SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2026

This form is for completing an SFP Bronze or Silver Award application.

If you are considering applying for a Gold Award, please contact the SFP team at info@sustainablefoodplaces.org to discuss the process.



Before starting your application, please fully read this form as well as the following documents:

- SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx

Please also review our approach to Representation & Justice, including REDI for Change and the FAIR food framework. This approach has been co-designed with SFP members across the four nations of the UK. SFP expects that applications present a considered approach to diversity and representation.

In 2026, a new **FAIR food** dimension has been applied across the SFP awards criteria to embed representation and justice across the SFP awards and to identify best practice. FAIR food recognises activities that facilitate, encourage, support and embed action on representation and justice in your food partnership and your food system work.

You will notice a greater emphasis on representation and justice across the SFP framework key issues and at all award levels: we have embedded representation and justice at the core of the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.

In addition, you'll notice **FAIR food STAR** criteria highlighted for each relevant Key Issue on this form. These describe additional, significant work on Representation and Justice, over and above the standard expectations for the Bronze or Silver Awards. These criteria are not compulsory, but where you do evidence exemplary work in these areas, this will be recognised and celebrated through SFP awarding a **FAIR food STAR** *in addition to* the Bronze or Silver Award.

Please do not alter the formatting of this form or redesign it and only return as a Word document not a PDF. This is essential for your application to pass the initial eligibility check.

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
Food Cumberland
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Emma Mackie emma.mackie@cumberland.gov.uk **Laura Blake laura.blake@futureproofcumbria.org.uk**
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Cumberland
Award you are applying for*:
Silver

Please provide us with background information about your place (not scored)*: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

Cumberland is a predominantly rural area in the North West of England, with a population of 271,310. It includes the historic City of Carlisle, the Solway Firth coastline and two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Hadrian's Wall and the English Lake District. Its natural beauty, cultural heritage and strong agricultural traditions create a deep connection between people, place and food.

The geography and climate make Cumberland ideally suited for beef, sheep and dairy farming, supporting the rural economy and shaping iconic landscapes. Our food graces the tables of some of the finest restaurants in the world and underpins a thriving Cumbrian food sector, including Michelin-starred establishments and artisan producers. The region's food system is increasingly defined by commitments to sustainability, with growing interest in locally sourced ingredients and regenerative farming practices reflecting tradition and innovation. Agriculture and land management also play a critical role in supporting biodiversity, climate resilience and carbon reduction, creating opportunities for food production systems that benefit nature and communities.

However, Cumberland is an area of striking contrasts. It is renowned for its breathtaking rural and coastal landscapes, while parts of the city and some towns face significant social and economic challenges and require regeneration. The economy spans diverse sectors: agriculture and tourism remain central, alongside advanced manufacturing and Europe's largest nuclear site. The area is home to 11,565 businesses, of which 90% are microbusinesses, reflecting a dynamic, locally rooted enterprise culture.

Cumberland's population is ageing and becoming increasingly diverse. As a Council of Sanctuary, Cumberland Council is committed to building welcoming and inclusive communities. However, significant inequalities remain. Fourteen neighbourhoods are among the 10% most deprived in England, fuel poverty is above the national average and 16.1% of children (10,799 children) live in relatively low-income families. These inequalities are reflected in health outcomes, with obesity affecting around 66% of adults and rates rising from 27% of Reception-aged children to almost 37% of Year 6 pupils.

Despite being a major food-producing region, Cumberland faces food insecurity and food access challenges. Rising living costs, rural isolation and transport barriers can make it difficult for some residents to access affordable, healthy food, particularly in rural and coastal communities.

Climate change poses an escalating threat, with severe weather events and unprecedented flooding impacting health, housing, agriculture and livelihoods. Despite this, communities have shown remarkable resilience through a variety of emergencies, forming new partnerships and grassroots initiatives that align with broader sustainability goals.

Following local government reorganisation, Cumberland Council reaffirmed its commitment to food justice through its Right to Food approach, placing access to adequate, nutritious and affordable food at the heart of local decision-making. This provides a strong foundation for collaborative action across the food system.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants before completing this section.

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the relevant key issues (1-6) and action areas (A and B) below.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words for each action area (i.e. for each A and B under the key issues). Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. For sections C, 250 words is the mandatory limit.

For Bronze and Silver awards, there are mandatory actions for some key issues. These are laid out in *SFP Awards - Activity and Impact:* SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx. This document also provides a broad benchmark for each award, rationale for SFP's inclusion of each key issue, and example actions for each action area.

Only submit additional documents for food action plans and strategies related to Key Issue 1 mandatory criteria. All other additional documents will not be assessed. You may add links to online documents but always check the links and permissions as we will not be requesting changes from you after submission.

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

NB failure to provide Key Issue 1, Action area B mandatory criteria will result in rejection at the eligibility stage.

- Bronze applications require a one year action plan
- Silver applications require a three year action plan

1. **Have you submitted a current food action plan or food strategy with an action plan?** Yes

2. **How are you evidencing this action plan?** (delete as appropriate)
    - Attachment as a Word document
    - Link to a document?
    - If a link place here as well under Key Issue 1
        - Action Plan link:

3. **Has the action plan less than 6 months to run?**
    - No
    - If less than 6 months to run, what is happening after the action plan expires? (100 words)

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action

***NB** At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has taken proactive steps to genuinely represent your place and its diverse communities in its work and activities*

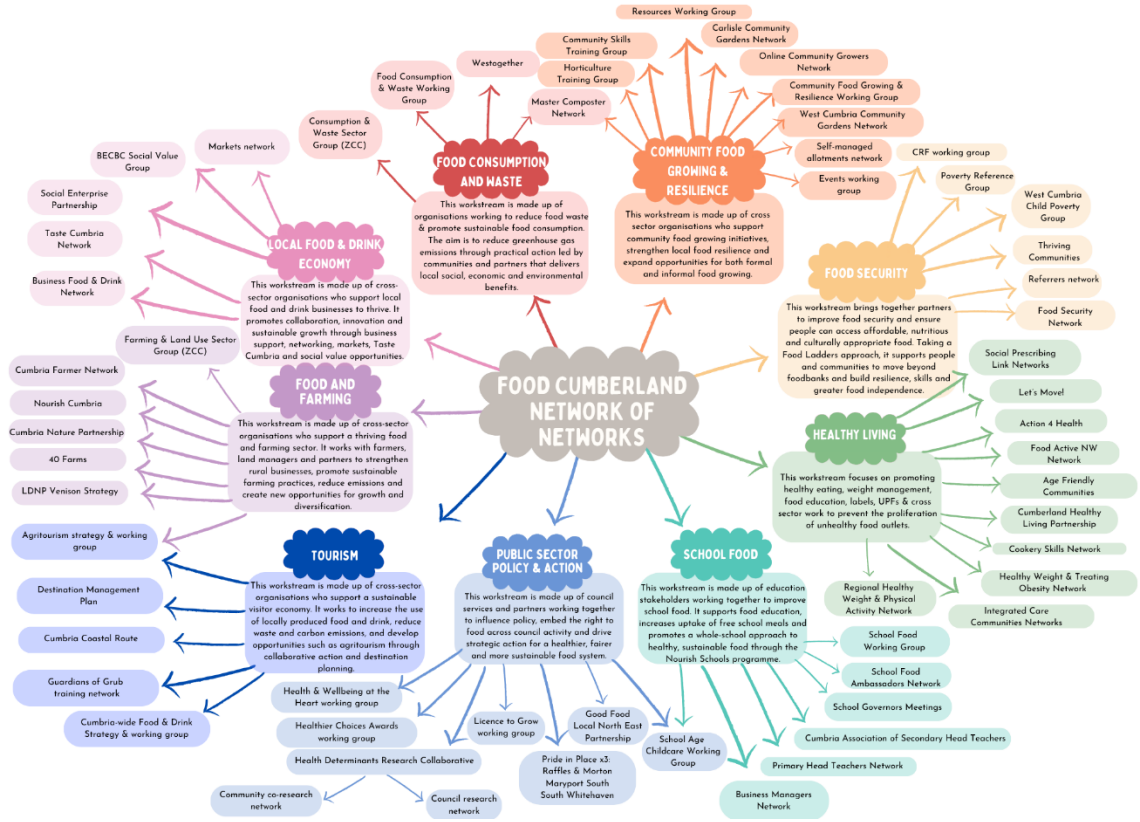
Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership

Partnership Governance, Representation and Engagement

Food Cumberland was established following Local Government Reorganisation in 2023, building on the legacy of Food Carlisle, a founding member of the Sustainable Food Places network. The partnership expanded to cover the Cumberland geography in response to the Council's Right to Food motion, which remains central to the partnership's vision and activities.

Since its formation, Food Cumberland has developed a broad cross-sector partnership driving food system change across the area. Strategic meetings are held quarterly, while working groups and networks meet monthly or bi-monthly. The strategic partnership comprises 65 members and coordinates activity through nine workstreams, engaging with well over 300 organisations across business, farming, tourism, hospitality, public health, education, local government, community organisations, food support providers, environmental organisations, researchers and people with lived experience of food-related challenges. Strong links with the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership (ZCCP), Integrated Care Communities, Anchor Organisations, the Social Enterprise Partnership and the Age Friendly Partnership help embed food system thinking across health, climate, economic development and community wellbeing agendas.

A partnership network map has been developed to demonstrate the breadth of relationships and collaborative activity across Cumberland's food system.



Membership is open and inclusive, with new organisations, businesses, community groups and residents joining through workstreams, events, existing networks and direct engagement. The partnership regularly reviews representation and undertakes targeted engagement to ensure the involvement of under-represented groups, including people with lived experience of food insecurity, rural communities, children and young people, older adults, minority ethnic communities, producers, farmers and voluntary organisations.

Governance is supported through agreed Terms of Reference. Each quarterly meeting is chaired by a different partner organisation, creating a shared leadership model, while priorities and decisions are reached collaboratively through discussion and consensus. Workstreams report progress, priorities and recommendations back to the strategic partnership, ensuring local activity informs strategic decision-making. Working groups and networks are chaired by individuals best placed to lead their theme and represent the interests of participating organisations and communities. For example, the Community Food Growing & Resilience Workstream is chaired by a community representative, helping ensure grassroots perspectives remain central to planning and delivery.

The Food Cumberland Development Officer (FCDO), funded through Cumberland Council's Public Health team, coordinates partnership activity across the nine workstreams. The role facilitates collaboration between organisations, convenes

meetings and networks, supports delivery across the workstreams, helps identify opportunities for joint action, and connects local activity with regional and national networks. The FCDO also plays a key role in coordination support for policy engagement, collating collective responses to consultations and partnership responses to emerging food system issues.

The Partnership reports through both the Cumberland Health and Wellbeing Board and the Climate and Nature Advisory Group, helping ensure food is recognised as a key contributor to health improvement, inequality reduction, local economic development and climate action.

Food Cumberland also works closely with Public Health and partner organisations through the Good Food Local North East and North Cumbria programme. Partners have helped drive significant improvements in local food system performance, contributing to Cumberland achieving an Excellence Award and the highest benchmark score across the North East and North Cumbria in 2026.

Cumberland Council further strengthens the partnership through long-term investment in the FCDO role, engagement from all seven Council directorates and alignment with key council strategies and programmes. The Council's Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) enables partners and community co-researchers to co-design research on food insecurity, obesity and health inequalities, ensuring action is informed by evidence, lived experience and community priorities.

Identifying Gaps and Responding to Local Need

Food Cumberland works collaboratively with partners and communities to identify challenges, priorities and opportunities for action across the local food system.

One significant example was the identification of a lack of robust local data on food insecurity. Partners instigated the development of the Food Insecurity at a Local Level (FILL) survey. Findings helped improve understanding of the scale, nature and drivers of food insecurity across Cumberland. In response, the Partnership expanded the Food Security Network and introduced the Food Ladders approach, bringing together food banks, affordable food initiatives, referral agencies and public services to develop more coordinated and dignified responses to food insecurity. This work has contributed to the development of new affordable food initiatives and community shop models that reduce reliance on emergency food aid.

Food resilience has also emerged as a key priority. Through engagement with resilience planning processes and Local Resilience Forum discussions, the Partnership identified the need for greater coordination and preparedness across the food system. This led to hosting a Food Resilience Summit and Food Cumberland is now developing a Food

Resilience Plan which will complement Local Resilience Forum activity and strengthen preparedness for future disruptions and shocks.

The Partnership has also strengthened collaboration between food, farming and environmental organisations, becoming a vital contributor to the ZCCP, helping shape the Consumption & Waste and farming & other land use Emissions Reduction Action Plans (ERAPs), ensuring food system priorities are embedded within Cumbria's pathway to net zero by 2037 and supporting delivery of collaborative programmes of work across these themes.

In particular, the partnership has provided ongoing support for the community-based aspects of this work through charity Futureproof Cumbria, which coordinates the Cumbria Sustainability Network of grassroots groups raising awareness of the climate and nature crises while developing practical projects to reduce carbon emissions and address cost of living challenges. Particular focus has been given to communities along Cumbria's West Coast through the Westogether programme, including areas facing poverty and disadvantage that are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Food has been a key theme across the network, providing an opportunity to strengthen community resilience, build local engagement, and promote food security through locally grown produce.

Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement extends beyond the strategic partnership and plays a central role in shaping priorities and action across workstreams. Food Cumberland regularly engages residents, community groups, businesses and stakeholders through Community Food Conversations, Right to Food consultations, Community Panels, workshops, action-planning sessions and co-produced projects. These activities enable local people to shape priorities, identify challenges and contribute to solutions.

The Partnership seeks to involve people with a broad range of experiences and perspectives, including those affected by food insecurity, poverty, rural isolation and barriers to accessing culturally appropriate food alongside children and young people, older adults, racially minoritised communities, migrant and refugee communities, disabled residents, LGBTQ+ residents, food sector workers, producers, farmers and fishers.

Workstreams provide additional routes for participation, enabling organisations and residents to contribute to partnership activity without being members of the strategic partnership itself.

Partnership Activity and Collective Action

Food Cumberland regularly hosts and supports events which bring together communities, businesses, policy makers and practitioners to share learning, build networks and coordinate action. Recent examples include:

- Agritourism Workshop, bringing together food producers, tourism businesses and rural stakeholders
- Beyond the Food Bank Event and Referrer Networking Session, supporting partners to develop more coordinated responses to food insecurity and embedding the food ladders approach into our ways of working
- Food Resilience Summit, bringing together partners from across the food system to explore risks, opportunities and preparedness across the system.
- Community Food Conversations & Right to Food Consultations engaging residents that have informed local priorities and action plans.

These activities have helped build stronger relationships between community organisations, businesses, researchers, public services and residents while supporting new partnerships, coordinated action and shared learning across Cumberland's food system.

Food Cumberland continues to provide leadership, coordination and a shared platform for collective action, enabling communities, businesses, public services and voluntary organisations to work together towards a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system.

Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

Food Cumberland Strategic Framework & Action Plan

Food Cumberland has placed the Right to Food at the centre of its approach to food governance. The Strategic Framework was launched in 2023 following extensive engagement with partners and stakeholders to embed the Right to Food across Cumberland. A five-year Action Plan was subsequently co-produced with the strategic partnership, more than 350 residents and 55 organisations through consultations, workshops, community panels, food conversations and partnership events. This ensured that delivery priorities reflect local needs, lived experience and partner expertise.

The Strategic Framework is guided by a shared vision:

"Cumberland will be a region where nutritious, tasty and affordable food is available to all, across both our rural and urban communities. The local food economy will be inclusive, resilient, sustainable and fair for everyone involved, ultimately reducing health inequalities. It will support local food enterprises, and the food available will have a low

environmental impact, increased animal welfare and support the people who grow, create and sell it."

Delivery is coordinated through nine thematic workstreams covering food security, healthy living, school food, community food growing and resilience, food and farming, the food and drink economy, tourism, food consumption and waste, and public sector policy and action. These workstreams bring partners together to set priorities, coordinate activity, direct resources and monitor progress, translating the Right to Food into practical action across Cumberland. While Cumberland Council plays an active role in delivery, the Partnership provides strategic oversight, drives implementation and ensures action reflects local needs and priorities.

The Action Plan remains a dynamic working document, enabling the partnership to respond to emerging challenges, opportunities and evidence. As the partnership has evolved, the original Strategic Framework has developed into a broader programme of workstreams to remain responsive to local priorities. The Framework is due to be refreshed in 2027, providing an opportunity to update priorities and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

Monitoring Progress and Measuring Impact

Progress is monitored through workstreams, quarterly partnership meetings and reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Climate and Nature Advisory Group and other strategic forums. Key indicators are reviewed throughout the year and decisions are supported by the Combined Impact Assessment, which considers equality, health, climate and socio-economic impacts.

Regular reflection and review enables partners to celebrate success, identify gaps, refresh priorities and ensure the action plan remains responsive to community feedback, new evidence and emerging opportunities. Where new priorities emerge through community engagement, evidence, policy changes or partner feedback, actions can be amended throughout the year, ensuring the plan remains relevant and responsive rather than a static document.

Coordinating Action Through a Dynamic Partnership

Food Cumberland acts as a hub for collective action across the local food system, bringing together organisations and individuals to maximise resources, avoid duplication and develop coordinated responses to shared priorities.

For example, partnership discussions identified a shared need to help hospitality businesses reduce food waste. Food Cumberland brought together Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumberland Council's Waste Team to coordinate delivery of the Guardians of Grub programme. By aligning resources, networks and

expertise, the partnership was able to provide a more joined-up offer to businesses and achieved a greater reach than any organisation could have achieved independently.

Similarly, Partnership discussions highlighted opportunities to better celebrate and promote local farming and food production. This led to the development of Nourish Cumbria, spearheaded by H&H group, with partners creating a more coordinated approach to storytelling, promotion and public engagement. The initiative has strengthened visibility for local farmers, producers and food businesses while providing a stronger collective voice for the sector.

These examples demonstrate how Food Cumberland moves beyond networking to enable practical collaboration, helping partners align activity, pool resources and drive greater impact.

The Partnership continues to evolve in response to local priorities. Recent developments include expansion of the Food Security Network, adoption of the Food Ladders approach, development of a Cumberland Food Resilience Plan, support for the Cartmel Commitment, creation of a community growing licence to support a Right to Grow approach and strengthened collaboration with ZCCP.

Evidence-Led Action and Continuous Learning

Food Cumberland is committed to evidence-led action and continuous improvement. Following a strategic review, partners identified the need to strengthen evaluation and impact measurement and established a collaboration with Cumberland Council's Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC), bringing research expertise into the Partnership.

Since joining the Partnership, HDRC has worked with partners to identify evidence gaps, develop research priorities and improve access to local data and insights. Community co-researchers and people with lived experience play an important role in this work, ensuring that research is grounded in local knowledge and priorities. This collaboration has strengthened the Partnership's ability to use research, evaluation, community insight and lived experience to inform decision-making, target resources and measure impact.

Current research includes food insecurity, obesity, health inequalities, children's experiences of high-sugar foods and access to healthy food access across Cumberland. HDRC is also supporting evaluation of the Nourish Cumberland Schools programme to assess its impact and inform future school food, food growing and healthy eating initiatives.

Food Cumberland also participates in the Good Food Local North East & Cumberland programme. The benchmarking process provides an additional mechanism for evaluating progress, identifying gaps, sharing good practice and shaping future priorities. Partner

contributions helped Cumberland achieve an Excellence Award and the highest benchmark score across North East and Cumberland, demonstrating the impact of continuous learning and collective action.

Delivering Outcomes Through Partnership Working

The publication and adoption of the Food Cumberland Strategic Framework has provided a shared framework for coordinated action. Through this partnership-led approach:

- Approximately 1,000 children have been auto-enrolled for Free School Meals, unlocking around £1.1m in additional Pupil Premium funding. This followed partners identifying the opportunity and working with Public Health to embed the approach, dedicate officer time and secure resources to support delivery. The Partnership continues to support national lobbying efforts for children where local data remains insufficient for automatic enrolment.
- Six new community food offers have been established following evidence from the FILL survey, with a further three offers in development (9 total).
- Partners have secured significant investment for school food, community food growing, affordable food initiatives, food resilience, local food economy projects and community events, helping strengthen local food infrastructure and support vulnerable communities.

Partnership working has also catalysed activity beyond Food Cumberland itself, including inspiring collaboration between Futureproof Cumbria and Westmorland & Furness partners to secure Place to Plate funding, ongoing discussions about extending the Right to Grow approach across Cumbria, collaboration through the regional Food Advisory Group, joint funding opportunities and support for other areas developing community food growing initiatives. Partners have also shared learning through networks including Capital Growth, Incredible Edible, Innovate UK and Food Active, contributing to wider discussions on food growing, food security and access to land.

Food Cumberland contributed to the development of the Cartmel Commitment through ZCCP. Developed with young people from across Cumbria, the Commitment sets out a shared vision for a fairer, healthier and more sustainable future. The partnership continues to support these principles through work on climate resilience, food justice, sustainable consumption and food system transformation.

These examples demonstrate how Food Cumberland translates shared priorities into action while extending its influence beyond Cumberland through collaboration, learning and advocacy.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Food Justice

Food Cumberland is committed to ensuring that food system change benefits all communities fairly and equitably. Equality, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and social justice are embedded within the partnership's Terms of Reference, governance arrangements and decision-making processes. Through engagement with diverse communities, lived experience representatives, community researchers and partner organisations, including Anti-Racist Cumbria, the partnership works to understand and address barriers to participation, access and opportunities. The Combined Impact Assessment further supports this approach by considering equality, health, socio-economic and environmental impacts when developing and delivering work.

Building a Recognisable Food Identity

Food Cumberland has developed a strong and recognisable identity, supported by its logo, website and communications channels. The website provides a central platform for sharing resources, opportunities, research, events and partnership activity, helping residents and organisations engage with the wider food movement across Cumberland. Partners are continuing to develop and enhance the site to ensure it becomes a comprehensive and trusted resource that showcases local action, supports collaboration and helps residents easily engage with the wider food system work across Cumberland.

By sharing stories, opportunities and resources from across the area, Food Cumberland helps strengthen collaboration, build momentum and make visible the collective impact of organisations working towards a healthier, fairer and more sustainable food system.



(examples of the logo being adapted for partnership-led projects)

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 1 FAIR food STAR:

We will look for evidence that you have:

- **Reflected on representation and justice** e.g. regular REDI Review, FAIR food Action Plan.

- **Demonstrated commitment to anti-racism and justice** e.g. statement of commitment, code of conduct, proactive steps

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

NB *At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. Simply mapping activity is not sufficient: the 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

Through its workstreams and wider networks, the Partnership helps connect food, climate, health, farming and community agendas, reaching tens of thousands of residents each year.

Awareness raising

The Partnership coordinates a shared communications approach enabling partners to reach wider audiences than would be possible individually. Through websites, social media, films, exhibitions, campaigns and partner networks, Food Cumberland promotes healthy, sustainable and locally produced food while celebrating Cumberland's food culture, farming heritage and food businesses.

The Partnership has enabled coordinated promotion of national films such as Six Inches of Soil, which has reached over 250 residents through six local screenings and engagement events, and the People's Emergency Briefing which has engaged more than 500 residents through 16 screenings (and rising!) and associated discussions.

Joint campaigns including Food Waste Action Week, Healthy Start, Refill, Hydration Week and workplace health awareness days are also amplified across partner organisations using the channels listed above. Similarly, the ZCC's Consumption and Waste 9Rs pilot and resource tool, seasonal recipes, producer spotlights and Business Bites are also delivered in this way.

The Partnership made a collective decision to adopt the national Food Conversations model and deliver sessions across Cumberland. Through shared facilitation, coordinated promotion, use of partner venues, volunteer support, the Partnership enabled eight in-person events and one online conversation, engaging more than 320 residents in discussions about local food systems and community priorities.

The conversations created inclusive opportunities for residents to share experiences and influence local decision-making, while helping ensure that people across both rural and urban communities, including those who might otherwise face barriers to participation, were able to take part.

Feedback gathered through Food Conversations has directly informed the redevelopment of the Food Cumberland Action Plan, helped identify opportunities for new food growing projects and food hubs, strengthened links between existing groups and informed wider partnership priorities.

Free, Inclusive Opportunities to Celebrate and Learn

Food Cumberland identified an opportunity to use community celebrations to strengthen food citizenship, community connections and sustainable food practices, developing a proposal which successfully secured £22,000 of Council funding for The Big Lunch and Harvest Fest programme. This Partnership-enabled funding supported more than 120 community-led celebrations reaching over 5,000 residents.

Alongside this, the Partnership supports low-waste chef demonstrations at Taste Cumbria, community apple-pressing days, school food ambassador projects, composting workshops and inclusive cookery activities across community hubs.

Hedgerow cookery experiences with chef John Crouch were delivered in partnership with organisations including Solway Coast National Landscape, Vindolanda and Open Farm Sunday events. Residents take guided walks to learn about edible plants before taking part in practical demonstrations using foraged and locally sourced ingredients.

Show & Tell demonstrates how the Partnership uses wider community events strategically to engage families who may not otherwise participate in food initiatives. In 2026 the event attracted over 5,000 attendees, with Food Cumberland delivering hands-on food-growing activities for more than 150 children and parents, introducing food growing in a fun and accessible way. The event's broader focus on community connection, inclusion and access to services aligns closely with the Partnership's commitment to reaching diverse audiences.

The annual Cook & Play event is developed collaboratively across a range of partners to encourage children to get hands-on with food, try new foods and build confidence. Activities include cooking, tasting, food-related play and food-growing experiences designed to make healthy food fun and familiar.

Great Big Green Week activities are jointly coordinated with the Cumbria Sustainability Network, Westogether, Cumberland schools and Cumberland Council, enabling open farm days, planting events and green fairs which respond directly to community interest in climate and food.

Local Climate Networks are deeply interwoven with the Partnership's approach to community-led sustainability. Westogether brings grassroots organisations across West Cumbria into the fold, raising awareness of the climate crisis and supporting communities to cut fossil fuel use in ways that complement food-focused activity.

Convened with support from the Cumbria Sustainability Network and aligned with the ZCCP, these networks collaborate with Food Cumberland to co-deliver events, learning opportunities and community engagement. The Youth Climate Summit was co-designed to empower young people to explore food, climate and sustainability, ensuring youth voices shape local priorities and future action. The Partnership provides structure, convening power and shared priorities, ensuring climate action and food resilience are connected rather than siloed.

Skills Development Through Training and Volunteering

The Partnership plays an important role in connecting residents to food-related learning, volunteering, training and employment opportunities by bringing together organisations with complementary expertise and audiences.

The Partnership enables coordination between:

- Growing Well, providing therapeutic horticulture, composting demonstrations and school visits & GoodLives, offering food growing and cookery training to support employment and reduce poverty.
- Adult Learning and Food Pantry Partners, delivering free cookery courses and practical food skills workshops focused on affordable, healthy meals. Recent sessions have included low-cost cooking, batch cooking, healthy eating on a budget and air-fryer cookery.
- Master Composters, funded by Cumberland Council and community gardens, providing training, demonstrations and practical learning opportunities focused on home composting, food waste reduction and soil health.
- The Farmer Network, to provide workshops, business support, training and one-to-one advice for farmers and farming families supporting over 1,500 farming members.
- H&H Group and agricultural partners, supporting knowledge exchange and professional development across the farming and land-based sector. Recent initiatives have included specialist training on upland farming, Net Zero, environmental land management, diversification, financial resilience and sustainable land management, combining classroom learning with practical farm visits and peer-to-peer learning.
- LANSS (Land and Nature Skills Service), connecting food producers, land managers and training providers to address skills gaps following the closure of Newton Rigg College and strengthen future workforce development.

Experiential learning is also partnership-led, with coordinated visits to biodigesters, recycling centres and composting facilities. These visits only happen at scale because the Partnership brokers access, aligns messaging and brings groups together from different sectors who would not otherwise engage with one another.

The Partnership has also influenced and supported schools to establish food-growing spaces, edible gardens and composting systems. Partners, schools and early years providers coordinate resources, training and practical support. A nursery-led vermiculture pilot, catalysed through Partnership support, is now informing wider early years practice, helping children understand food growing, soil health, composting and food waste from an early age.

As part of the Nourish Cumberland Schools programme, children can take part in gardening clubs where they prepare soil, plant seeds and monitor growth. Schools have successfully grown produce including lettuce, tomatoes and peas. The programme has also created wider impacts, with teachers taking on responsibility for growing spaces, schools incorporating growing activities into wider learning, and pupils sharing skills and enthusiasm with their families and communities. As well as involving parents, schools have reached out to contacts in the community who can help with resources, such as reclaimed wood for raised beds, plug plants and seeds.

Initiatives including Licence to Grow and Grown Together are also Partnership-enabled, promoting hands-on learning and community ownership of shared growing spaces.

Inclusive Participation

Through connecting providers, volunteers and resources, the Partnership works to ensure opportunities to engage with food activity are accessible to people from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Effort is made to engage people experiencing poverty, food insecurity, rural isolation and other barriers to participation. Activities, such as coffee mornings and wrap-around support, are delivered through trusted community settings including food pantries, schools, community hubs, growing projects, warm spaces and other partner organisations.

Food Conversations have been held across Community Panel areas and online, ensuring opportunities are accessible to rural communities and people who may face barriers to participation. The HDRC also works with the Partnership to help build research-active communities that shape local food priorities and future action.

A Shared Public Campaign

Through the Right to Food movement, Food Cumberland provides an umbrella campaign that brings everyone together around a shared vision and common narrative. This

connects activities across the region and helps residents understand how they can contribute.

Partners use shared communications to amplify messages that no organisation could deliver alone and enable new ideas to be brought to fruition. The concept for Nourish Cumbria, for example, was first brought to the Partnership by a local partner seeking to turn an idea into a coordinated programme of activity. Recognising the opportunity to enable this idea, the Partnership helped secure funding for a dedicated research and development role and brought together a wider group of partners to shape and deliver the programme. Nourish Cumbria now has its own website and Facebook page. It showcases farmers, growers and local produce and amplifies partner-led storytelling.

Through joint coordination, partners have also shared locally produced films on damsons, dairy and the Egremont Crab Fair and collectively promote the Forty Farms project ensuring farming stories reach wider audiences.

The Partnership's branding, website, Food Conversations, Nourish Cumbria platform and public events collectively provide residents with opportunities to learn, participate, act and share ideas, helping to build an active and visible good food movement across Cumberland.

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

Cumberland is cultivating a strong local good food movement by empowering residents, communities and organisations to shape the food system through partnership-enabled access to land, community-led growing, shared infrastructure, and collaborative networks. Rooted in the Right to Food and strengthened by strategic investment, grassroots leadership and the convening power of the Partnership, this work is helping create a fairer, healthier and more sustainable food future.

Building Community Growing Networks and Leadership

The Community Food Growing & Resilience Workstream connects more than 40 community growing projects, 20 Master Composters, five self-managed allotment associations, over 20 partner organisations and a growing network of volunteers and community leaders, including inclusive growing spaces such as Grown Together, Groundwork's 5 Green Community Hubs, the community gardens network and Incredible Edible sites. Many operate within communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation, rural isolation or poorer health outcomes, helping ensure that opportunities to engage with food growing are accessible to those who may benefit most. Through this work, residents are supported to move from participation to leadership by creating growing spaces, leading events, shaping investment decisions and influencing the future of Cumberland's food system.

Partnership networks connect and strengthen For example, the Community Food Growing & Resilience working group delivered Spring into Community Food Growing brought together 30 participants from existing and emerging growing groups for talks, seed swaps, round-table discussions and site visits, helping shape the Carlisle and Surrounding Area Growing Network. The Harvest Community Growing Event at Red Lonning, Whitehaven also brought together 25 participants and helped establish a West Cumbria Growing Network. Following these events, partners established a Community Growers Facebook Group connecting 25 growers, volunteers and community groups, enabling ongoing peer support and knowledge sharing.

The Partnership's Community Food Growing & Resilience working group also provides practical support that groups could not access alone, through mapping growing spaces, coordinating training with organisations such as the National Allotments Society and Garden Organic, and developing practical resources on allotment management, governance, funding, composting, volunteer recruitment and community growing. Working with Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC), Town and Parish Councils and allotment associations, the Partnership has also helped improve and expand community growing infrastructure, including supporting two new community allotments, dividing larger plots into more accessible spaces, and improving access to land.

Climate networks are also interwoven with this work. Westogether and the Cumbria Sustainability Network collaborate with the Partnership to deliver training, grants and networking for community groups, ensuring climate action and food citizenship are connected rather than siloed.

At the Zero Carbon Cumbria Summit, Food Cumberland hosted a dedicated discussion group on community food growing, bringing together organisations from across the region. The session generated shared actions for attendees, from improving access to land, to expanding volunteer networks, to strengthening links between climate and food initiatives, demonstrating how Partnership convening catalyses practical, multi-agency progress.

The Partnership also supports regional collaboration through the Food Advisory Group, set up by Futureproof Cumbria and joint Lottery funding bids, strengthening cross-County coordination, shared learning and collective action.

Empowering Communities Through Access to Land

The Licence to Grow campaign, supporting the national Right to Grow, launched in 2024, was co-designed through Partnership working groups with community groups and enables residents and community groups to access council-owned land through a simplified, inclusive process. The licence uses clear, accessible language, reducing many of the barriers traditionally associated with accessing public land, helping residents navigate

applications and develop proposals. Partnership coordination has ensured pilots run across Cumberland to demonstrate its effectiveness.

The largest site to date - a former Council tipping yard in Drigg & Carleton Community - was unlocked through Partnership facilitation. The Parish Council now leads development of an accessible growing space where volunteers take home produce and use it for weekly community lunches. Accessible raised beds, habitat creation and rewilding plans ensure the site delivers environmental and social benefits alongside food production. The project provides a valuable community asset for a rural west Cumbrian community and demonstrates how Partnership facilitation can transform underused land into community-owned food assets that strengthen local leadership and food citizenship. Most sites operate as open and welcoming community spaces where people can volunteer, attend events, learn new skills or simply spend time outdoors connecting with others.

The Partnership strengthens therapeutic growing by connecting providers, volunteers, community organisations and distribution networks that might otherwise operate independently. Through Food Cumberland's Community Food Growing & Resilience Workstream, partners identified opportunities to connect therapeutic growing with affordable food initiatives, community learning and food growing networks, increasing the reach and impact of existing activity.

Growing Well West Cumbria uses an ex-Council nursery on a peppercorn rent facilitated by the Partnership to support around 100 people each week with mental health needs through therapeutic horticulture. The Partnership introduced Growing Well to the Master Composters network, creating a collaboration that would not otherwise have occurred. Through this connection, Growing Well now hosts composting demonstrations, school visits and practical learning opportunities which combine food growing, waste reduction and environmental education. Beyond direct delivery, Partnership convening has enabled Growing Well to share learning with other organisations interested in therapeutic growing and community food production, helping to spread successful approaches and extend health, wellbeing and food citizenship benefits across the wider region.

Cumberland's Community Panels

Partners across Food Cumberland actively engage with Cumberland Council's Community Panels to ensure that local priorities around good food, community growing and food-related infrastructure are recognised within wider place-based investment. By contributing insight, evidence and lived experience from communities, partners help Panels understand where food initiatives can strengthen wellbeing, resilience and local leadership. This collaborative influence has supported funding for projects such as Drigg Licence to Grow, Riversmeet Community Cooperative and other grassroots organisations working to improve access to good food, expand community growing opportunities and

build locally owned food assets. Through this shared approach, investment flows directly into neighbourhoods where it can have the greatest impact.

Opportunities to get involved are promoted through partnership networks, community organisations, social media, local events, food pantries, schools, community hubs and word-of-mouth, helping residents discover projects close to where they live.

Skills, Resources and Inclusion

The Council has increasingly entrusted the Partnership to administer and coordinate funding programmes on its behalf, recognising the Partnership's strong community connections, local knowledge and ability to identify where investment can have greatest impact. Partnership-distributed grants have catalysed a wide range of local projects.

Following a proposal developed by Food Cumberland and submitted to Cumberland Council, £22,000 was secured to support delivery of The Big Lunch and Harvest Fest programme. This Partnership-enabled funding supported more than 120 community-led celebrations reaching over 5,000 residents. Funding criteria were intentionally designed by partners to support low-carbon, plastic-free and zero-waste events while empowering communities to lead their own local food initiatives, embedding good food into local culture and strengthening neighbourhood connections.

The Unity Harvest Festival, for example, supported through the Food Cumberland Harvest Festival Grant, brought together the Afrikana Centre, Susan's Farm and local partners to connect orchard produce with local food systems. Activities included recipe sharing, sustainability learning and opportunities for participants to take surplus apples home and recreate dishes with their families. Through collaboration with Cumberland Council's Resettlement Team, the event successfully engaged Ukrainian families alongside local residents, creating opportunities for cultural exchange through food. Additional activities included Roman food experiences linked to the Wilder Hadrian's Wall project and seasonal corn dolly making with local artist Margaret Rees.

Beyond funding, the Partnership helps groups access practical support including premises, infrastructure, training, networking opportunities and specialist advice. Through close working with the Council, the Partnership helps local organisations secure suitable council-owned premises for food-related activity allowing groups to run food support services, cookery classes, warm hubs, community meals and growing spaces in well-managed, accessible settings.

The Partnership catalyses skills development by connecting training providers, community organisations and learners. The Good Lives Project, launched by Home to Work, offers food growing and cookery training to support learners into employment and relieve poverty. Its onsite kitchen at West Lakes Science Park hosts public-facing workshops and demonstrations. Cookery courses are also delivered with food pantries, community food

projects and Adult Learning providers, helping residents build confidence in preparing healthy, affordable meals using accessible ingredients. These opportunities also reduce food waste.

Partnership coordination has also supported Groundwork's Green Community Hubs by identifying and supporting bids for external funding, sharing resources and facilitating access to specialist expertise. Through this approach, hubs have secured funding from multiple sources to install raised beds, rainwater harvesting systems, composting infrastructure and shared tools. These hubs now operate as inclusive, community-led spaces for growing, learning and connection, strengthened by Partnership-enabled volunteer networks and shared training.

Influencing Long-Term Planning

The Partnership has influenced long-term planning and development. Through coordinated input from the Community Food Growing Workstream, for example, the St Cuthbert's Garden Village now includes community food growing spaces, allotments and orchards as core infrastructure rather than optional features. Partnership feedback also helped strengthen Local Plan proposals to include edible landscaping within the Greenway. By influencing strategic planning in this way, the Partnership is helping create neighbourhoods where food growing, access to green space, nature connection and community stewardship are included from the outset.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

The Partnership also supports the development of future food leaders through collaboration with the University of Cumbria and wider education partners. In 2025, the University hosted the UK's first World Food Prize Foundation Youth Institute, providing young people with opportunities to explore global food security challenges and engage directly with experts working across food, farming and sustainability. Partnership networks helped amplify the programme locally, supporting food citizenship by encouraging young people to consider how food systems influence health, climate, equity and global development. Link

Cumberland Council has become an Area of Sanctuary, demonstrating its commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment for people seeking sanctuary. Delivered in partnership with local voluntary, community and public sector organisations, this work helps reduce inequalities, strengthen community connections and ensure people can access food, advice and support with dignity. Council's place of sanctuary status approved

Key Issue 2 FAIR food STAR:

We will look for evidence that you:

- **Celebrate diverse food culture** e.g. events, festivals, celebrations
- **Embed representation and justice action** e.g. FAIR food Action Plan, facilitating representation and engagement

Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

***NB** At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. Simply mapping activity is not sufficient: the 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Establishing a Multi-Agency Partnership

We take a coordinated and collaborative approach to tackling food poverty, rooted in the Right to Food. The Partnership helped embed the Right to Food and continues to act as a critical friend, holding the Council to account and ensuring commitments translate into action.

Our work is structured around the food ladders approach, and the Partnership plays a central role in shaping priorities, administering funding and coordinating delivery. We also ensure interventions are dignified, sustainable and designed to help residents move up the food ladder from crisis support to long-term resilience and community-led solutions.

Through the expanded Food Security Network, Poverty Reference Group, lived experience voices, community organisations and public sector partners, Food Cumberland brings together more than 90 organisations working across welfare, food, health and community development to tackle both the causes and consequences of food poverty in a joined-up way.

The Partnership ensures that food insecurity and access to affordable healthy food are increasingly considered within wider decisions relating to community infrastructure, regeneration, asset management and neighbourhood development. This combined approach ensures food poverty work is not siloed but embedded across planning, public health, community development and economic policy.

Building the Evidence Base

The Partnership promotes dignified approaches to food support that offer choice, affordability, community connection and access to wider advice and support.

To better understand local need, Food Cumberland worked with Public Health, local food support organisations and the University of Liverpool to develop and deliver the Food Insecurity at a Local Level (FILL) survey, one of the first initiatives of its kind in the UK. The survey identified significant gaps in support provision and revealed that many food-insecure households were not accessing available services. Findings were shared across the Food Security Workstream, enabling partners to prioritise investment, target resources more effectively and ensure support reaches communities with the greatest need.

Collaborative working with the HDRC has also ensured obesity and food insecurity among households with children are key research priorities, helping to shape future policy, funding and practice.

Expanding Community Food Support

FILL findings directly informed the development of six new community food offers, including pantries and community shops, with a further three currently in development (leading to 9 total new offers developed through the Partnership). One example is Rachael's Community Shop & Cafe in Carlisle, which provides affordable food in a welcoming, stigma-free environment while connecting residents to debt, housing and employment advice, helping people move up the food ladder.

The Partnership has also strengthened the sustainability of existing food hubs and pantries through improvements to governance, equipment, volunteer capacity and income diversification. Alongside this, it has supported practical food skills development through cookery sessions, recipe cards, slow cooker and air fryer demonstrations, and Scratch & Batch workshops. Examples: Silloth Share & Support, Rachael's Community Shop & Cafe, and Wigton Food Pantry.

Improving Access to Affordable Healthy Food

Through the Nourish Cumberland Schools programme (see 3B for further detail), participating schools are reviewing and strengthening breakfast and after-school provision and identifying barriers to food access for children at risk of food insecurity. This work has been made possible through funding secured by the Partnership.

The Partnership has also commissioned Growing Well to provide weekly vegetable boxes to 26 food support organisations. In addition, 50 of 100 weekly crop-share boxes are subsidised for lower-income families by Partners. Together, these initiatives have increased access to fresh produce for more than 650 families while supporting a social enterprise that provides mental health support to around 100 people each week.

Strengthening Community Infrastructure

The Partnership works with Cumberland Council to help community organisations access council-owned assets at peppercorn rents, enabling the delivery of food support services, cookery classes, warm hubs, community meals and growing spaces in accessible and well-managed settings. A strong example is Growing Well's use of former nursery glasshouses and buildings to expand organic horticulture production while hosting cookery classes, a compost demonstration site, community meals and wider community events.

The Partnership also supports Licence to Grow sites to integrate food growing into broader community resilience activities, develop practical growing skills and strengthen community ownership of local food assets.

Meals on Wheels schemes in Carlisle, Wigton and Millom have expanded through Partnership support, helping providers connect, identify funding opportunities and strengthen local delivery models. Further growth is expected in West Cumbria, with access to suitable kitchen facilities currently being brokered by the Partnership.

Building Community Resilience

Warm hubs and lunch clubs supported through Partnership connections and seed funding provide regular meals and opportunities for social connection. This includes support for refugees and asylum seekers through links with Multicultural Cumbria. Many of these initiatives began with small amounts of seed funding secured by the Partnership and have subsequently developed links with a wider network of support organisations.

A refill shops Leaflet and campaign were also developed through the Partnership, helping residents save money and reduce waste. Refill options are now promoted through food pantries, alongside a practical “how to set up refill” guide developed through the Food Consumption & Waste Working Group.

Recognising the Partnership's effectiveness in this area, Cumberland Council entrusted it with coordinating significant investment. To date, the Partnership has distributed more than £260,000 through the Household Support Fund and is now coordinating Community Resilience Fund allocations of £80,000 in 2026 and approximately £500,000 across 2027-2028. This ensures investment builds long-term community capacity and resilience rather than relying solely on short-term emergency responses.

Promoting Fair Wages

Through its strategic relationship with the Council, the Partnership has championed the importance of fair wages and reducing the drivers of food poverty, supporting promotion of the Real Living Wage through procurement, commissioning and wider economic

development activity. The Council and several other partners now pay the living wage as a result.

Training for Health Professionals

Through Partnership coordination, a programme of nutrition, food insecurity and poverty-awareness training is delivered to HAF providers, health professionals, housing staff, welfare advisers, community organisations and frontline workers. This includes a suite of training developed by Food Active, alongside training delivered through community organisations and the Referrers Network. The training helps increase understanding of food poverty, strengthen referral pathways, and ensures residents can access welfare advice, hardship funds, financial assistance and emergency food aid at times of crisis. The Partnership has also supported Healthy Start awareness and uptake through training and frontline engagement, while Cumberland Council funds the provision of universal vitamins, helping improve access to nutritional support across the area.

Cash-First Support & Community Inclusion

The Partnership worked with IFAN to develop & promote Worrying About Money leaflets, supporting a cash-first approach to food insecurity and helping residents access advice, welfare support and hardship funding before reaching crisis point.

Partnership working has also enabled auto-enrolment for Free School Meals, enabling approximately 1000 previously unregistered children to receive meals and unlocking approximately £1.1 million in additional pupil premium funding since 2025. This work was championed by partners who identified low uptake as a barrier to tackling child food poverty and worked with Public Health colleagues to dedicate officer time and resources to implementation. This work directly improved access to existing entitlements and maximised household income for families experiencing food insecurity.

The Poverty Reference Group, which includes people with lived experience of poverty alongside voluntary and public sector partners, acts as a critical friend to the Council and Partnership. The group helps shape anti-poverty priorities, challenge assumptions and ensure that lived experience informs funding decisions, service design and policy development.

Through Partnership funding, networks and connections, Food Cumberland has supported organisations such as Multicultural Cumbria to share learning, develop partnerships and connect food activities with wider inclusion and anti-poverty work. Partnership funding has supported community meals, cultural food events and activities that bring people together through food in welcoming, stigma-free settings.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

Healthy Eating Campaigns

The Food Cumberland Partnership leads a coordinated, place-based approach to improving access to healthy food. Much of this work is coordinated through the Healthy Living Workstream, which brings together over 100 partners including Public Health, NHS partners (across the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) and NHS neighbourhood health teams), Integrated Care Communities, schools, community organisations and VCFSE partners to align priorities and coordinate action. The Workstream provides accountability for this activity and ensures that evidence, lived experience and community insight inform decision-making.

The Partnership also amplifies public health messaging and national healthy eating campaigns through schools, Family Hubs, NHS services, community organisations, workplaces and social media.

The Partnership works to address the wider factors that influence diet and health and has driven a number of system-level changes:

- The Partnership has influenced planning policy to restrict new hot food takeaways in areas with high levels of childhood obesity, supported the development of a healthy advertising approach across Council estates and developed vending machine guidance to increase the availability of healthier options across Council buildings and partner sites, creating more consistent nutrition standards in public spaces. This was achieved by bringing together evidence from Public Health, Food Active and local partners to reduce exposure to unhealthy food marketing and promote healthier choices and has been approved by the Council and the Health & Wellbeing board. Partners are now looking to support other Anchor Institutions to do the same.
- Partners collaboratively developed healthier catering guidance for meetings and events, helping organisations provide more nutritious, seasonal and locally sourced food at Council, NHS, community and workplace events.
- Through its relationship with Food Active, the Partnership instigated Cumberland's recommitment to the Healthy Weight Declaration which is now being developed across the ICB footprint.
- Partners have also successfully influenced the Healthy Weight Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring healthy eating priorities are embedded in long-term strategic planning.
- Partnership organisations also coordinate delivery of national campaigns including Sugar Smart, Veg Cities, Change4Life and Drink Water/Refill, using local networks and communications channels to promote healthier food and drink choices.

The Partnership also uses community events and shared celebrations to make healthy eating visible, accessible and culturally relevant. Through the Big Lunch and Harvest Fest

programme, Food Cumberland supported more than 120 community-led events reaching over 5,000 residents. Activities included seasonal cooking demonstrations, foraging walks, planting sessions, composting workshops, Indian cooking using low-waste approaches, Bollywild dancing in tomato polytunnels, community BBQs featuring local produce, and talks from farmers, growers and health professionals. These events help people experience healthy food in practical, social and enjoyable ways, build confidence in preparing nutritious meals, promote seasonal and local produce, celebrate cultural diversity, and encourage longer-term healthy and sustainable food choices.

Promoting support services

Through the Workstream, partners align activity across the Healthy Weight Partnership, Action 4 Health, Let's Move!, Age Friendly Communities, the Cookery Skills Network, the Healthy Weight and Treating Obesity Network, Integrated Care Community (ICC) networks and wider NHS and Public Health programmes. The Workstream also connects local activity with regional networks including Food Active North West and the North East & Cumberland Healthy Weight and Physical Activity Network. By bringing these partners together under a shared governance structure, the Partnership enables a coordinated whole-systems approach to healthy eating, ensuring food is recognised as a core determinant of health and embedded across early years, family support, long-term conditions, mental health, community development and prevention programmes.

Healthy Living Programmes combine nutrition education, cooking skills, food psychology, hydration guidance and physical activity through structured twelve-week support programmes. The Healthy Habits for Life programme complements this work by providing free one-to-one healthy lifestyle and nutrition support for families, helping residents make sustainable dietary changes and improve long-term health outcomes.

The Partnership works with social prescribing teams to strengthen referral routes and connect residents with support, healthy living programmes and community opportunities. The Joy social prescribing platform as well as 20 social prescribing link workers, for example, connect residents with cookery classes and budgeting workshops. Nature-based health activities through green social prescribing also include food growing, gardening and outdoor wellbeing programmes. Community meals and multicultural food activities delivered through Partnership-supported organisations such as Multicultural Cumbria, also use food as a tool for social connection, cultural exchange, confidence building and wellbeing. Cumberland's Dementia Action Alliances & Age Friendly Communities also deliver healthy food gatherings and community activities for older people, including those living with dementia and their carers, supporting nutrition, social connection, wellbeing and independent living through shared food experiences. The Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme ensures healthy eating and nutrition are incorporated into routine conversations about health and wellbeing.

This integrated approach ensures that residents can access a coordinated offer of support rather than isolated services.

Food Culture and Transformation

The Partnership influences healthy food culture through community-led action, ensuring residents are not only recipients of healthy eating initiatives but active participants in shaping them. Through Food Conversations, food poverty engagement work and school-based activities, residents, families and young people help identify priorities and influence the development of healthy eating initiatives. Through the Nourish Cumbria Farming programme, community organisations, schools, farmers and local producers work together to promote seasonal, local and climate-friendly food choices and Community growing projects, food hubs, affordable food initiatives and cookery programmes are supported through Partnership networks and provide opportunities for residents to develop skills, build confidence and share knowledge with others.

As part of the School Food Working Group (SFWG) action plan, the Partnership leads a bold, collaborative programme with support from School Food Matters to embed healthy eating across school life, securing £130,000 to launch a whole-school approach to food. Research conducted by the SFWG identified the challenges schools are facing, which led to the partnership approaching School Food Matters to ask them to expand their Nourish Programme to Cumberland. Without the Partnership, this would not have happened.

Nourish Cumberland Schools Programme works with each school's community on:

- Creating bespoke School Food Policies
- Training for teaching and catering staff, governors and senior leadership around School Food Standards and positive relationships with food.
- Pupil based activities such as sensory food exploration, menu collaboration, school food ambassadors and gardening groups.
- Parent/Carer and early years support around food choices and packed lunches through cooking sessions and newsletters.
- Peer learning through network meetings.
- Support to develop a healthy food culture beyond the dining hall

The Partnership brings together headteachers, researchers, early years settings, caterers and public health colleagues. The group has:

- Mapped school meal procurement

- Delivered Phunky Foods workshops and Chef-led cooking sessions in schools (funded through collaboration with local businesses)
- Gained access to the school network, facilitating targeted and quality collaboration and support
- Improved menu quality through collaboration with Orian (school food caterers)
- Piloted increased use of healthy, locally sourced food, including sustainably caught fish
- Strengthened links between schools and local producers
- Supported the national pilot of free school breakfast clubs, ensuring healthy options were available and collecting feedback to inform national rollout.
- Worked closely with providers to improve the nutritional quality of holiday food provision and ensure healthy eating messages are consistently promoted.
- Delivered HAF training, guidance and ongoing collaboration to improve menu quality, increase fruit and vegetable consumption, reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods, and strengthened links with local producers and suppliers.

SFWG works closely with Cumberland's Growing Healthy 0-19 Cumberland | HDFT Childrens Health Service, Infant Feeding Team and Health Visitor Service to promote healthy nutrition from the earliest stages of life. Through these partnerships, families can access support around infant feeding, breastfeeding, weaning and healthy eating, helping establish positive food habits from childhood. Through the Healthy Living workstream, Cumberland's Breastfeeding Friendly Scheme is supported to encourage cafés, libraries, leisure centres and other community venues to provide welcoming environments for breastfeeding families, helping create healthier and more inclusive public spaces.

The Partnership has worked with Environmental Health and Public Health colleagues to redesign and relaunch Cumberland's Healthier Choices Awards, creating a practical and accessible scheme that supports local food businesses to offer healthier food options. It convened Public Health expertise, Environmental Health colleagues and local businesses to ensure the scheme reflects current nutrition guidance while remaining achievable for independent food outlets. Local businesses were involved throughout the pilot phase, helping test and refine the application process to maximise participation and impact.

Mapping access

Using a whole-systems approach, the Partnership combines data from the Food Insecurity at a Local Level (FILL) survey, National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), dental health data, Healthy Start intelligence and community networks to target action where it

can have the greatest impact. This enables partners to move beyond isolated projects and coordinate long-term improvements to food access, healthy weight, nutrition and food culture across Cumberland.

Evidence gained demonstrates that access to healthy food and diet-related health outcomes are not experienced equally and this evidence is used to target interventions towards communities facing the greatest barriers. This data has also been used to target initiatives such as healthy food access programmes, school food improvements, cookery training, Healthy Start promotion and nature-based health activities.

The Partnership has also contributed local evidence and insight to national consultations, including responses on the Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM), food advertising and promotions restrictions, and School Food Standards reviews, ensuring Cumberland's experience helps shape future national policy.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Food Cumberland operates within a wider system of health, wellbeing and anti-poverty activity across Cumberland. The area falls within the North Cumbria Integrated Care Place of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. Seven Integrated Care Communities work at neighbourhood level with local communities, voluntary organisations and statutory partners, with healthy weight and healthy eating identified as priorities across all areas.

The HDRC has developed a comprehensive baseline evidence and data mapping resource through the Cumbria Observatory (report here), supporting a better understanding of local health inequalities and wider determinants of health.

Residents can also access a range of wider support aimed at addressing the wider determinants of health and reducing financial hardship. This includes initiatives such as Cold to Cosy Homes and Green Doctor, which provide advice, energy-saving measures and support to help eligible households reduce fuel costs. Additional investment through the HSF and connections to food pantries has helped expand access to these services. Partners also work together to deliver awareness campaigns and training on wider issues affecting financial wellbeing, including work to tackle illegal money lending and loan shark activity.

Food-related work is further strengthened through collaboration with academic and strategic partners, including the Just Centre at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and the West Cumbria Child Poverty Strategy, helping align local action on food insecurity, child poverty and health inequalities.

Key Issue 3 FAIR food STAR:

We will look for evidence that you have:

- **Embedded accountability in representation of marginalised communities** e.g. engage with representative organisations and groups, establish new representative groups and panels, embedding lived experience

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

NB *At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. Simply mapping activity is not sufficient: the 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

The Food Cumberland Partnership has been instrumental in ensuring food, farming and local enterprise are recognised as key drivers of Cumberland's economic development. Through its Food & Farming (15 core partners), Local Food & Drink Economy (20 core partners & engagement with over 150 food and drink businesses) and Tourism (12 core partners and over 50 hospitality businesses engaged through Guardians of Grub programme) Workstreams , the Partnership brings together producers, businesses, support agencies, local authorities and tourism partners to influence policy, investment, business support and market development.

Strategic Leadership & Investment

Through advocacy, evidence-sharing and coordinated action, the Partnership played a pivotal role in securing food and farming as priorities within Cumberland's emerging Economy & Inclusive Growth Strategy. Contributions to the Economic Summit, Health in Planning workshops and wider strategy development processes ensured food enterprise, local production, sustainable supply chains and rural businesses were recognised as key components of future economic development plans.

The Partnership has also influenced planning policy. Through coordinated input from the Community Food Growing Workstream, the St Cuthbert's Garden Village masterplan includes community growing spaces, allotments and orchards as core infrastructure. Partnership feedback also strengthened Local Plan proposals for edible landscaping within the Greenway, helping ensure future neighbourhoods support food growing, community stewardship and connections to nature.

Working closely with Cumberland Council, economic development teams, funding bodies and Cumbria Tourism, the Partnership has also influenced investment priorities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This has helped secure support for food retail, hospitality, farm diversification, agritourism, equipment upgrades and producer collaboration, including:

- £1.2 million invested through the Shop Front Grants Programme.
- 100 commercial premises improved.
- 11 vacant units brought back into use.
- Investment in food retail and hospitality businesses.
- Numerous farm diversification and agritourism projects.
- Equipment and productivity improvements.
- Support for farm aggregation and collaboration models.

The Partnership also helped shape Cumbria Tourism's Food & Drink development programme, ensuring local producers and food businesses were prioritised within tourism, business support and destination-marketing activity.

This included:

- The Food & Drink in Cumberland campaign, promoting local producers, hospitality and food experiences
- The Cumbrian Coastal Food Route, showcasing West Coast producers and creating new visitor itineraries
- Workforce development through the Tourism Talent Hub, supporting skills, apprenticeships and sector resilience
- A dedicated Food & Drink Resource Hub providing support on local sourcing, food waste reduction, carbon reduction, events and business development.

This involvement has helped align tourism investment with wider food system goals, creating opportunities for rural enterprises.

Business Support & Market Development

The Partnership strengthens Cumberland's food and drink sector by acting as a gateway to business support, helping businesses access funding, advice, training, networks and commercial opportunities. Through Partnership convened events, brokerage and signposting, access is less fragmented and easier to navigate.

This includes:

- Enterprising Cumbria and the Cumbria Accelerator Programme, offering one-to-one innovation advice, specialist consultancy support and growth opportunities.
- Cumbria Growth Hub, led by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, providing training, networking, digital support and tailored advice.
- Cumbrian Larder and Nourish Cumbria, developed by the Partnership to strengthen local supply chains and connect buyers with Cumbrian producers.
- Mitie Business Boost, supporting food-related SMEs and start-ups through grants and development support.
- ONiT and support networks championed by the Partnership to provide specialist advice and support.
- Business Bites sessions connecting producers, retailers, hospitality businesses and buyers to create commercial opportunities and strengthen local supply chains.

Markets, Tourism & Agritourism

Working with our partners (stated above) and the Business Food & Drink Network, the Partnership has connected businesses with new customers, routes to market, funding opportunities and wider economic development activity.

This leadership has also embedded local sourcing into event design. This includes expanding seasonal markets and Teenage Markets, Artisan markets and producer pop-ups, Farmers' Markets, Open Farm Sunday events and agritourism open days.

Free trader stands at Taste Cumbria, Taste of the Sea and seasonal markets, funded and coordinated by the Partnership, helping early-stage businesses test products, gain customer feedback and develop customer relationships without significant financial risk.

Taste Cumbria and Taste of the Sea have become significant economic drivers. In 2025, Taste of the Sea Maryport attracted approximately 22,500 visitors and Taste Cumbria Christmas around 10,000 visitors. These events generated approximately £2.1 million of economic impact in Cockermouth, almost £2 million in Maryport and more than £400,000 in Carlisle during 2025 alone. By ensuring local producers are central to these events, the Partnership helps translate visitor spending into opportunities for local food businesses, market traders, farmers and hospitality enterprises.

Recognising agritourism as a major opportunity for farm diversification and rural enterprise, Food Cumberland worked with Cumbria Tourism, supported by the Food & Farming Workstream and producer networks to convene a workshop attended by more than 80 farmers, producers and support organisations, bringing together sectors that had

not previously worked strategically on this agenda. The workshop led to the creation of an Agritourism Working Group and development of a dedicated Cumberland Agritourism Strategy (publication due to Winter 2026). Priorities include development, provenance, sustainable food tourism, farm diversification, new food routes and visitor itineraries that increase the value generated.

Investing in Infrastructure

The Partnership has championed investment in food-related infrastructure that secures shorter supply chains and local market access. This ensures the importance of trading spaces for local food businesses is recognised within regeneration projects and town-centre development plans.

Key results include:

Carlisle Open Air Market, part of a £5.5 million regeneration programme creating new opportunities for traders and increasing city-centre footfall.

Carlisle Market Hall, being transformed into a food-focused destination and community hub that combines heritage preservation with new opportunities.

Taking a community wealth building approach, community enterprises are connected with funding, expertise, networks and market opportunities. Examples include The Gather at Ennerdale and the Hesket Newmarket community-owned Old Crown Pub, Community Shop and brewery.

By convening and coordinating partners, Food Cumberland identifies opportunities, influences policy, unlocks resources and develops collaborations that strengthen access to land, community food growing, community-owned enterprises, local procurement and shorter supply chains. This helps keep wealth circulating locally, strengthen community ownership and build long-term economic resilience.

Skills and Careers

The Partnership supports skills, innovation and workforce development, helping address skills shortages and build resilience.

Activity includes:

- Improving careers pathways in food, farming and land-based industries, raising awareness of employment opportunities and addressing future workforce needs.
- Working with LANSS, The Farmer Network and sector partners to secure the continuation of land-based training following the closure of Newton Rigg College.

- Connecting businesses to the H&H-led farming courses, developing the next generation of farmers by providing training in sustainable farming, land management and rural enterprise.
- Collaboration with LANSS, LEAF and the University of Cumbria in skills, training and knowledge exchange.
- Work with Thomas Jardine & Co to map Cumbria's food ecosystem and identify future investment opportunities.
- Developing producer-led innovation networks and peer learning opportunities.
- Establishing a Horticulture Training Group with LANSS and sector partners to address skills shortages and expand training provision.

Through strategic leadership, investment, skills development, business support, agritourism and market development, Food Cumberland is helping strengthen Cumberland's food economy, support jobs, build resilient supply chains, retain wealth locally and create opportunities for sustainable food businesses to thrive.

Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

The Food Cumberland Partnership plays a key role in helping residents and visitors discover, access and support local, sustainable and independent food businesses. By bringing together producers, tourism organisations, local authorities, market operators, food businesses and community partners, the Partnership promotes Cumberland's food identity, strengthens consumer awareness and encourages spending within the local food economy.

Helping Consumers Find Local Food

The Partnership has supported the development and promotion of platforms that make it easier for consumers to find local producers, retailers, food experiences and sustainable food businesses.

Nourish Cumbria originated through partnership discussions after the Director of H&H Group approached Food Cumberland with the idea of creating a stronger connection between consumers and local food producers. Partners recognised the opportunity and collectively committed time, expertise, networks and resources to develop the concept. The Partnership subsequently secured support and funding from Cumberland Council and commissioned a food systems researcher to help design and establish the programme.

The resulting interactive platform maps farms, producers, agritourism businesses and food experiences across Cumbria promoting sustainable farming, provenance, and

informed food choices. The next phase will link Nourish Cumbria with Cumbrian Larder, a platform for secondary producers, to strengthen connections and create new opportunities for local sourcing.

The Partnership also amplifies initiatives such as the Made in Cumbria brand and directory, led by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, which showcases local producers, food businesses, artisans and craftspeople. Through marketing support, social media promotion, producer storytelling, product demonstrations and multiple routes to market, the scheme helps raise the profile of local businesses, build pride in provenance and connect consumers directly with local producers. The Partnership also promotes the Lake District National Park's new wild venison brand, increasing visibility for sustainable local produce and encouraging consumers to support Cumberland's food economy as part of the LDNP Deer Strategy.

Together, these platforms improve access to local food, support shorter supply chains and strengthen public understanding of where food comes from. Together, these initiatives improve access to local food, support shorter supply chains and strengthen public understanding of where food comes from. Through its Food & Farming, Local Food & Drink Economy and Tourism Workstreams, the Partnership also connects businesses with markets, promotional opportunities, tourism initiatives and consumer-facing campaigns, helping local businesses reach wider audiences and develop a stronger collective voice.

Promoting Local Food, Producers and Provenance

The Partnership works with Cumberland Council, Cumbria Tourism, market organisers and producer networks to ensure local food businesses are prominently featured within festivals, markets and visitor experiences.

Flagship events such as Taste Cumbria and Taste of the Sea provide valuable opportunities for consumers to discover local food businesses while enabling producers to showcase products directly to the public. Supplier showcases and producer events further strengthen visibility and consumer engagement, while the Taste Cumbria Network enables producers, traders, event organisers and tourism partners to help shape future events and visitor experiences.

Through support for Teenage Markets and producer events, the Partnership also helps young entrepreneurs access customers, gain experience, build confidence and develop commercial skills.

Through its workstreams, the Partnership coordinates and promotes farmers' markets, artisan markets, producer pop-ups, Open Farm Sunday events and agritourism activities. Partners contribute expertise, networks, venues, funding opportunities, marketing

support and producer connections, creating opportunities for consumers to meet producers directly, learn about provenance and support local food businesses.

Awards, Recognition and Consumer Choice

The Partnership promotes healthier and more sustainable food choices through award schemes, business recognition programmes and consumer-facing promotions.

The Partnership redesigned the Healthier Choices Awards, helping consumers identify cafés, restaurants and takeaways that offer healthier and more sustainable options. The scheme also encourages businesses to improve menus, increase vegetable consumption, reduce sugar and highlight locally sourced ingredients.

The Partnership also works with the Cumbria Food Awards and has representatives on the judging panel, celebrating excellence across food production, hospitality, retail and community food initiatives. Through media coverage, producer profiles and digital promotion, the awards help raise the profile of local businesses and encourage consumers to support them.

Strategic Communications and Consumer Spending

The Partnership works with campaigns including Visit Cumbria, Visit Lake District, Lets Go Spring-Summer, Business Crack and Cumbria Tourism to promote local food businesses through campaigns, food trails, itineraries and destination marketing.

Through collaboration, campaigns have highlighted themes including:

- Taste of the Coast.
- Farm to Fork.
- Iconic Cumbria.
- Local food routes and experiences.

These campaigns encourage residents and visitors to explore local food businesses while increasing awareness of Cumberland's food offer.

Recognising the need to encourage repeat spending with independent businesses, the Partnership identified the MyCumbria Card as a valuable loyalty mechanism and worked with partners to increase business participation and consumer awareness. The scheme was promoted through employer networks, staff communications and partner channels, helping encourage repeat visits and local spending while supporting independent food businesses.

Across all of this work, the Partnership acts as a connector, bringing together producers, businesses, tourism organisations, consumers and community partners to strengthen

relationships and build awareness of Cumberland's food economy. By combining digital platforms, festivals, markets, awards, marketing campaigns and loyalty initiatives, Food Cumberland helps consumers identify, access and support local, independent and sustainable food businesses. In doing so, it strengthens local provenance, encourages spending within the local economy, supports business growth and helps retain more wealth within Cumberland's food system.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 4 FAIR food STAR:

We will look for evidence that you:

- **Facilitate and support representation of food producers** e.g. establish working groups, representative forums, or engagement with existing associations/groups

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains

NB *At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. Simply mapping activity is not sufficient: the 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

Policy Change

The Partnership plays a leading role in embedding good food within public policy and procurement. Through its Public Sector Policy & Practice Workstream, the Partnership brings together representatives from all seven Council directorates, health services, education, economic development and the voluntary sector as well as 15 co-researchers to coordinate action and influence policy change.

The Workstream provides a mechanism for partners to identify barriers, develop solutions and through groups including Licence to Grow Working Group, Healthier Choices Awards Working Group and the Health and Wellbeing at the Heart Working Group, securing support for healthier catering and vending policies and healthy promotion activity.

The Partnership has also influenced a range of policies that place food at the heart of health, sustainability, economic development and community wellbeing:

The Right to Food and the Right to Grow establishes food as adequate, accessible, available and provided with dignity and choice. The Partnership has helped make the Right to Food central to everything the council does. As the principles were already supported, no new motion was required to introduce a Right to Grow approach. Land has been offered free of charge for community growing projects for many years. However, feedback from the community highlighted that the process was complex and legal documentation difficult to understand. In response, the Food Cumberland Development Officer secured support from Public Health and worked collaboratively with Legal, Green Spaces and Property teams to develop a straightforward, easy-to-understand licence and streamline the application process. Following this, partnership support has helped establish a growing number of community-led growing spaces, including the flagship Drigg Licence to Grow project: Licence to Grow – Drigg & Carleton Community

Participating schools of the Nourish Cumberland Schools Programme received support to develop school food policies, strengthen leadership and governance, and create healthy food cultures that extend beyond the dining hall. Interest and visits from our three local MPs has further highlighted the programme's potential as a model for wider school food transformation and policy change.

Approximately 1,000 previously unregistered children have also been auto-enrolled for Free School Meals, unlocking around £1.1 million in additional Pupil Premium funding. This demonstrates how Partnership-led policy change can improve access to healthy food, maximise household income and bring additional resources into schools serving communities with the greatest need.

The Partnership continues to advocate for improvements to FSM registration through the SFWG and the Bremner & Co FSM campaign. Working with local MPs, including Josh MacAlister MP, partners helped secure a joint letter from Cumbrian MPs to the Department for Work and Pensions calling for local authorities to receive the information needed to identify and register all eligible children. This would not have happened had partners not continually raised concerns about the newly eligible children who cannot currently be auto-enrolled. The Partnership has also worked with schools and families to communicate national policy changes and maximise uptake of entitlements.

Food Cumberland has further contributed to national consultations, including the School Food Standards Review and Nutrient Profiling Model consultation, ensuring the views of Cumberland's producers, businesses and communities inform policy development.

Transforming Procurement, Catering and Public Sector Practice

The Partnership has supported implementation of Cumberland Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy, helping ensure food contracts deliver economic, environmental and social value. The Council spends approximately £4 million annually on food contracts with outcomes including:

- 90% of fresh meat sourced from Cumbria.
- 100% of school milk supplied by local farms.
- 64% of procurement spend retained within Cumbrian businesses.
- 35% spent with local SMEs.
- 9% spent through third-sector organisations.

The Partnership has also played a significant role in influencing how public sector organisations procure, serve and promote food. Working with procurement teams, caterers, schools and council services, the Partnership developed:

- Healthy & Sustainable Catering Guidance prioritising local sourcing, seasonal produce, low-carbon menus, reduced waste and "less but better quality" local meat and more veg.
- Healthy Vending Guidance increases access to healthier options across council buildings and leisure facilities.
- Healthy Tuck Shop Policy supporting healthier food choices for staff working in anchor institution buildings.
- A Healthier Advertising Policy supporting healthier food choices across council-controlled advertising spaces.

Initially developed for Cumberland Council and published through Food Cumberland, these resources are increasingly being adopted by partner organisations across Cumberland and received strong support from the Health & Wellbeing Board, helping create a more consistent approach to healthy and sustainable food provision. Read the policies here

The Partnership also supported the development and implementation of Cumberland Council's Fair Deal for Farmers motion, helping embed local food production, sustainable farming, local procurement and farm diversification within council policy. This work strengthens local supply chains while supporting biodiversity, soil health and rural enterprise.

The Partnership leads a whole-system approach to improving school food policy and practice and convenes the School Food Working Group (SFWG), bringing together schools,

caterers, procurement specialists, governors and public health colleagues to improve food practice across Cumberland and drive system-wide change.

The group has driven procurement improvements, supplier engagement, breakfast club development, increased Free School Meal uptake, School Food Standards compliance, early years food support and implementation of the Cartmel Commitment, which promotes curriculum-embedded food education, low-carbon and locally sourced school meals, reduced food waste and student-led food action.

Through menu reviews undertaken by the School Food Development Officer, the Partnership has also influenced catering practice at scale. In one example, a review identified excessive fried carbohydrate options and insufficient fruit-based desserts within an Orian (school catering provider) menu cycle. Following feedback, menu changes were implemented and rolled out across all schools using that cycle, improving nutritional balance across multiple settings.

SFWG has also mapped school catering arrangements, enabling more in-house catered schools to access the Council's preferentially priced procurement framework, delivered through a local supplier that prioritises sustainable and locally sourced produce. This has helped embed healthier menus, sustainable sourcing and fresh cooking principles within everyday school food provision.

Through partnership working via SFWG, Food Cumberland has: developed early years nutritional guidance for parents, supported the development and roll out of EYFS packed lunch guidance and delivered training, embedded food and nutrition within the Healthy Happy Foundations Pledge, connected practitioners with training through TasteEd, LEYF Chef Academy, PANCO & Early Years Alliance to increase workforce confidence and knowledge of food education, delivered Governor training on the School Food Standards, delivered nutrition training & facilitating access to specialist support for practitioners across schools & early years, and is supporting settings to implement healthier food policies and practices by sharing resources, coordinating peer learning and facilitating collaboration across the sector. This coordinated approach has strengthened food leadership, improved nutritional practice and embedded healthier food cultures across schools and early years settings.

Influencing Tourism, Hospitality and Food Business Practice

Working through the Tourism Workstream, the Partnership has worked with Cumbria Tourism, hospitality businesses, food producers and destination partners to embed sustainable food within tourism and hospitality policy and practice. This includes developing low-carbon menu guidance and Recipe Cards, promoting local sourcing, creating the Food & Drink Resource Hub, supporting food waste reduction initiatives,

expanding the Guardians of Grub training network and integrating sustainable food into tourism planning and destination marketing activity.

By aligning food, tourism and sustainability objectives, the Partnership is helping hospitality businesses improve environmental performance, reduce waste, strengthen local supply chains and celebrate Cumberland's food identity through the visitor economy.

Fairtrade, Higher Education and Food Business Change

The Partnership continues to support ethical and sustainable food systems through Fairtrade promotion and improvements in food business practice. Cumberland is home to Carlisle Fairtrade City, seven Fairtrade Towns and the world's first Fairtrade World Heritage Site at Hadrian's Wall. During Fairtrade Fortnight, local activities have included community events and awareness-raising initiatives in Carlisle and Keswick, helping to promote ethical sourcing and global food justice. The Partnership also continues to support Fairtrade education in schools and communities to raise awareness of ethical sourcing and global food justice.

The Partnership also redesigned and relaunched the Healthier Choices Awards, bringing together Public Health, Environmental Health and local food businesses to improve nutritional quality, increase fruit and vegetable content, reduce sugar, improve sustainable sourcing & reduce food waste. The awards provide a practical mechanism for changing food business practice and helping consumers identify healthier and more sustainable food options.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how the Partnership is influencing policy, institutional practice and food business behaviour to make healthy, ethical and sustainable food more widely available across Cumberland.

Through policy influence, procurement reform, cross-council collaboration, school food transformation, sustainable tourism initiatives and food business engagement, Food Cumberland is embedding healthy, sustainable and locally sourced food within the systems that shape everyday life across Cumberland.

Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

The Food Cumberland Partnership strengthens Cumberland's food supply chain by bringing together farmers, growers, wholesalers, processors, schools, caterers, procurement teams, community organisations and major institutions. Through its various networks (detailed later), the Partnership provides mechanisms for stakeholders to identify barriers, develop collaborative solutions and create new opportunities for local sourcing and market access.

Producer Collaboration and Supply Chain Resilience

The Partnership has identified producer collaboration as a key priority for strengthening local supply chains and building long-term food system resilience. Through its Food & Farming Workstream, it supports networks such as the Cumbria Farmer Network, Nourish Cumbria, the Farming & Land Use Sector Group, and other producer-led initiatives. Working alongside Cumbria Combined Authority and sector partners, the Partnership has helped support the development of new farmer cooperation models and a bid to DEFRA designed to improve resilience, increase bargaining power and strengthen local supply chains. The Partnership is also exploring opportunities to develop a FarmStart programme in response to identified needs around new entrants to farming, skills development and future food production capacity.

This Workstream, also helped develop Nourish Cumbria, which supports farm diversification, strengthens producer-buyer relationships, identifies new routes to market and builds more resilient local supply chains. The Partnership also supports wider producer networks including First Milk, Aspatria Farmers and other collaborative farming initiatives.

Cross-Sector Procurement Collaboration

The Partnership, through its Public Sector Policy & Practice Workstream and School Food Working Group, which acts as our cross-sector sustainable food procurement forum, has brought together procurement officers, caterers, suppliers, schools, wholesalers, producers and public health colleagues and helps to identify barriers and increase opportunities for local sourcing.

This collaboration has:

- Improved school meal procurement arrangements.
- Increased access to preferential purchasing frameworks.
- Strengthened supplier engagement.
- Improved compliance with School Food Standards.
- Increased local sourcing within public sector food contracts.

Local wholesalers including Pioneer, Caterite and Cranstons play an important intermediary role, helping connect producers with schools, care providers, hospitality businesses and public institutions.

The Partnership has played a key role in strengthening Cumberland Council's purchasing framework, and has facilitated ongoing dialogue to align procurement requirements with local supply capacity and develop practical solutions for increasing local sourcing. As a

result, the framework has created genuine opportunities for local businesses, strengthened relationships across the supply chain, and made it easier for institutions to buy local and seasonal food, increasing the number of schools and organisations using the framework, creating more reliable markets for Cumbrian producers.

Community Supply Chains and Local Food Distribution

The Partnership supports community-scale supply chains that connect growers directly with community organisations and residents. Examples include:

- Good Lives CIC sharing produce with Growing Well to support community meals.
- Community growing projects supplying food banks, food hubs and pantries e.g. Carlisle Green Hub provides fresh produce to both Currock's pop up pantry & Carlisle Foodbank, Bloom in Botcherby supplies Botcherby Community Centre Pantry
- Growing Well producing 100 vegetable boxes each week, alongside produce supplied to food hubs across Cumberland, supporting Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library & growing over 50 varieties of produce.
- Local growing initiatives supplying community kitchens - Drigg Licence to Grow supplies produce for community meals and warm spaces & St Nicholas Community Garden supports the church warm hub.

These initiatives strengthen community resilience, reduce food miles and improve access to fresh local food.

The Partnership also supports Home Grown Here, a grower-owned cooperative established through ZCCP, by connecting the cooperative with wider food system networks, buyers and partners across Cumberland. Home Grown Here enables fruit and vegetable producers to access wholesalers, retailers, hospitality businesses, farm shops and veg box schemes through a shared marketplace, helping strengthen local supply chains and market access while creating new opportunities for small-scale growers.

Anchor Institutions, Buyers & Market Access

The Partnership works with major institutions and buyers to embed local sourcing within large-scale purchasing arrangements.

Working alongside Sellafield's procurement and catering teams, the Partnership has helped embed local sourcing and sustainable procurement into Sellafield's supply-chain commitments, helping create stable demand for Cumbrian producers.

The Partnership has also connected Sellafield supplier engagement opportunities delivered through the Chamber Food & Drink Network, producer showcases and wider

Partnership networks, and in doing so has secured support for the next phase of Nourish Cumbria and integration with the Cumbrian Larder to strengthen relationships between producers, processors and institutional buyers. These connections help local producers understand and access procurement opportunities with large institutional buyers, reducing barriers to market entry, strengthening local supply chains, and creating pathways into larger markets for small and medium-sized food businesses.

Working with Cumberland Council, Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and sector partners, the Partnership facilitates and delivers:

- Supplier showcases, connecting producers with wholesalers, retailers, caterers and institutional buyers while raising awareness of locally sourced products.
- Meet-the-buyer events, enabling producers to build relationships with procurement teams and better understand buyer requirements, specifications and purchasing processes.
- Business networking opportunities facilitating collaboration, peer learning and supply-chain connections across the food, farming, hospitality and retail sectors.
- Taste Cumbria producer opportunities, providing low-risk access to new customers, wholesalers, retailers and hospitality buyers while increasing visibility for local food businesses.
- Chamber Food & Drink Network activity, including market insights, sustainability workshops and practical support to help businesses scale and access new markets.
- Routes into institutional procurement markets, helping producers understand requirements around packaging, labelling, pricing and logistics and increasing opportunities to supply schools, care settings, public sector organisations and major employers.

These activities help producers understand buyer requirements, build commercial relationships and access new customers and procurement opportunities.

<u>School Food Procurement Pilot</u>

The Partnership secured £15,000 from Sustain through the Good Food Local North East programme to pilot approaches for increasing the amount of locally sourced and sustainably caught fish served in schools. The pilot brought together schools, fishermen, suppliers and procurement teams to explore how local seafood could be integrated into school meals. The project strengthened relationships across the supply chain, mapped procurement barriers and opportunities, supported the development of a Cumbrian Fishcake and identified practical solutions for integrating sustainable seafood into procurement systems. By creating reliable demand for sustainably caught fish, the pilot

supported small-scale fishermen through fairer prices and more stable local markets while strengthening local supply chains.

The pilot identified a clear pathway for future work, including strengthening local supply chains, evaluating pupil acceptance and value for money, and supporting rollout across Cumberland schools all whilst improving the quality, sustainability and provenance of school meals.

Through producer networks, procurement collaboration, wholesaler engagement, anchor institution partnerships, cooperative initiatives and strategic supply-chain development, the Food Cumberland Partnership is creating stronger connections across Cumberland's food system. By acting as a broker between producers, buyers, caterers, wholesalers, schools and major institutions, the Partnership is increasing opportunities for local food to reach both public and commercial markets.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

NB *At Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. Simply mapping activity is not sufficient: the 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

The Food Cumberland Partnership is driving Cumberland's transition to a climate-aligned, nature-positive food system. Through its Food & Farming, Food Consumption and Waste, Tourism, Public Sector Policy & Practice and Local Food & Drink Economy workstreams, the Partnership delivers coordinated action on climate change, biodiversity recovery, sustainable food production and resource efficiency. Acting as a strategic convener, facilitator and catalyst, the Partnership ensures food is recognised as a key solution to both the climate and nature emergency.

<u>Climate Leadership & Net Zero Alignment</u>

Food is recognised as a priority area within Cumberland's ambition to become Net Zero by 2037. By convening farmers, businesses, communities, groups and organisations the

Partnership has played a central role in ensuring food, farming and land use are embedded within climate action planning and are recognised as critical components of Cumberland's climate and nature response.

Through its work with Zero Carbon Cumbria and Cumberland Council's Climate and Nature Strategy the Partnership has helped develop, coordinate and deliver action through:

- The farming & other land use Emissions Reduction Action Plan (ERAP), supporting emissions reduction, carbon sequestration and nature-friendly land management.
- The Consumption & Waste ERAP, promoting low-carbon diets, food waste reduction and sustainable procurement.
- The Cumbria Sustainability Network and Westogether, helping connect organisations and communities delivering climate action through food. These networks help coordinate knowledge-sharing, training, grants and collaborative action across communities and organisations.

Land Use, Growing Space and Nature Recovery

The Partnership has played an important role in protecting and expanding opportunities for sustainable food production and nature recovery. Through Right to Grow, community growing initiatives, parish and town council consultations and wider land-use discussions, we have helped secure access to land for food growing and influenced decisions affecting community growing spaces and allotments.

The Partnership has also developed:

- Food forests through the Raise Cumbria programme, community orchards and planting initiatives.
- Pollinator-friendly growing projects.
- Seed-saving networks.
- Community composting and soil improvement initiatives.
- A proposal for a year-round growing project using industrial waste heat, bringing together growers, industry and public-sector partners to explore innovative approaches to reducing emissions, increasing local food production and improving water efficiency.

The Partnership is helping ensure land is managed in ways that support food production, biodiversity, climate resilience and long-term environmental stewardship.

Regenerative Farming & Nature-Positive Land Use

The Partnership champions regenerative agriculture as a cornerstone of Cumberland's low-carbon future. Through the Food & Farming Workstream, the Partnership convenes farmers, advisers, researchers and environmental organisations to coordinate training, peer learning and practical support for nature-friendly farming. Working with organisations including the Farmer Network, NFU, Digital Dairy Chain, Futureproof Cumbria, West Cumbria Rivers Trust and Carbon Calling, the Partnership has delivered:

- soil health workshops, herbal ley events and peer-learning networks
- farm carbon audits and soil analysis across key catchments
- infrastructure support for circular farming (on-farm AD & composting systems)
- carbon-literacy training for farmers
- regenerative livestock and pasture-fed learning through Carbon Calling
- Nature-friendly farming practices that improve biodiversity, water quality & soil health
- large-scale public engagement via Big Green Open Farm Sunday events to connect the public with sustainable farming
- Initiatives such as Home Grown Here, helping expand local fruit and vegetable production from one site to six, growing the veg box scheme, shortening supply chains and reducing food miles.
- Planting days on farms for community groups, helping strengthen connections between food production, habitat restoration and nature recovery.

Through this work, the Partnership is helping farmers adopt regenerative and agroecological farming approaches that help the climate and strengthen farm resilience.

Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Resource Efficiency

The Partnership uses campaigns, training, demonstration projects and business engagement to promote lower-carbon diets, reduce food waste and encourage more sustainable food choices. Working with Cumbria Tourism, Zero Carbon Cumbria, hospitality businesses and environmental partners, the Partnership has:

- Delivered Guardians of Grub training, food waste audits and provided advice for new recycling legislation.

- Supported hospitality businesses to develop sustainable menus & developed the Waste Reduction Resource Hub hosted by Cumbria Tourism.
- Delivered Love Food Hate Waste campaigns and sessions with major employers e.g. Futarmura & AW Jenkinsons, a train-the-trainer programme, behaviour-change campaigns and low-waste chef demonstrations at events across Cumberland.
- Promoted sustainable seafood through the school procurement pilot, connecting schools with local fishermen and encouraging lower-impact, locally sourced fish within public sector catering.
- Supporting businesses to access Low Carbon Lake District grants, enabling investment in decarbonisation and resource-efficiency measures, including food waste reduction technologies e.g. Embleton Spa.
- Helped shape the ZCCP Low Carbon Food Programme, with Food Cumberland partners serving on the advisory board ensuring food system expertise informed its development and delivery, and providing support on low-carbon menus, circular food systems, composting and waste-reduction innovation. Through this role, the Partnership has helped embed practical food-system solutions within wider climate action activity across Cumbria.

The Partnership has also supported practical resource-efficiency initiatives including:

- Sustainable gardening and composting activities through Nourish Cumberland Schools and delivery of grants to set up wormeries in nursery settings
- Setting up and coordinating community garden composting projects & three compost demonstration sites across Cumberland.
- Cumberland's Council-funded Master Composter Network, which supports residents, community groups and growers through talks, events, networking, practical composting advice & the “big heap” events, allowing community groups to collect council-donated compost, network and get composting support.

At the ZCCP Summit, the Partnership modelled climate-aligned catering by sourcing wild local venison through Partnership networks as a lower-carbon alternative to conventional meat while prioritising vegetarian and vegan options, demonstrating practical ways organisations can reduce the environmental footprint of catering while supporting local producers and responsible land management. This had led to further collaborative work on this issue and a contribution from the partnership to a new article which will be featured on the ZCC website and promoted through various comms channels.

Through these initiatives, the Partnership is helping reduce emissions, improve resource efficiency and mainstream more sustainable food choices.

Building Climate Literacy and Food Citizenship

The Partnership is helping communities understand the relationship between food, climate and nature through a range of engagement and education activities.

This includes:

- Climate Fresk workshops delivered across schools, council services and communities.
- Development of Food Fresk sessions, helping participants understand the environmental impacts of food systems.
- Youth Climate Summits highlighting sustainable diets and climate-positive food choices.
- Citizen assemblies and community engagement events.
- Support for school climate action plans linked to food systems.
- Working through the Cumbria Sustainability Network to deliver National Emergency Briefings highlighting the role of food systems in tackling the climate and nature emergency and building shared understanding across sectors.
- Food-focused climate engagement activities involving young people and community organisations.

The Partnership has also worked with local communities and partners to deliver more than 120 Big Lunch and Harvest Festival events, reaching over 5,000 residents and promoting local food, low-carbon living, community growing and waste reduction.

By embedding food within climate education and community action, the Partnership is helping residents understand how individual and collective food choices contribute to climate and nature goals.

Funding Community-Led Climate Action

The Partnership has helped ensure food is recognised within local climate and nature investment through Cumberland's Community Panels. £348,851 has supported climate and nature initiatives including:

- Community composting projects.
- Food forest development.

- Low-carbon community meals.
- Sustainable growing programmes.
- Nature recovery and biodiversity projects linked to food production.

This investment is helping communities develop practical local responses to the climate and nature emergency while strengthening local food resilience.

Through climate leadership, regenerative farming support, sustainable consumption campaigns, resource-efficiency initiatives, land-use planning, food citizenship activity and community investment, the Partnership is embedding food within Cumberland's response to the climate and nature emergency.

Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

Food Cumberland is driving a whole-system approach to food waste reduction. The Partnership provides strategic coordination between waste services, schools, businesses, growers, redistribution organisations and community food projects, ensuring action takes place across the food waste hierarchy, from prevention and redistribution through to composting and recycling. The Partnership's Food Consumption and Waste Working Group, chaired by Cumberland Council's Waste Reduction Manager with over 25 organisations involved, is a key driver of this agenda, bringing together partners to coordinate action, share best practice and develop initiatives that reduce food waste and promote more sustainable food consumption across the area.

<u>Preventing Food Waste Through Education and Behaviour Change</u>

The Partnership works closely with Cumberland Council's Waste Reduction Team, schools, businesses and community organisations to embed food waste prevention within everyday practice.

Through the Nourish Cumberland Schools programme, the Partnership supports schools to establish School Food Ambassadors, enabling children to play an active role in reducing food waste and improving the school food environment. Ambassadors gather pupil feedback on meals, lead food-related projects, analyse lunchtime food waste, identify meals generating the highest levels of waste and work with catering teams to propose practical solutions. Pupils present their findings to the wider school community, ensuring pupil voice helps shape food provision. This pupil-led approach strengthens food citizenship and climate awareness while building collaboration between pupils, catering teams and school leadership. Waste audits have already informed menu adjustments, improved meal uptake and reduced plate waste across participating schools.

The Partnership also coordinates and promotes:

- Love Food Hate Waste campaigns and Train-the Train waste reduction sessions.
- Community food waste audits.
- Let's Go Zero education activities.
- Council communications and videos explaining what happens to household waste - the “what happens to your waste” series e.g. paper recycling.
- Waste reduction talks and awareness events.
- The Unpacked Webinar Series provides practical guidance for households and farmers to reduce carbon emissions, cut costs, improve energy efficiency, adopt renewable technologies, and live more sustainably, including which explores food waste prevention, packaging reduction, farm carbon audits and wider environmental circular food systems.

In 2026 alone, more than 30 outreach events were delivered through collaboration between the Partnership and the Council's Waste Reduction Team, helping residents understand food waste prevention, recycling, composting and new food waste legislation.

Through Zero Carbon Cumbria, the Partnership also helped shape and promote the 9Rs communications approach, using practical local food and waste examples to encourage residents and organisations to prioritise prevention, reuse, repair and redistribution before recycling and disposal. This helps embed waste hierarchy principles across the wider food system in clear terms, using local stories and examples that resonate with local people.

Supporting Businesses to Reduce Waste

The Partnership works with Cumbria Tourism, Zero Carbon Cumbria, hospitality businesses and waste partners to help businesses reduce food and packaging waste.

This includes:

- Delivering Guardians of Grub training.
- Food waste audits.
- Support with new recycling legislation.
- Seasonal surplus redistribution guidance.
- Scope 3 decarbonisation sessions through Business Bitesize.
- Promotion of Too Good To Go and other surplus food initiatives.

- Developing the Food Waste Reduction Resource Hub, providing practical support on menu planning, waste reduction, surplus redistribution and packaging reduction.

The Partnership also works with waste management partners including Biffa to deliver workshops and awareness sessions that improve understanding of food waste pathways, recycling infrastructure and circular waste management solutions.

Community Composting and Circular Solutions

The Partnership has helped expand community composting and circular food waste solutions across Cumberland. Working with Garden Organic and Cumberland Council, the Master Composter programme has trained more than 100 people in composting the last two years, and has a network of 20 Master Composters who provide practical advice, deliver workshops, support community groups and maintain three compost demonstration sites.

The Partnership also supports:

- Community composting hubs and garden composting schemes.
- Vermiculture and wormery projects.
- School composting initiatives.
- Community "Big Heap" events where groups can access donated compost and practical support.
- Following conversations with the Council, they now subsidise compost bins to encourage circular growing practices and provide community gardens with free bins.

The Partnership also promotes circular approaches to unavoidable food waste, including anaerobic digestion (AD). Working with waste management and environmental partners, the Partnership has delivered workshops and awareness sessions as well as site visits that help businesses, community groups and institutions understand food waste disposal options and the role of AD in energy recovery and circular resource management.

These initiatives help divert food waste from disposal, improve soil health and embed circular growing practices within local communities.

Redistributing Surplus Food

The Partnership plays a key coordinating role in Cumberland's food redistribution network, helping ensure edible surplus food reaches people rather than becoming waste. Through the Food Security Networks, the Partnership brings together retailers,

growers, redistribution organisations, food banks, pantries, community fridges and community food projects. Surplus food is shared from organisations including Lidl, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Growing Well and FareShare partners, supporting households while preventing food waste.

The Partnership has also coordinated redistribution of surplus apples from orchards, ensuring fruit is harvested and shared rather than left to rot. In 2025, through collaboration with Cumbria Wildlife Trust, around 5,000 surplus apples were collected by over 200 volunteers, and redistributed through schools, community groups, food pantries and local events. Activities included apple pressing, community cooking sessions, educational visits and recipe development which led to a community cookbook, helping raise awareness of food waste while increasing access to healthy food.

Reducing Packaging Waste

The Partnership also works with businesses, communities and event organisers to reduce packaging waste and encourage reuse. This includes supporting single-use plastic reduction pledges at Taste Cumbria and other events, promoting refill and reuse schemes, providing guidance on packaging alternatives and supporting community campaigns that encourage residents to reduce disposable packaging. Through collaboration with Cumberland Council and event organisers, Taste Cumbria now incorporates bring-your-own-cup initiatives and water refill stations, helping reduce event-related waste and normalise reusable alternatives.

Through food waste prevention campaigns, school programmes, business engagement, redistribution networks, community composting initiatives and packaging reduction activity, the Food Cumberland Partnership is helping embed the Food Waste Hierarchy across Cumberland. This is reducing waste, increasing redistribution, promoting circular resource use and ensuring more food is used for its highest value purpose.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

The Partnership continues to work with Cumberland Council, waste partners and regional stakeholders to strengthen food waste infrastructure across the area. While Cumberland does not currently operate dedicated commercial food waste collections across all sectors due to being locked into a commercial contract until 2031, partners have actively explored opportunities to expand infrastructure and improve food waste diversion. This included collaborative work to develop a Borderlands funding application aimed at strengthening regional waste and resource management capacity. Although unsuccessful, the process helped identify future opportunities for investment and reinforced the importance of coordinated action across waste prevention, redistribution, composting and anaerobic digestion.

The Partnership also supports nature recovery through collaboration with faith groups and community organisations. For example, at a Church Nature Network Day, convened with partners, 22 representatives from 13 churches explored how churchyards can contribute to biodiversity, community engagement and local food growing. Discussions highlighted the ecological value of churchyards, including wildflower meadows, pollinators, bats, swifts, swallows and waxcap fungi, while identifying opportunities to further enhance these spaces for nature.

The event enabled churches to share practical experience, identify common challenges around volunteer capacity, site management and habitat creation, and access peer learning and specialist support. By connecting churches, schools, environmental organisations and community groups, the Partnership is helping transform underused church land into valuable spaces for biodiversity, community participation and environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, the Partnership strengthens the work of the Cumbria Nature Partnership through community representation and delivery of programmes.