

Food Resilience Zoom meeting

18th March 2021 18.00-19.30

Present: Philip McDonnell (SCGN Chair, Environment Centre), Witchhazel Wildwood (The Orchard Project), Margot Greer, Katharine Aylett, Neil Barry (Community Growing Spaces), Louise Gibbard & Alyson Pugh (Councillors, Cabinet Members for Supporting Communities), Anthony Richards (Councillor, Swansea Food Poverty Network), Elizabeth Westaway (GRFFN), Kate Gibbs (Swansea Community Farm), Laura Norman (Summit Good), Dawn Lyle & Zoe Antrobus (4theRegion), Mary Sherwood (Gower Power, Councillor), Geoff Thomas (Cae Tân), Anna Williams (Sweet Pickings)

Apologies: Kate Davies (The Orchard Project), Jennifer Davies (Public Health Wales)

Presentations:

Witchhazel Wildwood, 'Food Resilience'

Witchhazel gave a brief overview of her links with Community Food Network Cymru, and stressed the importance of the council, businesses and communities working together to create and implement a food strategy. She suggested creating a food partnership or hub, referring to previous incarnations of this. She looked forward to including the local authorities, the health board, the universities and environmental groups. As a first step, she proposed setting up a local food assembly, possibly online in the first instance.

Elizabeth Westaway, 'Growing Real Food for Nutrition'

Elizabeth talked about her time with the Nottingham Good Food Partnership, part of the Sustainable Food Places network. In order to become a part of SFP, there would need to be a group meeting monthly. Some groups, including NGFP, have a coordinator, who organises activities. NGFP focused on social eating, which is something to consider after lockdown. If Swansea wishes to join the SFP network, she suggested getting in touch with the Network Coordinator for Wales, signing up to newsletters and forming a small group to assess SFP's 6 key issues.

<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/resources/>

Concerning her Growing Real Food for Nutrition CIC <https://grffn.org/>, Elizabeth talked about growing nutrient dense food, measurable with a Brix Refractometer. She encouraged people to think about the quality of their soil and the relative nutrient density of vegetables grown in different ways. GRFFN is running citizen science projects to take Brix measurements, and she invited anyone growing food in Swansea to take part. @Grffn_CIC

General discussion:

1/ All agreed that the first step would be to map the current opportunities in Swansea: food growing projects, shopping local, food banks, availability of surplus, food preparation classes/groups. Margot Greer has begun this, and is willing to continue with support from other groups or individuals.

2/ Food preparation skills are key to feeding Swansea. If food is available but no one can cook it, it's not much use. Cllr Alyson Pugh talked about plans to convert the pub by Dyfatty flats into a social café/working kitchen. Kate Gibbs suggested using the Community Farm's kitchen as well, since it is set up for group training, with experienced staff.

3/ Land for growing: Cllr Mary Sherwood said that part of the council Poverty Reduction task force was looking into identifying and mapping disused land to create community growing areas. Geoff Thomas pointed out that growing food is a skilled activity, and that more would need to be put in place to share these skills. The Community Farm already trains volunteers in food growing, and this could be expanded through other groups. Also, not all communities want a growing area, so consideration will be given to groups who want a wildlife area, or other possibilities. General discussion of benefits of being outdoors for wellbeing, to be prioritized after a year of lockdowns.

4/ Food banks: the Poverty Reduction group is doing a great job of linking together food banks across the city, and others, including Anna Williams' Sweet Pickings, are looking at how to provide more fresh fruit & veg to the banks. Margot Greer pointed out that food banks, while unfortunately essential currently, should ideally not form part of long-term strategy.

Actions:

1/ Setting up an action group to look a SFP network, to use as framework even if we decide not to join

2/ Individuals and groups to contact other partners, especially health board, universities, more diverse groups

3/ Mapping Swansea's assets

4/ Look at setting up an online food assembly, with a view to creating a hub for local food producers to sell their produce (working with FarmCo, possibly expanding their base, if wanted)

As the meeting drew to a swift close, no one put themselves forward to complete these actions during the meeting itself. Anyone interested should email swanseacommunitygrowing@gmail.com