



Environmental Theme Group

Growing Coventry – Celebrating Local Food

Meeting Details

Date: 8th December, 2008

Venue: Tanners Room, Council House

Attended by:

Len Parnell	Coventry Allotments
Myles Bremner	Garden Organic
Andy Littlewood	Coventry City Council
Jamie Whitehouse	Coventry City Council
Nigel Wain	Coventry Partnership
Jo Rathbone	Earlsdon Transition Town
Monika Bzowy	IKEA
Phil Dickin	Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
Melody Stokes	Coventry City Council
Peter Woodward	Quest Associates (Facilitator)

Current Situation:

Land space:

3,500 city allotment plots

Former city farm

Local initiatives:

MIND allotments programme + Age Concern

Refugee Centre, Home Office funding for local scheme

Coventry Carer's programme

LEAF: Local Environmental Action for Food

Updated new local food directory 'Food Matters' available

Transition Coventry: promotes local food production

Coventry: Fairtrade City

Green Garden Café – aiming to have café in town providing local + own foods

Groundwork/WWT/City Council/Garden Organic bids for Lottery funding

Schools:

School Food Trust – Food for Life Partnership (BLF)

Cardinal Wiseman: exemplar school – integrated approach to farming + food (Deputy Head,

Sean O'Donovan provides strong leadership); Coventry's greatest secret!

Almost half schools engaged on Eco-schools sustainable schools scheme

Other channels for promotion:

City Council dieticians: help to encourage healthy eating

Cardiac referral group: possibilities for support to recovering patients for growing food

/allotment use

Coventry telegraph's 'Go Green' campaign + supplements

Growing/cooking/procurement through schools

Academic + training:

Adult Education allotments + NVQ training

Henley College: renowned catering course

City College: horticultural training

Heritage:

There are some local varieties of food and heritage sites. The Wyken Pippin is a local apple variety.

Benefits:

Opportunity for community engagement
Allows control over food supply + independence; provides health benefits + well-being (mental, physical + healthy eating)
Protects open spaces
Carbon reduction through reduced food miles
Recreates a sense of purpose through practical application
Reconnects with food production and maintains growing and cooking skills
Relationship building; social cohesion
Vehicle to encourage entrepreneurial skills
Very clear indicator of weather/climate change
Catalyst to wise living – 'narrows the gap'
Biodiversity benefits
Food security

Vision for Coventry:

New way of thinking about land and its use – doorsteps & odd spaces
Celebrate what we do – festival?
Create an ethos of grow your own
Opportunity to green the city
Adopt Middlesbrough example
Encourage appreciation of food & cultural diversity
All children and young people in Coventry to understand where food comes from
Trees planted in the city – large proportion could be fruit and nut trees
Coventry: composting city (green toilets!)
Encourage excitement over being outside and interacting with the environment
City Council to adopt local food procurement policy – model for business/public procurement
Use iconic symbols to promote and advertise growing food – Ring Road, Cathedral, major spaces
More local independent retailers, supplied locally
Supermarkets engaged in supporting local sustainable businesses through sponsorship + helping local actions
Provide a range of models of how we access local foods
Extend green café approach (growing areas linked to buildings)
Adopt Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Garden share cropping scheme
More farmers markets in the city
Facilitate producer /supplier co-ops
Evolution of the 'in bloom' scheme e.g. 'food in bloom'

Revised Proposition:

- A series of food growing events/campaigns that raise Coventry's focus on growing own foods
- Local foods as a catalyst for a more sustainable Coventry
- Local food as the key ingredient for partnership working in Coventry
- Greening Coventry, growing food
- Coventry – a growing city
- Coventry grows with an appetite
- Coventry Food Matters
- Coventry Grows: Food for free, food for all, fresh farmed focus
- Growing Coventry – celebrating local food

Of these the new title for this project stream was chosen to be the latter:

'Growing Coventry – celebrating local food'

Ideas:

Major food festival – food week
Range of activities during the week at different venues
Using the Godiva Festival as a venue
National Open Gardens type event (local, neighbourhood, city-wide)

Next Steps

Issues :

Key people need convincing
Leadership is key – top level buy-in needed
Needs to be linked up to health groups
Need a 'Growing Coventry' steering group

Agreed actions:

Set up a steering group (WWT, Groundwork, City Council [Andy Duncan], PCT [Esther Highton]. Liaise with Melody Stokes (Coventry City Council).
(Myles Bremner, Jan '09)

Note: Useful report on food production in UK – 'An inconvenient truth about food' by Tim Laing, Soil Association

(at:

[http://www.soilassociation.org/Web/SA/saweb.nsf/cff6730b881e40e80256a6a002a765c/2332f95504fb0b778025748100330b79/\\$FILE/an_inconvenient_truth.pdf](http://www.soilassociation.org/Web/SA/saweb.nsf/cff6730b881e40e80256a6a002a765c/2332f95504fb0b778025748100330b79/$FILE/an_inconvenient_truth.pdf))