



Leicestershire Food Summit at Stanford Hall CSA, near Lutterworth, on Weds 6 April 2022



New beginnings

As debuts go, it was agreed during the first Leicestershire Food Summit that a get together was long overdue for the many people working within the county food system.

From farming to nutrition, food poverty to community cookery classes, food waste to school meals, around 100 people from diverse food-related backgrounds gathered at Stanford Hall CSA for the event organised by Good Food Leicestershire.

The varied guestlist included: The Soil Association, Leicestershire Traded Services (LTS), the NFU, Allerton Project, Leicestershire Adult Learning Service, Cross Counties Primary Care Network, Venner Nutrition, The Real Junk Food Project, Charnwood Food Poverty Group and many, many others.

The purpose of the summit was to pool attendees' collective strengths with the aim of shaping a stronger and more sustainable future food system for the county.

The need for greater connectivity has recently been highlighted by the cost of living crisis, with huge increases in the price of food, petrol and energy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has further destabilised the European food network with ramifications already being felt in local budgets.

It's now widely known that Ukraine is the leading producer of sunflower oil, a common ingredient and cooking oil. The scarcity of sunflower oil has seen an increase in demand for British produced rapeseed oil, which is used by Leicestershire Traded Services in their school meals. Overnight, the cost of rapeseed oil increased by 100 per cent. Needless to say, the LTS food budget did not.



The launch

Gavin Fletcher, organiser of the first Leicestershire Food Summit, and Co-ordinator of Good Food Leicestershire (GFL), kicked off proceedings. GFL is a three-strong resource based within Public Health at Leicestershire County Council. Gavin spoke of how the work across the Stanford Estate neatly exemplified the food system in miniature, and, as such, was the perfect location for the first summit.

Nick Fothergill, Custodian of Stanford Hall, followed Gavin and spoke of their environmental work, which included regenerative farming practices and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) scheme. Stanford's green fields sit on the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire border amid a network of beautiful, undeveloped villages.



Nick also spoke of his home's SSSI status and their ambition to encircle the estate with 18,000 trees. Not just a diversity measure, it turns out, but also a protective barrier against the clouds of pesticides that come rolling across the fields from Leicestershire.

Afterwards, Amy Cooper, the manager of Stanford Hall CSA, engaged the audience by finding out which fields the attendees worked within.



Next up was Joe Stanley, Chair of the county NFU and Head of Training and Partnerships at the Allerton Project. Joe, a farmer from Ashby, has recently become a published author as well - *Farm To Fork: The challenge of sustainable farming in 21st century Britain* is currently available at all good booksellers.

Joe had brought a slideshow for his talk on the sustainability of British farming in a global context. He told us that we grow enough beef to satisfy UK demand, but import lower quality, higher carbon beef. For fruit and veg the story was worse, with only 17% grown in the UK.



Emily O'Brien was up next. Emily is the Partnerships and Development Lead at Sustainable Food Places, which is managed by the Soil Association, Sustain and Food Matters.

Emily spoke passionately about the need for making connections and the importance of local authorities recognising the benefits that enhanced food networks and alliances bring to local food economies.

Food, as we all know, is central to our lives, but for everyone at the Stanford summit, it was also central to employment. Some farmed hundreds of hectares of county farmland, some shared surplus food among community waste warriors, and others ensured that 35,000 hot nutritious school meals were served each day in Leicestershire. The variety was huge and, need we add, humbling.

It was clear from those in attendance that there is much energy and wisdom to be harnessed locally.

There was also a desire to see the strengthening of the local food chain, with Leicestershire farms supplying Leicestershire schools, colleges, councils, food banks and businesses with fresh, nutritious produce within a limited distance of where it was grown.

As it stands, the people recuperating in the city and county hospitals can only wish to receive local produce. Their reheated food currently travels all the way from North Wales.

After our guest speakers, it was time to head outside and learn more about regenerative farming the Stanford CSA way.





After tours of the farm, which saw some attendees sing The Glorious Beans Song and pretend to be the sun, a humble haricot bean, earthworms and suchlike, it was time for the day's star attraction – lunch.



Gratitude is the mother of all virtues

The food at the summit was curated by Shena Cooper, a skilled cook and a master in the arts of sustainability. Working with The Real Junk Food Project, Shena has saved thousands of tons of food from waste. At Stanford, she saw that delegates ate food rescued from waste and were fed with produce grown/reared at the CSA farm, including salad, beans, pork, parsnips and rhubarb, the latter two being served in cake form.

After a brief pause, our attendees plunged headlong into the afternoon workshops.

Workshop 1 discussed Regenerative and Community Agriculture and featured Sue Johnson of CLOG, the Co-operative of Leicestershire Organic Growers, Sarah Fall of organic farm Raw n Pure and Amy Cooper, the manager of the CSA at Stanford.



Workshop 2 centred on Community Food Security and was steered by Sian Rigby, Food Poverty Officer of Good Food Leicestershire, Gemma Skevington of Charnwood Food Poverty Group and Louise Monk, standing in for Mary Flynn, the Local Area Co-ordinator for Oadby.



Workshop 3 looked at what makes a Good Food Economy. Beth Lambert the Eco Village co-founder, and Cat Turnell of Good Food Leicestershire, were among those involved.



Workshop 4 approached the consistently important topic of Community Skills and Training. Raksha Mistry of Food for Life and Juliette Smart of Leicestershire Adult Learning Service helped direct the discussion.



Afterwards, people gravitated in groups to discuss in greater depth the subjects and situations presented by the summit.

It had been a long day, full of great food and interesting new alliances, and Gavin Fletcher, the summit's organiser, said it best over a much-needed cup of tea as the attendees departed.

"I think we're all going home with more knowledge and understanding than we did than when we arrived."

And, before we sign off, the feedback from the first Leicestershire Food Summit has been pretty nourishing so far...

Beth Lambert of Eco Village, Market Harborough: "I loved attending the Leicestershire Food Summit at Stanford Hall and met some incredible people doing amazing work."

Laura Holland of Venner Nutrition: "Joe Stanley's talk on British farming and sustainability was an eye opener, and highlighted the need for conversations around food, farming and sustainability to go hand in hand if we're to create practical strategies/systems that actually result in everyone having access to healthy food, whilst also protecting the environment.

"And so pleased to hear the importance of nutrition in the same conversation as food poverty, and the need for more skills and education to make healthy eating affordable and practical for everyone - Venner Nutrition is focused on making this a reality."

Raksha Mistry of Food for Life at the Soil Association: "The fact it was standing room only is testament to the enthusiasm and gravity the Leicestershire Food Plan is generating. Through creativity and collaboration, the summit revealed how we all have a role in shaping food in Leicestershire.

“I personally loved the opportunity to network. It was great to finally catch up with Brian Gardiner at LTS, and the setting was beautiful. Next year, we may need more rooms and, perhaps, different ways in recording reactions and capturing feedback during the day.”

Councillor Louise Richardson, Leicestershire County Council Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing: “I am delighted that we organised the food summit as it’s been a great way to involve various stakeholders in our collective work and helping to create a more sustainable food system in Leicestershire.”



The Guestlist

	Attended	Apologies
Allerton Project	✓	
Blaby District Council		✓
Brooksby Melton College		✓
Charnwood Borough Council	✓	
Charnwood Food Poverty Group	✓	
Climate Action West Northants	✓	
Community of Grace	✓	
Cooperative of Leicestershire Organic Growers	✓	
Cotesbach Estate	✓	
Cross Counties PCN	✓	
District Eating	✓	
Eco Village	✓	
FareShare		✓
Food and Drink Forum		✓

Good Food West Northants	✓	
Grazers of Ashby Parva		✓
Grow Collective	✓	
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council		✓
Harborough District Council	✓	
Jubilee Food Bank	✓	
LCoCo – Environmental Partnerships	✓	
LCoCo – Public Health	✓	
LCoCo – Waste Team	✓	
LCoCo – Local Area Coordination	✓	
LCoCo – Leicestershire Adult Learning Service	✓	
LCoCo – Policy and Funding	✓	
LCoCo – Leicestershire Traded Services	✓	
Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust		✓
Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership	✓	
Marlene Reid Centre	✓	
Melton Borough Council	✓	
Melton Transition		✓
Melton Mowbray Food Partnership		✓
Northamptonshire Food Partnership	✓	
Nottinghamshire County Council		✓
North West Leicestershire District Council	✓	
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council		✓
Oadby and Wigston PCN		✓
Polebrook Hayes Organic Farm	✓	
Raw n Pure	✓	
RCC		✓
Soil Association Food for Life	✓	
Stanford Hall	✓	
Sustainable Harborough Community	✓	
Sustainable Food Places	✓	
The Bridge	✓	
Trussell Trust	✓	
UHL Commercial Services Manager		✓
UHL Production and Development Chef		✓
University of Leicester		✓
Venner	✓	
Waterloo Community Garden	✓	
Zayndu	✓	

And finally...

We would like to thank everyone who came along and participated in the event, but also those who weren't able to join us, but were still keen to engage. There were several people who had to cancel due to Covid – thanks for staying away (Sorry!).

In addition, we'd like to say huge thanks to Stanford Hall for allowing us to visit and use their amazing facilities, and share our gratitude with the speakers, workshop facilitators, and everyone who supported the summit.

Last, but absolutely not least, thanks to those who sustained us – Shena Cooper and the expert catering team.

Hungry for more? Visit @goodfoodleics on Facebook.

Summit breakdown and next steps

The following table details the content from the various workshops and discussions through the day. These have been grouped into Headings, and assigned a category –

Need – something that partners identified that is stopping projects from progressing.

Strategy – something that needs to be better understood and planned.

Aspiration – something that we should be collaboratively aiming for, needs further discussion and will be longer term.

Each heading has a set of 'routes to progression' to steer future work across the partnership.

Heading	Category	Routes to progression
Network	Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeat Summit – annual event• Smaller groups to enable similar interest groups to meet• Investigate a 'digital' network – online 'community' notice board and collaboration space – share contacts, needs, offers etc. Something that doesn't require LCC as a gatekeeper, but enables updates and information to be shared e.g. Riseup.net• Link in with Leicestershire Communities website
Collaboration	Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partly about what is needed, offered etc linked to the network above• Working groups to consider collaboration• Also consider as part of future meetings – consider 'leads' for different sections of Food System – part of role to link across to other areas of work and look for linkages and collaborators• Projects developed across GFL to be considered for impact on all aspects of Charter e.g. How does a proposed new food pantry reduce its environmental footprint.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, stories and case studies shared through Facebook and newsletter. • Identify particular examples to be explored for actions to enable greater collaboration e.g. Edible16, Eco Village etc.
Education	Strategy, aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and the next generation – education about the food system – including supporting teachers/FE staff • Adult Education – throughout the life course – how to encourage greater understanding of healthy food and the wider system • Storytelling and celebration – don't shy away from the detail and encourage debate • Education from communities to support services to deliver what is needed/wanted e.g. Diverse foods in Food Pantries/Banks • Growing – expand understanding of diversity of growing and associated opportunities for new entrants to farming
Land availability	Need, strategy, aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for land to be made available for new entrants to farming/growing • Link to other work in the UK where support is in place and develop actions towards increased support • Understand how planning can enable a more sustainable food system, and how to influence • Make the link to procurement below
Produce and procurement	Need, strategy, aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between local growers/farmers and food banks/pantries • Information about local producers • Large procurers to commit to local supply chains and ethical produce – supported by local partners • Identify collaborative actions to support producers e.g. Central processing, distribution and knowledge
Links to other services	Need, strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate working across LCC to see how we can pilot an approach that invests in a community across all services (not just about funding)
Funding	Need, strategy, aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to Communities website for funding availability • Understand/agree priorities for food system funding needs and seek funding partners
Storytelling	Need, strategy, aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See numerous storytelling aspects above • Put together a representative series of case studies across the food system • Identify coherent mechanisms for having an ongoing dialogue around celebrating food stories and enabling feedback
Policy	Strategy	Policy and making the case for Food Systems change – including strategic priorities (poverty).

