

Parish Food Plans



Lessons learnt from three pilot community-led local food and landscape action plans

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What's this all about?

This report aims to inform rural communities and organisations which support rural development, local food, and landscape character about the lessons learnt from three Parish Food Plan pilot projects. It provides guidance on how community groups might go about developing local food and landscape strategies and action plans.

Whilst all situations will differ, the lessons learnt from the pilots provide useful insights into how similar projects might be approached. This document summarises how the pilots were organised, what the results were, and gives tips on conducting similar projects.

Context



The grazing regime on the South Downs is crucial to the conservation of the open character and grassland biodiversity; and the beef and lamb is now being sold as an added-value branded meat product



Initiatives and projects throughout the UK are demonstrating how the development of local food systems can strengthen the local economy, benefit the environment, conserve the distinctiveness of landscapes, create rural employment, and contribute to better nutrition and access to fresh food for local communities.

This potential is now recognised at a national level, with increasing government interest and support for local food both in England and Wales. The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, and the recent Defra strategy on sustainable development, now provide a supportive top-level rationale for regional and local activities.

The work of the Countryside Agency's Eat the View programme and others at a county and district level has included the promotion of links between landscape and sustainable local food, such as work in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) to foster mutually supportive change in land management, landscape character, and local food marketing.

In the summer of 2005, the Countryside Agency asked f3, a not-for-profit organisation which advises on local and sustainable food systems, to facilitate three pilot Parish Food Plans. The aim was to see how community groups at a parish scale, with the help of a facilitator, could help shape local food systems, and as a consequence protect and enhance the character of local landscapes.

What is a Parish Food Plan?

The idea behind a Parish Food Plan (PFP) is that of a community-led strategy and action plan which aims to create sustainable food economies, and as a consequence, safeguard or enhance the distinctive character of the local landscape.

The process by which Parish Food Plans can be developed, was tested in the pilots as a potential mechanism to bring together the two issues of local food and landscape at a village or parish scale.

The pilot projects

Three pilot projects were supported, with distinct differences in terms of the communities involved, the nature of the local landscape, and existing local food activity. The pilots were Crowmarsh near Wallingford in Oxfordshire, Haltwhistle in South Tyneside close to Hadrian's Wall, and Headcorn near Maidstone in Kent.

The process

The pilot projects brought together a **diverse range of people**, from farmers and shopkeepers to local residents, to discuss issues and consider what was important in the local landscape and how farming and food systems were changing. The groups then developed a strategy and action plan to generate activities that might improve or preserve important features of food, farming and the local landscape for their specific circumstances.

Each group was supported by a **facilitator** with experience of local food systems, a national co-ordinator and an **expert in landscape character**. The groups prepared their strategy and action plan over a six month period, and were allocated up to £4,000 for costs and to begin to implement their action plans.

The groups organised public meetings and used other media to **raise awareness** of the project, supported by the facilitator. The meetings aimed to explore local issues with regard to local food, farming and the landscape. People were invited to confirm their interest in working on the project. This was typically followed by a series of further meetings where ideas were discussed in more depth, identifying what work needed to be done and who would do it.



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A traditional orchard in Kent...and a family looking at their basket of purchases at Wye Farmers' Market



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Three pilot projects were launched in three very different environments

The consultants provided guidance for the two key areas of work: how to undertake an **audit of local food activity** in the area; and how to appraise the **character of the local landscape**. The pilot groups were encouraged to develop the process according to their local context and in response to their skills and capacity to undertake the work.

Desk and field studies were undertaken to better understand the local issues and opportunities. The groups then developed their **strategies and action plans** to implement their projects and initiatives.

Finally, each group was asked to report on their experience of the project and to evaluate the potential impacts and benefits that their action plans might generate. This **evaluation** was co-ordinated by an independent organisation, the Plunkett Foundation.

The pilots

Crowmarsh in Oxfordshire is located close to the River Thames, surrounded by generally open landscape on level land. Rural land use is dominated by commodity-scale grain production. The project was led by Sustainable Wallingford, a community-led organisation with broad objectives. The main focus of the group was a school vegetable garden project. The group also identified a number of other projects, including a community coppice project. Due to the large-scale nature of local farming, the group felt largely unable to identify many opportunities to develop connections between local food initiatives and landscape enhancement.

Haltwhistle is located on the western edge of Northumberland, within an upland landscape close to Hadrian's Wall. Here farming tends to be extensive, and primarily sheep and cattle rearing. The action plan developed by the Haltwhistle Partnership, which led the group, focused on developing the Hadrian's Wall Brand in respect of local food and drink, business skills development for producers, and a local food directory. Although the branding aligned to Hadrian's Wall did reflect the local landscape character, the group did not identify many other activities that might have a significant beneficial impact on the landscape.

Headcorn in Kent lies within a landscape of great diversity, comprising scarp slope, pastureland, valley and floodplain areas, which is reflected in the diverse food production in the area. The community-led organisation, Headcorn Sustainability, acted as co-ordinators with a large and active group of people including farmers, shopkeepers and local consumers. Local people and trade buyers such as restaurants indicated a willingness to buy locally where possible. The main priorities in the Headcorn action plan included a school garden project, an apple orchard project, a covered multi-use farmers' market, a local delivery scheme, and a local milk-processing unit. Related activities also included plans for the setting up of nature trails, a nature reserve, and an exhibition, DVD, and 'nature cards' to raise awareness about what shapes the local landscape.



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The open landscape of the Thames floodplain at Crowmarsh. As a result, the community found a disassociation between commodity scale production and local food systems



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Upland grazing near Haltwhistle, in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall which is helping local producers to create a strong brand
(photo ref 6)



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The diverse landscape around Headcorn has a rich heritage of food production; some of which may get restored through local action, such the creation of a community orchard

Key findings

In all cases, the Parish Food Plan process generated new initiatives which have the potential to deliver environmental, social or economic benefits. The initiatives have varied considerably between the groups, depending on the leadership and success of community participation, the character of local landscapes and food and farming activity, and the groups' priorities and project ideas.

However, the project concept, to develop an integrated strategy for local landscape and food, was sometimes difficult to grasp. Most of the energy and emphasis was on developing local food projects. Related landscape issues, impacts and opportunities were little understood in two of the three pilot groups.

The exception was Headcorn, where the landscape analysis triggered participants to make many connections between their local landscape, social issues and food production. The visit of the landscape expert to the group was the catalyst for the creation of a 'landscape sub-group'.

In some locations, there may be few opportunities to explore the links between landscape and local food systems and influence change; this is certainly the case where there is very little or no connection between commodity scale food production and local retailing or catering supply chains.

The pilots varied in the level of involvement of the local community. In Crowmarsh and Haltwhistle, the level of involvement by the wider community narrowed as the project progressed and the drive behind the project largely reflected the interests of the lead partners, whilst in Headcorn, the inclusivity broadened and new people became involved.

Information provided to the pilots [by the f3 project team] included guidance on the Parish Food Plans process; suggestions for landscape and local food analysis methodologies; and protocols for drawing down funds to implement the action plans. These were used with varying success. In some cases the groups felt that more structured guidance was needed but elsewhere the groups were happy to follow a more flexible approach.

The timing and duration of the project were seen as limiting factors. Six months had seemed adequate for the groups and Headcorn, after a late start, completed their action plan

after four months. The winter period was not ideal for the landscape survey work and Christmas led to some delays.

One of the constraints on project development was the scale at which the pilots worked. A single parish may often be too small to allow effective local food or landscape projects to emerge, and particularly so when developments in infrastructure are required. The development of and resulting Parish Food Plans were very dependent on the character of the landscape and food systems they intended to improve, and on the nature of the community group and its priorities.

Case Study: Haltwhistle

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Sampling local produce at a community event

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An exhibition recording what's special about local food and landscape

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Hadrian's wall provided a key starting point for local food branding

Haltwhistle is a small market town in Northumberland (population 3,500) midway between Carlisle and Newcastle.

The landscape around the town is dominated by heather moorland at a high altitude with grazing sheep, some forestry, and limited improved pasture and production of game. Farming in the area is predominantly sheep and cattle rearing with little finishing of the livestock. There is very little dairying and minimal arable, although silage and to a lesser extent hay production are important.

Food production within the area is mainly undertaken by small speciality producers of meat, cakes, preserves, poultry and game. Trade of these items is largely aimed at distant markets, mainly in Carlisle and Newcastle. The small local market has not encouraged trading of local foods, although a recently established farmer's market in Greenhead is proving successful. Much of the discussion in the workshops focused on issues for small livestock farmers, and the need to integrate their marketing with promotional activity linked to Hadrian's Wall.

The Haltwhistle Partnership, a development trust for the area, led the project. Their initial drive was to promote local food under one brand, targeting local people and tourists visiting the area. The town's close proximity to Hadrian's Wall offered a strong association between this significant landscape feature and the food produced in the local area, with food producers promoting their products with reference to Hadrian's Wall. Through the project, the brand is now being used by more producers of beef, lamb, honey and game, and in shops and restaurants in a wide area around the town. Additional actions planned include building more networking opportunities for producers, caterers and retailers; skills training for producers; and a local food directory aimed at visitors to the area.

Case Study: Crowmarsh

The parish of Crowmarsh near Wallingford in Oxfordshire (population 7,000) is located about 12 miles south east of Oxford.

The pilot project was led by Sustainable Wallingford, an established group that already included a Local Sourcing Group. This was set up with the aims of raising awareness of the local environment and improving the supply of local produce. To date, the group is best known for publishing a 'Buy Local' directory. This meant that there was a solid base of existing local knowledge to inform the project.

The group raised awareness by emailing local contacts and through a Saturday morning market stall in Wallingford's market square. Local produce was displayed and free homemade vegetable soup was provided to shoppers, allowing the group to talk to people about the benefits of growing their own produce. This was a successful event and the group hopes to build on this in the future, perhaps giving out 'growing kits' at the next event.

Crowmarsh Parish is located close to the River Thames, surrounded by generally open landscape comprising open and semi-open rolling downs and a thin strip of flat floodplain pasture along the River Thames corridor. Rural land use is dominated by commodity-scale grain production. Although some of this grain is being used by local millers and bakers, there is little diversity in farming production and the group saw little opportunity to integrate primary production with a parish scale food strategy. As a result, the group found little opportunity for expanding the local food economy. However, one of the three farmers involved in the project is a Linking Environment And Farming (LEAF) member and has encouraged visits by local schools.

The group came to the project with an objective to create a school vegetable growing project, and this remained the main focus of the group. In January 2006 the work of building the garden began. The project aims to provide as much food as possible for the school's kitchen, to allow students and volunteers to participate in environmentally sustainable food production, and to help teachers fulfil parts of the national curriculum.

Other projects in the action plan which the group intends to take forward include a community coppice, updating and promoting the local food directory, farm visits, and other events to raise awareness about local food and landscape.



The Crowmarsh group and facilitator inviting interest from the local community

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Laying out the growing areas for the school garden project

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A local allotment project and a community coppice are potential follow-on action areas

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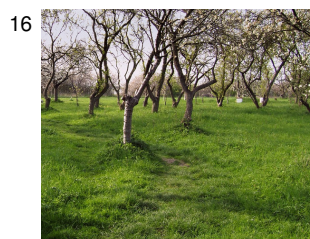
Case study: Headcorn



The farmers' market was an opportunity for publicity to get more people involved



Getting people of all ages and backgrounds involved



A new community orchard is planned, reflecting historical land use in the area

Headcorn lies between Maidstone and Ashford in Kent, and has a population of about 5,000. The lead partner for the pilot was an existing group called 'Headcorn Sustainability'. There was lots of enthusiasm from many Headcorn residents and wide interest in the project, with people getting involved ranging from local farmers, shops and pubs, to those with experience in setting up and running community initiatives.

Through questionnaires and other discussions it became clear that most people felt that there was an opportunity to change some aspects of the current food system, and that logistics was the greatest barrier to local producers selling direct to consumers. Local people noted that there were no dairy producers offering produce directly to consumers, and that there has been a dramatic decline in fruit production.

Fifteen people from the group helped to define five main landscape areas a Greensand Ridge, where livestock production predominates on pasture broken by stout hedgerows and where orchards were once situated on the south facing slopes; the Low Weald Pasture lands with seasonally wet clay soils supporting pasture for livestock production on small to medium sized fields surrounded by mature hedgerows; the Beult Valley which comprises an incised meandering river channel and surrounding floodplain, with many arable fields and some pasture, where hop gardens and apple orchards were once found; The "Tongue" an area of raised land where much stone and marl has been extracted, and which supports diverse agriculture including some orchards; and the Egerton Greensand fruit and arable belt with mixed farming of dairy and arable.

The project gave the group, in their own words "the chance to take stock at a local level and re-connect with the landscape in a way that is beneficial and empowering; in a way that engenders local independence". Through the analysis the group identified several potential projects, including a school vegetable growing project, a new windmill, a covered multi-use farmers' market, and a delivery scheme. There was also interest by a farmer and others in setting up a micro-processing unit to enable a farm to sell cartons of milk directly to local consumers.

Through the landscape assessment work, ideas were also generated for establishing nature trails, a nature reserve, cycle routes and new footways. There is a proposal for an apple orchard to be planted within the Headcorn/Smarden boundary, to link with Headcorn's fruit growing heritage. A

public exhibition and a DVD is planned to create greater awareness, interest and appreciation of what makes Headcorn special, linking to school educational programmes. Another major benefit of the landscape assessment was the necessity and opportunity for some members of the group to make contact with local farmers and thus create a greater understanding of their needs.



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Landscape interpretation and awareness raising has been a significant outcome

Tips on running similar projects

The process

One of the suggestions for future projects of this kind is to have three distinct project stages, as follows:

1. **getting started** – an appropriately experienced facilitator could spend half a day with a prospective community group to discuss possibilities and to inspire those involved to take action. If the group wants to proceed to the planning stage, a community group will need to be formed comprising a wide range of stakeholders and local people;
2. **planning** – the group should then carry out an audit of local food activity and assess the character of the local landscape, and try to understand how one affects the other;
3. **strategy and action** - a shared vision should then be defined and a strategy and action plan prepared for specific projects, including identifying appropriate funding or other sources of income.

The level of guidance made available to the group needs to be tailored to local issues, skills and capacity. In the three PFP pilots some groups felt that the written guidance was either a constraint or else needed to be even clearer. There may therefore need to be more flexibility and adaptation of the process and guidance, to suit local needs. The role of the facilitator is crucial in this respect.

Whilst six months may often be adequate time to get to the point of preparing an action plan, it will depend on the capacity of the group to carry out the project tasks. Field survey work over the summer is recommended, and it should be noted that food producers can be very busy at particular periods such as leading up to Christmas or when food festivals are taking place.

In terms of scale, a cluster of parishes based around a rural village is recommended as the most effective scale for projects of this nature.

The people

The most successful of the projects involved the widest range of people within its local area. The need for an inclusive process that enables people to work together effectively is important.

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Getting people involved in local food and landscape projects – a community hedge-laying day

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A community café providing cheap and nutritious meals made with local produce

The starting point for most communities will involve a public meeting to which a diverse range of people should be invited. This may include farmers, fishermen or other food producers; land owners and others involved in land management; businesses involved in the processing, distribution and selling of food; hotels and restaurants and other caterers in the private or public sector; local independent, voluntary or statutory organisations with an interest in food, farming and landscape. The meeting itself may be a good opportunity to celebrate some of the local foods available from local producers.

Publicity should be planned so that new people become interested in coming to the first meeting. This may involve working with local media, community groups and local organisations, libraries and other resources. Well-designed flyers may be useful, and notice of the event publicised on relevant notice boards and websites.

A local organisation such as the Parish Council or other community group will need to assume leadership of the project. They will be responsible for project management and co-ordinating the preparation of the strategy and action plan. It is important that such projects are led effectively and are inclusive enough to encourage a widening of interest and involvement.

Sub-groups could be formed to work on specific areas of the surveys and analysis. For example, there could be a sub-group comprising two or three people to explore the opportunities for sales of produce in local shops, or another to research cultural associations with regard to food such as traditional local recipes.

It is important that the full group of stakeholders meets regularly, so that findings are shared and new ideas can be discussed.

The facilitator

The pilot projects all agreed that the help of a facilitator was a key component in the success of the projects. The role of the facilitator needs to be made very clear in terms of what support they can provide. In particular, one needs to stress that the facilitator is there to enable the groups to come to decisions, rather than act as a consultant to carry out the work.



Independent shops are often keen to stock local produce, as long as they can rely on deliveries and consistency of quality

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Good facilitation means helping the community to take action, rather than 'chairing'

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There appears to be several skills required by the facilitator, including an understanding of landscape and local food issues, but perhaps most importantly, the ability to help the groups form, keep their focus, remain inclusive and take action.

An important benefit of the facilitator in the pilots was their ability to summarise the areas of agreement and highlight issues, as well as passing on their experience and knowledge of local food systems.

In future, additional help and facilitation may be required to fully explore opportunities for the integration of local food and landscape issues. This may require a significant level of support from a landscape professional in following guidance on landscape character assessment

The landscape assessment and local food audit

A key stage in the process involves gathering information on food, farming and landscape issues (as relevant and appropriate to the group's priorities). This involves two inter-related themes, the local food audit and the landscape assessment. These need to be planned and expert help may be needed and guidance sought, such as on methods of landscape assessment.

It is important to understand what the survey shows - the 'so what' factor. For example, if stone walls are a distinctive and much loved feature but are in disrepair, does it matter? What might help the farmer or landowner to maintain these features? Or if local shopkeepers are reluctant to stock local produce, why is this – is it about price, availability, lack of information about suppliers, or low awareness by customers?

Landscape assessment

The key consideration once a landscape character assessment has been carried out is to ascertain which features and elements of the landscape are important and to identify opportunities for conserving, enhancing, restoring or recreating them. For example, a typical lowland landscape may have lost old hedgerows, eroding the traditional rural character; if a profitable local lamb or beef branding scheme was established with appropriate environmental criteria it could encourage the farmer to restore and care for the hedgerows as part of the management system.

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This old willow pollard is a common and distinctive feature of wetland landscapes; and is entirely a product of a practical farming need to produce withies out of reach of grazing cattle

Local people play a vital role in landscape assessment. Their involvement can produce a more informed assessment, with local knowledge of how the landscape has evolved and those features that have cultural significance. It is recommended that a workshop is held to find out from people what they value and what they would like to change about the area, what makes it distinctive and special, how they use or enjoy it, and what needs to be protected or enhanced.

The starting point for a landscape assessment is to identify what Landscape Character Assessments have already been undertaken for the area. England has a hierarchy of landscape assessment information. At the national/regional level there are 159 'Joint Character Areas' (JCAs) such as the Cotswolds, the Fens and the Thames Valley. These are defined in the Character Map of England. County 'Landscape Character Assessments' (LCAs) provide more detailed descriptions for areas within JCAs. These areas may be further subdivided at a district/local level. However in some cases information at the more local level may be missing.

Landscape character assessment should follow guidance prepared by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (see References and sources of information). Landscape Character Assessment is the tool that is used to help us understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps to identify the features that give a locality its sense of place and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas.

It is also useful to gather as much map-based information as possible. Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photos and Agricultural Land Classification maps can help to define 'character areas' with common features, such as open flat valley bottoms, grazed limestone scarp slopes, and wooded sandstone valley sides.

Once a desk-based study has established the basic character areas, field survey work should record, as notes and photos, what it is that makes the landscape distinctive and important. The nature of elements should be noted, such as field boundaries and farm buildings that create local character, as well as perceptions of scale, tranquillity and sensitivity to change.

Of particular interest to the Parish Food Plans was thinking about how farming practices help to create and shape the landscape, such as the crops produced or the scale or diversity of production. Looking ahead, it is also worth



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Charcoal production was once a major industry, providing an important domestic fuel source; and has shaped the character of many of our broadleaf woodlands. New added value woodland products can provide the catalyst for woodland management which conserves character as well as creating biodiversity

considering how potential changes in land management and the climate would affect the character of the landscape. For example, if a local farm wished to meet local demand for fruit and vegetables, this might lead to detractions to landscape quality from new facilities such as polytunnels. On the other hand, it might help to conserve the small-scale and intimate character of the area with hedgerows maintained and new orchard trees planted.

It is important that the landscape assessment work is not separated from the local food audit. It needs to be an exercise in which the over-riding question is *'how could this landscape be enhanced or conserved through local food initiatives?'*

Local food audit

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Farmers' markets are one of the most visible success stories of the local food movement; and for many small producers they are a lifeline. In turn, this helps keep rural communities intact and safeguards traditional farming practices

The other starting point for groups at a parish scale is to identify the extent and diversity of the local food economy and culture at regional, county, district and local level.

To understand what is happening in the area, it is useful to first talk to farmers and other food producers to understand what they produce, the scale of production and any barriers they perceive in establishing more local, direct trading activities.

In parallel, it is important to gain a good understanding of the demand for local produce, from shops, pubs, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs etc, including information on the perceived marketing opportunities to use local produce, current use of local produce, problems in supply and how much more local produce might be used if the problems were overcome.

There may also be demand from consumer groups, such as resident's associations, food co-ops, and other households interested in buying fresh, local food. By contacting as many people as possible in the area, local market opportunities for producers can be identified. Media coverage such as local papers and radio, as well as more traditional means such as flyers in shops, post offices and cafes or pubs, are a good way of promoting and publicising activities

Buyers for larger catering facilities, such as schools or hospitals, should also be contacted. Often they will be tied into supply contracts which are set up at a regional scale, but they or the supply service managers may be able to nominate local suppliers for particular foods.

The information gathered should be collated and made available to all. It can be useful to create a map of what is produced locally and where it goes. It can also indicate who buys food, where they get it, and where there is demand for more local food.

There are many ways in which local food is grown, traded, and provided, and many projects which aim to support this. These include:

- trade through farm shops, box schemes, farmers' markets, mail order and the Internet;
- commerce between producers, independent shops and the hospitality sector;
- community supported agriculture where local people share responsibility for producing their food;
- local distribution initiatives and marketing co-operatives;
- local branding and food directories;
- food and tourism activities, and;
- 'growing your own' such as allotments,



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Direct delivery, or box schemes, offer a service to busy consumers ensuring that they get fresh seasonal food, whilst supporting local businesses

There are also a number of initiatives and groups designed to help people engage with and change their food system for the better, including:

- Action for Market Towns' Local Foodcheck;
- Local Food Links groups;
- LEADER + projects;
- CPRE's Mapping Local Food Webs, and;
- 'Slow Food' convivia.



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Allotments, community gardens and other grow-your-own schemes have several benefits: helping people get out and get fitter, production of their own, fresh vegetables, and conservation of the fine grain of urban and suburban landscapes

Forming a strategy and action plan

Once all the survey and analysis work has been completed, a workshop could be held. This will be an opportunity to review what has been conducted to date and to agree priorities for action. The workshop might include:

- a review of the surveys and analysis and what they show;
- a discussion on the findings and issues that have arisen;
- a re-visiting of initial ideas from earlier meetings and their review in the light of the surveys and analysis;
- facilitated discussions on ideas for action;
- prioritising for action - a matrix plotting ease of implementation against effectiveness can be useful to help identify the most attractive ideas, and;
- clarifying what happens next.

The results of the workshop should be recorded and circulated to all interested people.

A strategy and action plan can then be developed and written. This should include clarity about elements such as:

- who the lead partner is, who does what and where responsibilities lie, who else needs to be involved, and how commitment by all key parties can be ensured;
- a programme and costs for each element, and whether more detailed work is required, for example on the financial viability of a project;
- whether the project needs grant funding and how it will become self-sustaining in the future;
- what organisational model is required - for example, is there a need to set up a constituted organisation or company to take ownership of specific projects, and;
- evaluation – explaining how the group will monitor the success of the proposed projects and how this will be acted upon.

Again, if facilitators or other experts are available, they may be able to help in defining how to go about this, or other help may be available locally.

Making it happen

Once the strategy and action plan has been prepared and agreed by the stakeholders, suitable funding bodies must be identified (if funding is required) and an application made. Match funding will be expected by most grant-giving bodies, but benefits in kind such as volunteer time can normally be included. This will generally require the preparation of a business plan and should include:

- a summary of the survey work, how the community group formed and developed, and how agreement was reached on priorities for action;
- the vision for short, medium and long term activity;
- the action plan for specific projects;
- financial appraisal of costs and funding support needed, and other match funding or income potential;
- where trading or other commercial services will be created, a market analysis and business case;
- details on how the action plan projects will be managed and co-ordinated;
- assessment of economic, social, and environmental benefits and how each project will be monitored and evaluated.

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Getting people of all ages involved

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Even modest projects, such as honey production for local sale, can create positive impacts on biodiversity such as giving a reason for flower-rich meadows to be preserved

Many funders will require an evaluation of the project. It is a good idea to plan how this can be done at the outset of the project. In this respect, a baseline indicator may be required to measure how effective the actions have been since starting; for example, a poll of shoppers to ask how much local food they buy or if they know much about its provenance, then asked again in six months time.

Other project ideas will not need external funding. If an income stream can be generated, it may balance costs quite early in the life of a project. Many enterprises however, need some capital at the start, and loans can be sought from banks, or from other institutions. Larger projects may attract interest from equity partners, who inject cash in return for a share of the business. Organisers will need to take advice on legal and organisational structures to suit the particular type of enterprise.

Finally, celebrations of the successes of the initiative and projects are always a good idea. They are an opportunity for local people to recognise and value the achievements of their own community as well as motivating others to get involved. Local media will often be interested in news stories about local successes. For this reason and for historical records, take lots of photos, and video too if possible.

References and sources of information

Organisation or initiative	Description	Web link
ACRE	a rural community development centre of expertise	www.acre.org.uk
Action for Market Towns	promoting the vitality and viability of small towns	www.towns.org.uk
Association of Historic Towns and Villages	cares and contributes to the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment	www.ashtav.org.uk
Awards for All	a Lottery grants scheme for local communities	www.awardsforall.org.uk
Common Ground	supports local distinctiveness	www.commonground.org.uk
Community supported agriculture	an interactive resource as part of the Cultivating Communities project	www.cuco.org.uk
Country Markets	retail outlets providing home-made produce to the general public	www.country-markets.co.uk
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	a charity dedicated to the protection of rural England	www.cpre.org.uk
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs	www.defra.gov.uk
f3	advising on local and sustainable food systems	www.localfood.org.uk
FARMA	national association of farm shops and farmers markets	www.farma.org.uk
Food Links UK	a network of organisations supporting the local food sector	www.foodlinks-uk.org
Guidance on landscape character assessment	Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, (2002).	www.countryside.gov.uk
Heritage Lottery Fund	funds for projects aimed at preserving and making accessible the nation's heritage	www.hlf.org.uk

LEADER +	the network for LEADER+ groups in the UK	www.ukleader.org.uk
Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)	promotes more sustainable methods for agriculture and space for nature	www.leafuk.org
Local Foodworks	fosters sustainable local food systems through the development of local food networks	www.localfoodworks.org
Lottery funding	committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need.	www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
National Association of Local Councils	represents the 10000 community, parish and town councils in England and Wales	www.nalc.gov.uk
Natural England	government body charged with protecting landscapes and wildlife, and promoting access and recreation in the countryside	www.naturalengland.org.uk
Regional food groups	represent quality, small and medium sized food and drink producers	www.foodfrombritain.com
Slow Food	promotes food and wine culture, and defends food and agricultural biodiversity	www.slowfood.com
Soil Association	campaigns for organic food, organic farming and sustainable forestry.	www.soilassociation.org
The Plunkett Foundation	promotes self-help in rural communities	www.plunkett.co.uk
ViRSA	supports rural communities wanting to set up and run a community owned shop	www.virsa.org

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Parish Food Plans

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