

Report of a workshop  
organised by Steady State Manchester  
on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013



There is an amazing amount of wonderful work going on around sustainable food issues in Greater Manchester. So why did Steady State Manchester want to do something as well? Because there is still an awful lot to do to ensure everyone has access to healthy, safe, food from sustainable sources both now and in the future.

Food does not have the political clout it needs and we are determined to do what we can to change that. Food is an issue which brings people together. We wonder if it might be a key issue to take forward steady state ideas in Greater Manchester. We are promoting this in our collaborative work with Manchester City Council's Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny sub-committee and elsewhere. So we wanted to bring interested people together to collaborate and dialogue for shared learning.

20 people spent the afternoon together on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013. Two were young people (under 16) and several were over 50 and many in between. We came from political organisations, trade unions, Climate Change Survivors, the Kindling Trust, Food Futures, the Food Ethics Council and as individuals. Most had not been to a Steady State event before.

We had a myriad of relationships connected to food. We all eat it, most of us buy it, some grow it and farm it, some make a living from it eg participants included a chef. All have a passionate interest in ensuring that good, healthy, safe and sustainably produced food is available to all. Some are most active at a grassroots level while others worked at a strategic level and some do both.

Having shared personal success stories in relation to food we watched an inspiring film of Tom Andrews from the Sustainable Food Cities talk about some of the amazing things that are going on across English Cities towards more sustainable food. (The film can be seen here; [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) ) We then looked at what is happening in Greater Manchester. The second part of the workshop involved small groups working on burning issues identified by participants. They were:

- Public Sector Procurement
- Involving children and young people
- How to build a bridge between positive experiences in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and mainstream political debate
- The Food Ethics Council (FEC) and going beyond business as usual
- Promoting food growing in under used gardens

Each group came up with suggestions of what we can do next which are included in this report. Participants left hopeful and encouraged by the breadth of people who



came and all the things that are going on that they did not know about. They had gained new ideas or confidence about their ideas being achievable, were more convinced that food can be a driver for economic and social change and that it needs to be higher up the political agenda.

Some wanted to go away and do grassroots work such as get growing projects off the ground in their street or Unemployed Workers Centres, and cook with teenage Mums, others wanted to work with Steady State Manchester or read our reports. Some wanted to get sustainable food discussed in their political organisations. For Steady State core group it clarified research we want to do, questions we want to ask politicians and ways we might develop conversations with groups including businesses.

It was an afternoon well spent. Four days after the workshop, Manchester City Council's Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny sub-committee agreed to work with Steady State Manchester to develop a recommendation linking poverty, food and economic development!!!! Our learning from the workshop and elsewhere will be put to good use. Thanks everyone who came, to Lancaster Transition and Tom Andrews from Sustainable Food Cities for permission to use the film and Marc Roberts for designing the diagram on the front cover of this report.

For more information, contact [ipogworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:ipogworkshop@gmail.com)



## Workshops

	<p><i>From what you have heard and what you bring to this workshop.....</i></p> <p><i>what are the most promising ways forward to ensure food is a vehicle for all people and communities in Greater Manchester to live and eat well and within planetary limits?</i></p>
<p>Public Sector Procurement</p>	
<p>Key points of conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 out of 3 meals eaten outside the home is via the public sector</li><li>• Manchester Fayre has done a lot on procurement (Manchester's school meals service) through Greater Manchester procurement</li><li>• Food for Life offers social, health environment and economic benefit for schools and communities, see <a href="http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/">http://www.foodforlife.org.uk/</a></li></ul>	
<p>Small things people can do to make a difference now</p> <p>Food for Life</p> <p>Make tenders/procurement accessible to small and medium size businesses eg nominated supplier, Manchester Veg People</p>	



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what are the most promising ways forward to ensure food is a vehicle for all people and communities in Greater Manchester to live and eat well and within planetary limits?*

Involving children and young people

Key points of conversation

- Low pay in food production
- What is the price of food?
- Skills can skip a generation is cooking from scratch
- Working hours preclude the time to cook real food
- Convenience food should be good food
- Tie in with local projects eg Surestart, community allotments, grandparents, Housing Associations & their tenants
- Invite school design and technology teachers to share ideas
- Make links with health/obesity stats
- Food is a focus for wellbeing

Things people can do to make a difference now

1. Find out what food makes people (children) happy
2. Enjoy cooking from scratch as a social asset – not a punishment
3. Ask Mosque for an invitation to lunch

Most radical thing : Ask children





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How to build a bridge between positive experiences in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and mainstream political debate

Key points of conversation

- Food still viewed as a niche issue
- Food, like health, can be a subject through which a much wider public policy agenda can be viewed (e.g. inequality, poverty, family & children etc); good food touches lots of different areas. These are immediate, visible 'deficits' but underlying deciding factors are social inequalities, low income etc
- How to get food on the political agenda as an economic issue and driver
- How do we put food in the centre of planning
- Private sectors big determinants in food policy

Things people can do to make a difference now

More promotion of food as a broad issue and opportunity in political parties

Most radical thing: Electoral reform in local government



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The Food Ethics Council (FEC) and going beyond business as usual

Key points of conversation

- FEC has been going for 15 years
- The system is broken and needs transformation
  - A new business model
  - Reforming the market
  - Food policy for the next election
- There are resources for sharing at the FEC website [www.foodethicscouncil.org/](http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/) and at [tansey.org.uk](http://tansey.org.uk). These include talks for helping understanding and the S. Ontario experience may be of interest

Things people can do to make a difference now

1. Establish food production enterprise – with first step as identifying bridging funding
2. Conversations with big players locally; Coop, Kellogg's, MCC etc – FEC could help
3. Look wider than Manchester eg EU-US trade deal is important





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Promoting food growing in under used gardens

Key points of conversation

There is a lot of underused land in gardens. People don't have the strength or time to grow anything. What if some of their neighbours were to come in and plant and tend vegetables and share produce with them?

Things people can do to make a difference now

Leaflet a few neighbours and ask, would you like me to plant some vegetables in your garden and share the produce with you?

Talk to Housing Associations about setting up a garden sharing scheme





<p><b>What participants were taking away</b></p>	<p><b>What participants said they would do next</b></p>
<p>Encouraged by                      -the breadth of people who came                      - all the things that are going on that they did not know about - interconnectedness                      Hope                      Growing on streets is achievable</p> <p>New ideas                      A few more questions</p> <p>Knowing what is going on in Manchester</p> <p>Sees driver for economics and social change                      Convinced that food needs to be higher up the political agenda</p> <p>A paradox; food poverty and cheap food that I want to understand better</p>	<p>Additional knowledge for dissertation                      Wants to get land for new Unemployed Workers Centres</p> <p>Cooking with teenage Mums                      Knock on doors in street to get interest                      Discuss with teacher friend                      Read SSM</p> <p>Possible Food Ethics Council Forum event in Manchester                      Will circulate details of 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector/academics network.                      Possibility of mapping project involving students.                      Explore possibility of Food Ethics Council dinner involving businesses, politicians and other key players</p> <p>Getting this on the agenda for Labour Party ward                      Find out why Manchester has not adopted Food for Life                      Develop in Whalley Range through the ward Labour Party in a broad way which promotes economic activity, environment and resilience                      Do some mapping. Look at issue more from an economic perspective</p>