Ines Cavill, Bridport Local Food Group,
Farmer
Tim Crabtree, Wessex Community Assets
Donna Curtis, Common Ground
Josef Davies Coates, Unite Diversity
Anita de Greef, Bothen Hill Farm
David Dixon, Bridport Town Council Officer
Yvonne Dobson, Community Fridge
Mike English, Fruits of the Earth
Sue English, Fruits of the Earth
Thomas Fowler, Dorset Children's Services
Rosie Gilgrist, Tamarisk Farm
Robert Golden Home in Bridport
Jo Harris, Harmony
Rose Harris, community cook
Eileen Haste, Seed Swap, Shed
Simon Holland, Washingpool Farm
Emily Hotchkiss, Chapel in the Garden
Bee Laughton, Bridport Co-housing and
Landworkers' Alliance
Felicity Laughton, volunteer
Tina Ellen Lee, HOME in Bridport
Elektra Owen, Cook, Gardener
Lally Owen, Springtail Farm

Louise Russell, Waste Not Want
Kim Sankey
Jonathan Scott, Edible Gardens
Lin Scrannage, Bridport Co-housing and
Seed Swap
Ellen Simon, Tamarisk Farm
Leila Simon, Tamarisk Farm
Deb Smith, Bridport Local Food Group,
Watercleaves
Kim Squirrel, Totally Locally, Community
Allotment
Christine Strickland, Common Ground
Project
Anna Vogel, Red Brick Café, Nutritionist
Peter Wilson, Bridport Local Food Group
and Glut Stall

Bridport Food Matters Team

Sarah Carney, Secretary
Nick Child, Treasurer
Candida Dunford Wood, Trustee
Carrie Gamble, Cupboard Love Foodbank
Peter Hayward, Steering Group Member
Penny Maynard, Steering Group member
Rachel Milson, Allotment Ambassador,
cook
Sarah Wilberforce, Edible Gardens and
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Luana Wilson, Waste Not Want and
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