



The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Cc Simon Clarke MP, Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government

10 June 2020

Dear Sirs

Re: Tackling food-related challenges in current and future crises

We are writing to you on behalf of the Sustainable Food Places Network, a growing movement of over 60 food partnerships in cities and other municipalities across the UK. Through these cross-sector food partnerships, local authorities and other public bodies are working together with third sector, business and academic organisations to transform their local food system with the aim of improving public health and wellbeing; fostering community connection and resilience; building prosperous and diverse local food economies; and helping to tackle the critical sustainability issues of waste and the climate and nature emergency.

Local Food Partnerships are also playing a pivotal role in driving and coordinating effective community food responses to the coronavirus pandemic. The necessary measures taken in response to the pandemic have hugely exacerbated the problems of food poverty and food access for the most vulnerable in our society and are likely to do so for many years to come. At the same time, they have created an existential threat to food businesses and social enterprises, as well as to the voluntary and community sector organisations that are so vital in responding effectively to the immediate crisis and in rebuilding our communities and our local economies as the crisis passes.

Local Food Partnerships' action in the current crisis includes:

- Identifying very large numbers of people not formally recognised as clinically vulnerable - including those on low incomes, children eligible for free school meals and those needing to self-isolate due to older age or medical risks - and providing them with food, including freshly prepared nutritious meals.
- Signposting those in need to other sources of emergency food support via websites, social media pages and other communications channels and connecting and coordinating those diverse emergency food organisations and initiatives to ensure a more coherent and effective joined-up response.
- Coordinating food collections from businesses that have surplus food that would otherwise have gone to waste and ensuring it is delivered to organisations that can redistribute it to those most in need.
- Working with a wide range of independent food businesses to help them remain viable in the crisis, for example through new supply chain collaborations, connecting food producers and retailers to alternative markets and supporting food markets and community food enterprises.
- A significant proportion of food partnerships are also now actively engaging with the urgent need for effective local economic regeneration as we come out of the crisis, in which food businesses from across the supply chain will play a vital role.

Recognition of the value of Local Food Partnerships in helping to tackle the current crisis, rebuild local communities and economies and transition to a more prosperous healthy and sustainable food system is growing amongst Local Authorities, Local Resilience Forums and Local Enterprise Partnerships. However, there remain many areas where a lack of sufficient recognition and active collaboration is undermining food responses to the crisis and preventing Local Food Partnerships from fulfilling their role in tackling key social, economic and environmental food-related issues.

There are also many areas where food partnerships do not currently exist. Sustainable Food Places has provided funding and support to its 60 members and will endeavour to continue to do so for these and the many new places interested in establishing a food partnership. We believe, however, that it is only through recognition, endorsement and support for Local Food Partnerships by government that such partnerships can fully realise their potential.

We are therefore asking the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to write to all Local Authorities, Local Resilience Forums and Local Enterprise Partnerships urging them to work closely with Local Food Partnerships where they currently exist and to push for their establishment where they do not. We also ask the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide funding to support the work of these partnerships, so that this responsibility does not fall entirely on local authorities and public and third sector organisations which are already under considerable financial strain.

Establishing, mandating and supporting Local Food Partnerships in every local authority area would, we believe, make a huge contribution to effective coordination and delivery of short, medium and long term food responses to the current crisis while at the same time ensuring that integrated local food policies and strategies are in place to build food resilience and a healthy and sustainable food system in a post-Covid world. This would reduce the long-term cost burden on local and national services and contribute to key social, economic and environmental goals through improved health and wellbeing, strengthened local food economies and a reduced environmental footprint.

We would like to request an opportunity to present the extraordinary work of our members in more detail and to work with government to ensure such partnerships can support local areas to build towards a better future.

Yours faithfully



Tom Andrews
Programme Director
Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain - the alliance for better food and farming. The call on Government outlined in this letter is supported by the individuals and organisations below:

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, award winning author, broadcaster and campaigner for food and environment

Professor Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy, Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London

Jeanette Orrey MBE, Co-founder of Food for Life and expert on school food

Professor Corinna Hawkes, Director of the Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London & Vice-Chair, London Child Obesity Taskforce London

Professor Duncan Cameron and Professor Peter Jackson, Institute for Sustainable Food, University of Sheffield

Professor Martin Caraher, Professor Emeritus Food and Health Policy, Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London

Professor Steven A. Banwart, Director, Global Food and Environment Institute, University of Leeds

Professor Louise Dye, N8 Centre for Doctoral Research, University of Leeds

Professor Bruce Grieve, N8 AgriFood Sustainable Food Production Academic Lead, Director of the e-Agri Sensors Centre, University of Manchester

Professor Bob Doherty, Professor of Marketing and Chair in Agrifood, University of York

London Food Board, Claire Pritchard, Chair



BiteBack2030, James Toop, CEO



Cambridge City Council, Councillor Anna Smith,
Deputy Leader of the Council



Jim Cokill, Chair of County Durham Environment
and Climate Change Partnership and Steve
Bhowmick, Strategic Manager, Environment and
Design, Durham County Council



FareShare, Lindsay Boswell, CEO



Feedback, Carina Millstone, Executive Director



Feeding Britain, Andrew Forsey, National Director



Food Active, Alex Holt, Programme Lead



Food Cycle, Mary McGrath, CEO



Food Ethics Council, Dan Crossley, Executive
Director



Food Farming and Countryside Commission, Sue
Pritchard



Food for Life, Sophia Koniarska, Associate
Director



Food Foundation, Anna Taylor, Executive Director



Food Matters, Victoria Williams, CEO



Food Power, Simon Shaw, Programme Coordinator



Food Sense Wales, Katie Palmer, Programme Manager



Greenwich, Royal Borough, Councillor Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council



Hubbub, Trewin Restorick, CEO



Incredible Edible, Pam Warhurst CBE, Founder



Leeds Council, Cllr Rebecca Charlwood, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults and Cllr Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development



Merton Council, Dagmar Zeuner, Director of Public Health



Middlesbrough Council, Mark Adams, Director of Public Health for South Tees



National Association of Care Catering, Sue Cawthray, Chair



N8 AgriFood, Prof. Katherine Denby, University of York and Academic Director of the N8 AgriFood Programme



Royal Society for Public Health, Duncan Stephenson, Deputy CEO



Soil Association, Helen Browning, CEO



Sustain, Kath Dalmeny, CEO



Sustainable Food Trust, Patrick Holden, Founding Director



Winchester Council, Councillor Jackie Porter, Winchester Cabinet Member for Built Environment & Wellbeing