

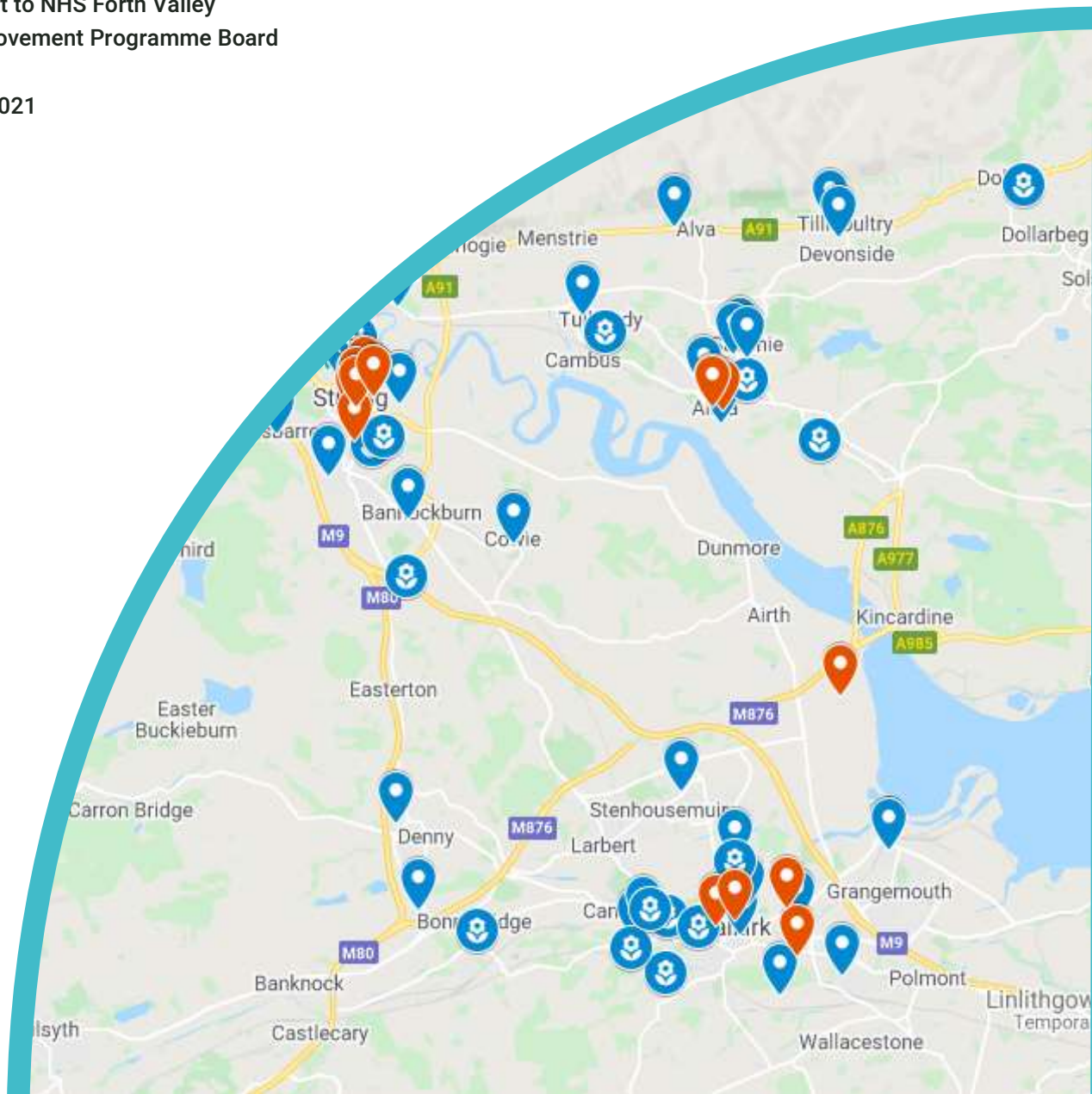


Understanding sustainable and dignified solutions to food insecurity in Forth Valley

A food system needs assessment

A final report to NHS Forth Valley
Health Improvement Programme Board

3rd August 2021





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Executive Summary

The aim of this study is to “make recommendations to support a more sustainable and collective approach to addressing food insecurity in Forth Valley”. The study has been managed by Forth Environment Link, a community led local charity that has brought together a diverse range of people and organisations active in Forth Valley’s food system. A series of consultations and events have focussed on a shared understanding of the issues, challenges, and solutions to food insecurity in Forth Valley. More than 90 people contributed to the study. This report describes different perspectives of need and makes recommendations about future approaches to addressing food insecurity across Forth Valley. A route map is proposed that sets out resources, activities, outputs and outcomes for a Sustainable Food Places framework for Forth Valley.

Service Users - Underpinning Themes: All our conversations with users of emergency food services focussed on *poverty* as the fundamental underpinning issue. *Mental ill-health* was highlighted as a challenge, and this ran through the narrative of discussions with service users. *Loneliness* has been a feature of the experiences of people using emergency food services. This is especially the case amongst elderly people and those shielding during the COVID crisis due to ill health. *Addiction* and drug use were perceived by study participants to have increased and changed over the course of the pandemic.

Community Organisations – Food Issues: Asked about the most important food issues in their area, study contributors told us about: access to food; knowledge and skills; poverty; and lack of co-ordination.

- *Poverty* was raised by organisations operating within and outside areas of deprivation. Where there is in-work poverty, the additional burdens of access to food tip people into a need for emergency food. This places burdens of stress on families that can lead to a spiral of complex issues, with emergency food providers being at the sharp end struggling to provide support for problems that go far beyond food issues. For those not in work, the benefits system causes pressure on emergency food providers who again find themselves at the sharp end, often without the means to advise their service users.
- *Access issues* include the prohibitive cost of healthy food, lack of healthy food availability in many communities, lack or cost of transport to get to places where food is affordable, and access issues for specific groups, in particular older people.
- Issues around *knowledge and skills* are complex. There are challenges for people being provided with sometimes random and often changing collections of ingredients - many organisations manage this by putting together meal packs with a recipe suggestion. There is a recognised demand for communal cooking sessions, but this demand is for expanding people’s repertoire of recipes, for social connections, and for facilities for batch cooking. There is no sense that very basic cooking skills are lacking.

Community Organisations – Challenges and Needs: *Funding* is the overwhelming challenge for organisations involved in delivering food security activity. Often the challenge is around very small amounts of money simply to keep operating with no paid staff resource. Other resource challenges include finding people to support activity, affording and maintaining vehicles and transport, and equipment.

Wider needs are to:

- address the underlying issue of poverty;
- focus on the strength of communities and places;
- improve transport;
- facilitate partnership, collaboration and networking;
- release assets such as land for growing and space for community kitchens.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Poverty is an underpinning theme raised by people in the emergency food system, including those using services, volunteers and workers in the voluntary and public sector.

Community and place are of fundamental importance. This study has highlighted the advantages of place-based, community led support. A sense of place, history and local culture is crucial to the successful delivery of services that address the dignity of those using them.

Access to food is a consistent challenge right across Forth Valley.

The intersection between *mental ill-health* and food insecurity is circuitous. Organisations operating at the 'coal face' of food insecurity are consistently challenged by the mental health crises faced by people needing their services.

There are issues around *knowledge and skills*. These include skills and confidence in food growing. There is demand for lessons and courses involving cooking, this is to expand people's repertoire, for social connections and access to well-equipped facilities, rather than for basic cooking skills.

Larger organisations noted the lack of *operational and strategic co-ordination* in the system as a challenge, and organisations of all types and sizes raised the need for a system to allow collaboration.

There are seven interlinked recommendations:

1. The issues, challenges and needs identified through this study are addressed by a **whole system collaborative effort**. Sustainable Food Places should be used as the basis for developing a strategic approach to food security across Forth Valley;
2. **Each local authority in Forth Valley continues to work towards its own strategic approach** to food security and feed into the Forth Valley plan;
3. **Sustainable Food Places is embedded within the Community Planning Partnerships**, where joint action among anchor organisations can be coordinated;
4. Co-ordination and action planning should be resourced at a Forth Valley level under a Sustainable Food Places umbrella. **It needs to be resourced with an overarching central co-ordinated funding mechanism and a team, for a minimum of three years.**

-
5. **Resourcing voluntary and community sector organisations** working on food security **should be a priority**.
 6. Stakeholders should **build on the momentum created over the COVID emergency**. Regular meeting and networking on this agenda by Councils and Forth Valley wide anchor organisations should progress the agenda. These meetings need to be coordinated, focussed on developing support, change and impact, for all partners.
 7. **Enhance the understanding of needs for people experiencing food insecurity and those supporting them**, to help develop better solutions and to be able to tell their stories so that we can engage decision makers and drive change.

A Route Map:

We have proposed a route map, Forth Valley Good Food, that uses the Sustainable Food Places framework to direct resources and activities towards the overall goal. The route map is presented at the end of this report, with proposals for resources, activities, outputs, interim and long-term outcomes. These outcomes fit within Forth Valley's existing landscape of organisations and activity.

1. Introduction

This assessment of sustainable and dignified solutions to food insecurity across Forth Valley was commissioned by NHS Forth Valley's Health Improvement Programme Board. The assessment will help ensure efforts currently being made to address food insecurity are informed by recent evidence and community need. The work builds on current knowledge in each of the three local authority areas in Forth Valley: Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling. It scopes needs and solutions for the population at risk of food insecurity.

The study is intended to broaden the understanding of local food culture, mapping existing activity against the six Sustainable Food Places themes. It describes different perspectives of need relating to food security and makes recommendations about future approaches to addressing food insecurity. There are three aims:

- Broaden current understanding of local context and food culture, including mapping of provision against Sustainable Food Places themes;
- Explore perspectives of need in relation to food security and facilitate participation and representation of partners; and
- Make recommendations to support a more sustainable and collective approach to addressing food insecurity in Forth Valley.

There are four objectives:

- Ascertain the need, in relation to achieving a more sustainable, dignified food system that addresses both emergency and longer term need for access to nutritious food as expressed by: food insecurity and food dignity organisations; Local Authority, third sector and NHS Partners; and other relevant organisations;
- Assess the reach of food provision into minority groups and whether there are gaps in provision or particular groups coming forward to access support;
- Scope the current status in relation to the six 'key issues' of the Sustainable Food places framework for action, and identify gaps; and
- Make recommendations on key priority actions to change the current food insecurity and food access programmes to provide those in need with improved dignified access to sustainable, nutritious, food.

2. Study Method

The study has been delivered through a “whole system approach”. This means responding to the complexity of the issues through a dynamic way of working, bringing together stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the challenge and to integrate action.

The study has been managed by Forth Environment Link, a community led local charity that has been able to use its local knowledge, networks, and connections to bring together a diverse range of people and organisations active in Forth Valley’s food system. A series of consultations and events have focussed on a shared understanding of the issues, challenges, and solutions to food insecurity.

Support for consultations and qualitative analysis has been provided by BiGGAR Economics, a small consultancy that works extensively on supporting clients to increase economic and social value.

The study has been delivered through a series of rounds of engagement with contributors, as follows.

1. Mapping organisations and activities related to food security across Forth Valley, drawing together the knowledge of all study participants;
2. Semi structured one-to-one interviews, regional ‘food conversations’, an unstructured group interview, and an online food summit:
 - Respondent led, to allow people to explain their views more fully;
 - Flexible, to avoid constraining the content of conversations;
 - Informed consent from participants using emergency food services.
3. Analysis:
 - Structured thematic analysis of qualitative data;
 - Quantification where possible;
 - Triangulation – data from several sources ensuring it is robust.
4. Conclusions and Recommendations built through engagement to ensure stakeholder input into study findings. Study contributors included:
 - People using emergency food services in one location;
 - People living in Forth Valley with an interest in food;
 - Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCSOs);
 - Local Authorities; and
 - NHS organisations.

Commercial businesses were not available for participation during the study period, because the field work was carried out during the COVID lock down.

The table below describes the number of people included in each group of study contributor.

Table 2-1: Study Contributors

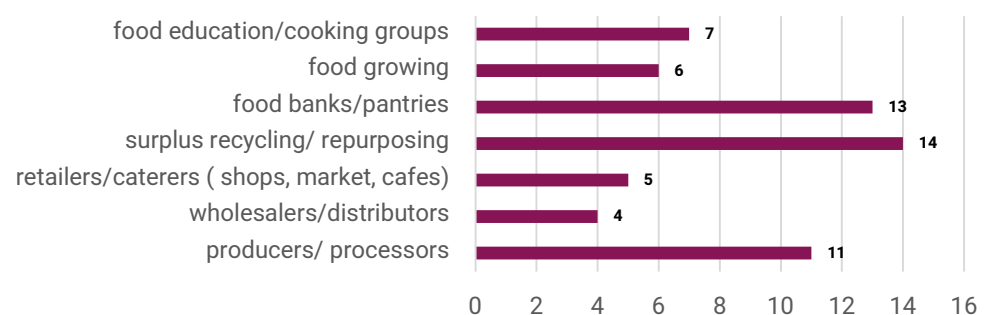
	No. of people
Semi Structured Interviews	
People using emergency food services	3
Voluntary and Community Organisations	34
Local authority consultees	5
Other organisations	1
Unstructured Group Interview	
People using emergency food services and volunteers	5
3 Regional Food Conversations	
People attending (VCOs, other organisations, residents)	36
.....of which, not previously included in study	23
Food Summit	
People attending	34
.....of which, not previously included in study	22
Total number of contributors	93

The profile of the interview sample of voluntary and community sector organisations is as follows:

- 34 VCSO organisations consulted, this is 55% of all the food related community organisations mapped during this study
- 29 (85%) of those consulted provide services in a defined geographic area – local organisations
- 31 (91%) have no restrictions on who uses the services. Those with restrictions were focussed on working exclusively with older people or people with disabilities.

Organisations that contributed to the study deliver a range of types of service, described in the figure below.

Figure 2-1: Activities delivered by consultation sample organisations



3. Food Security Activity

Forth Valley has an active group of organisations with an interest in food security. This group has grown during the COVID pandemic, with several organisations adapting to the emergency to support people in their communities in crisis. We asked each study participant to tell us who they had been working with, allowing the development of a map of food security activity across Forth Valley.

3.1 Profile of organisations

There are 97 organisations delivering in food security activity across Forth Valley. The table below shows the majority of these are part of Forth Valley’s Voluntary and Community Sector (63 organisations, 65% of the total). 15 “other support organisations” include the Third Sector Interfaces, Citizens Advice Bureau, networks and membership organisations. The two education institutions listed are Forth Valley College and the University of Stirling.

Forth Valley Food Security Organisations *	
Voluntary and Community Organisation	63
Other Support Organisation	15
National Organisation	12
Local Authority	3
NHS Organisation	2
Education Institution	2
Total	97

* Commercial businesses have not been included in this study because of challenges of COVID during the study period.

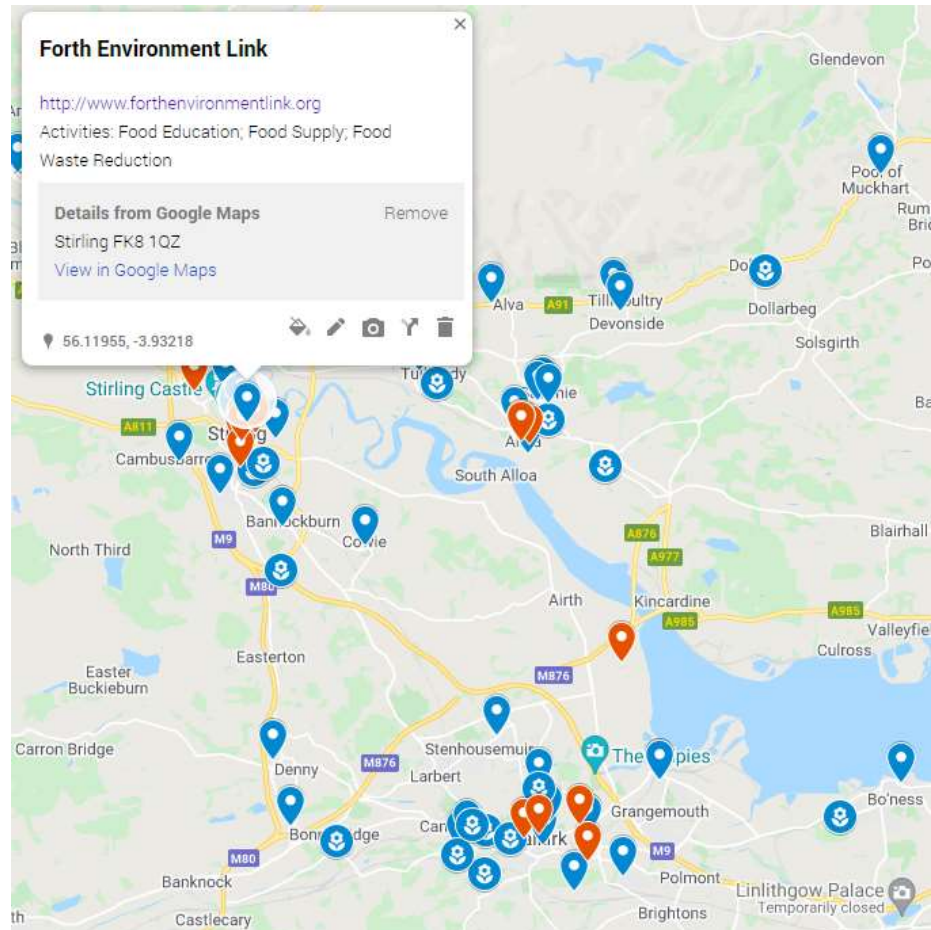
A database including these organisations has been developed. This provides the name and web link for each organisation, its location, and the activity it is engaged in. Activity criteria include:

- food growing;
- food education;
- food supply;
- emergency food;
- emergency food (pantry);
- emergency food (food bank);
- food waste reduction (climate focus);
- community café;
- support services.

A google map has been created and each organisation has a pin in the map, with a drop-down list showing its web link and activity. Community organisations are shown

in blue, public bodies in red. Organisations that include food growing have a flower icon in the pin. This map is to be published by NHS Forth Valley.

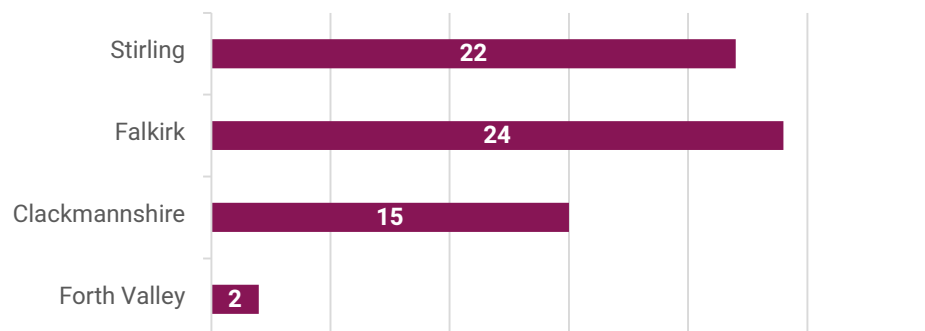
Figure 3-1: Forth Valley Food Security Organisations Map



3.2 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

The organisation map shows a good distribution of organisations across Forth Valley. In fact, there are 22 voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs) working on food security in Stirling, 24 in Falkirk and 15 in Clackmannanshire. Two operate across the Forth Valley.

Figure 3-2: VCSO Profile by Local Authority Area

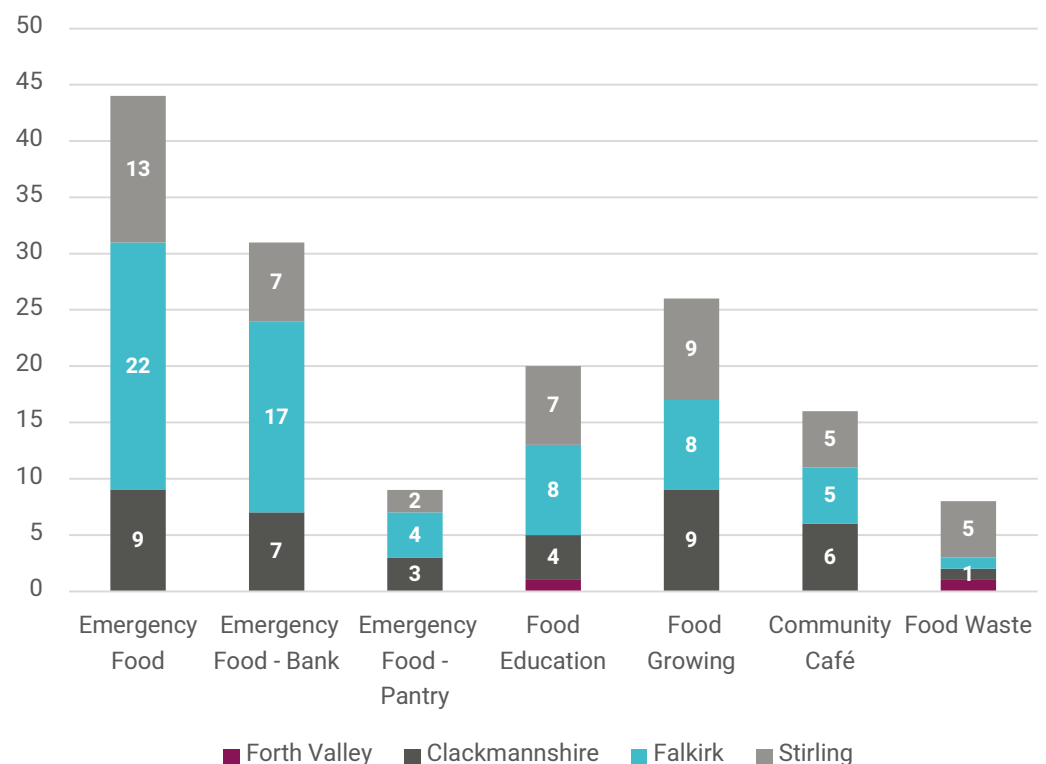


The figure below shows the activities of these 63 organisations, broken down by local authority. The categories are not mutually exclusive:

- 44 organisations (70%) are involved in providing emergency food;
- 26 organisations are growing food;
- 20 organisations are providing food education; and
- 8 organisations are working to reduce food waste as part of the climate emergency agenda.

The figure shows there is a good split of activity across each local authority area.

Figure 3-3: VCSO Activity by Local Authority Area



3.3 Local Authorities

Each of the local authorities in Forth Valley has a range of activity being delivered around food security, with particular work focussed on responses to the COVID emergency.

3.3.1 Clackmannanshire Council

The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017/2027 for Clackmannanshire, details its commitment to ensuring that Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses and people and ensure fair opportunities for all. That families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life, Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential. And finally, that communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish.

Clackmannanshire is a member of Sustainable Food Places network,. This is a recent development in response to both Covid, Climate emergencies and inequalities relating to income, health and food. NHS Forth Valley and Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface have created a movement called Clacks Good Food, which includes Clackmannanshire Council as part of the partnership. Clackmannanshire Council has a Food Growing Strategy which is going to consultation at time of writing.

Clackmannanshire Council, like other councils, is in process of reviewing local development plan ahead of National Performance Framework 4 changes at Scottish Government, due autumn 2021.

Clackmannanshire Council is part of the Sustainable Stirling and Clackmannanshire Partnership, this is delivering responses, policy and actions to the both the Climate and Nature Emergency, of which food is considered within.

Clackmannanshire Council in partnership with Greenspace Scotland is developing its local food growing strategy, which will detail how it will support more fruit and vegetables to be grown in Clackmannanshire by local people.

3.3.2 Falkirk Council

Falkirk Council has several food related policies and plans.

Dig in Falkirk is Falkirk Council's Local Food Growing Strategy, this details how the council will support more fruit and vegetables to be grown by people living in Falkirk.

The Fairer Falkirk plan sets out the ambition for Falkirk Council and the Community Planning Partnership to understand and address the impact of poverty on individuals, families and communities in the area. The Fairer Falkirk Council team, NHS Forth Valley, Forth Valley Royal Voluntary Service and Falkirk Third Sector Interface became the Covid Emergency Food Coordination team and have collaborated since on supporting families in food insecurity, through partnership working and distribution of funding. This is ongoing.

Falkirk Council Community Learning and Development action plan 2018-2021 has several actions that support learning. Action 15 specifically aims to increase food skills of vulnerable people and increase opportunities for them to access affordable food choices/activities within their local communities.

The Falkirk Plan, currently being developed, is a 10 year strategic "plan of plans", including climate and nature emergency, poverty and food access. This is being developed in partnership with the Community Planning Partnership.

3.3.3 Stirling Council

Stirling Council has several food related policies and plans. In June 2021 Stirling Council's Community and Regeneration Committee considered the Council's progress on food security within the Stirling Food Framework and considered an approach to advance its food security work¹.

Stirling's Food Framework has three linked priorities:

¹ Agenda Item No. 12, Stirling Food Framework

<http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/PDFs/ComPlan&Reg/Agendas/ComPlanRegAgenda.pdf>

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- Priority 1: Improving access to (and promoting) good quality, healthy and sustainable food;
 - Priority 2: Addressing Food Insecurity: Tackling food poverty, diet related ill health & access to affordable healthy food; and
 - Priority 3: Increasing access to food education, particularly in community settings Building community food knowledge, skills, resources & projects.

Stirling is currently a member of the Sustainable Food Places network and has both a Council priority and a strategic commitment to gaining accreditation included in the current Food Framework and Alive with Local Food.

The Community and Regeneration Committee meeting in June '21 considered updating the Council's strategic documents to align with and provide an overall vision for local food policy. This refresh work will be informed by agreed COVID recovery and Community Wealth Building approaches locally, including the outputs of this study. The Committee paper notes that re-establishing and re-visioning existing food policy work and delivering a partnership action programme would frame the spend of Growth Monies. This creates a substantial opportunity to address the issues and challenges raised by research participants throughout this study.

The Sustainable Stirling and Clackmannanshire partnership has developed the draft Climate and Nature Emergency Plan. Food is considered within this plan, for example within the circular economy actions, for food waste actions. The council has also developed its Local Food Growing Strategy 2020-2025, which details how it aims to support more people to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

4. Food Issues

Over 90 people from across the food system contributed their views about food issues, providing a rich seam of information about their knowledge and experiences. These include people currently using emergency food services, people volunteering and working for organisations providing food related services, and people within the public sector who have a role in food policy or operations (a profile of the sample of contributors are provided at Section 2).

4.1 People Using Emergency Food Services

We spoke to people from one community using a local food bank service, using face to face consultation techniques. While the situation there may broadly mirror other areas, we recommend exploring these issues with people using other services in Forth Valley, when COVID restrictions allow for more face-to-face engagement.

4.1.1 Underpinning Themes

All our conversations with users of emergency food services focussed on a fundamental underpinning issue – poverty. Some people we spoke to are working and some are not working. For those working, low wages, insecure contracts, and gaps in income mean they struggle to make money go far enough for food. For those on universal credit, it simply is not enough and frequency of payment is an issue. Poverty was also consistently raised as the key issue by organisations delivering emergency food.

“It’s really about having enough money.”

Mental ill-health was highlighted as a challenge, and this ran through the narrative of these discussions. People have needed emergency mental health help and have been unable to access this. Study consultees have witnessed an increase in suicide. As with poverty, this is an issue frequently raised by organisations, explored further below.

Loneliness has been a feature of the experiences of people using emergency food services. This is especially the case amongst elderly people and those shielding during the COVID crisis due to ill health.

Addiction and drug use were perceived by study participants in this local area to have increased and changed over the course of the pandemic from heroin to “Blues”, Valium, and Crack.

4.1.2 Community and Place

The majority of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations included as study participants are focussed on their immediate locality. Emergency food service users who contributed to the study were using one of these local services, and they highlighted the advantages of place based, community led support. A sense of place, history and local culture is fundamental here.

“It’s about the social fabric this small community has, which enabled it to respond this way.”

Because the community runs this food bank the volunteers are trusted and well known, they “know how to communicate”, who needs help, and how to create a social experience that isn’t overwhelming and makes people feel safe.

The organisation uses social media to advertise the service and availability of food, but also word-of-mouth is key. This is particularly the case for older people and people without access to technology or internet. This word-of-mouth element is simply not possible for larger or more geographically distant organisations.

4.1.3 Dignity

Dignity is a theme that runs through the discourse of food security and principles of delivering emergency food. Nourish Scotland’s Dignity in Practice resources have been cited by several organisations who are actively working to address this issue. Despite this, people using the community food bank involved in this study emphasised that there can be nothing dignified about food insecurity. Study contributors told us how they felt about being faced with not having enough food for their families:

- “ashamed”
- “disbelief at my circumstances”
- “embarrassed”
- “anxious”
- “scared”
- “rock bottom”

Study contributors told us that the service is open to anyone, and this reduces stress for them. A previous referral system had made them anxious, ashamed and they didn’t want to use it, particularly when they had to explain their circumstances more than once to get help. Because of this, the referral system was removed.

“I was afraid I would be seen, and that people would know. Why should I have to prove that my life is so hard and that I don’t have means to get enough food for my family? It’s harrowing.”

Though emergency food users said it is simply not possible make emergency food dignified, they did all have something to say about things that would make it feel a bit easier - there are tips and nuances for service delivery providers that only emergency food users can help with. They need to be involved in service design and have a sense of agency. There are always options (even if not taken up) for emergency food users to feel part of the solution and to get involved in small or more meaningful ways. It is important that there is ongoing dialogue between users, services and

funding organisations about how to improve the process to maximise a feeling of dignity.

Service users told us they often volunteer so they can give back to the community which has supported them in times of need. This means volunteers have direct and current experience of the issues facing service users. The impact of this on the notion of dignity is important. It also brings us back to the crucial role of community and place in responding to food insecurity issues.

Having some level of choice or decision making about the type of food available, would also help. For example, if the emergency food provider asked people using the service for a list of things that they commonly like to eat or can cook with. Study participants told us this would help with meal planning, it would provide a sense of agency. While they recognise this might not always be possible, perhaps when picking up food, some level of picking/browsing from food categories would help, similar to a food larder method.

4.2 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

A consistent group of issues and challenges were raised by voluntary and community sector organisations.

Asked about the most important food issues in their area, study contributors told us about: access to food; knowledge and skills; poverty; lack of co-ordination. The number of consultees raising each of these issues is described in the table below, along with the proportion of this group of 34 consultees.

Table 4-1: In your opinion, what are the most important local food issues?

Issue	No. of consultees (%)
Access to food (availability of food and cost)	18 (53%)
Knowledge and skills	14 (41%)
Poverty (benefits, in work poverty, lack of employment)	13 (38%)

Access to food: This was raised as an issue by more than half of the organisations consulted. There is no pattern of type or geographical reach of organisations raising this as an issue – they include foodbanks of all sizes, community hubs, food growing organisations and organisations focussed on the climate emergency. Access issues include the prohibitive cost of healthy food, lack of healthy food availability in many communities, lack or cost of transport to get to places where food is affordable, and access issues for specific groups with older people highlighted in particular.

Knowledge and Skills: The issues around knowledge and skills are complex ones. Several organisations raising this issue are involved in food growing and they perceive a lack of skills and confidence among their communities about how to grow food. Organisations involved in emergency food recognise the challenges for people in being provided with sometimes random and often changing collections of ingredients. Many organisations manage this by putting together meal packs with a

recipe suggestion included. While there is a recognised demand for communal cooking sessions, this demand appears to be for expanding people's repertoire of recipes, for social connections, and for facilities for batch cooking. There is no sense that very basic cooking skills are lacking, and this was confirmed by study participants who are currently using food bank services.

Poverty: Like access to food, this issue was raised by the full range of types of organisations consulted, including those operating within and outside areas of deprivation. Study contributors spoke about in work poverty, with the impact of COVID driving a growth in the level of need. For working people who are just getting by on low wages and/or insecure or zero hours contracts, the additional burdens of access to food tip them into a need for emergency food. This, in turn, places burdens of stress on families that can lead to a spiral of complex issues, with emergency food providers describing being at the sharp end struggling to provide support for problems that go far beyond food issues. For those not in work, the benefits system causes pressure on emergency food providers who again find themselves at the sharp end, often without the means to advise their service users.

“Benefits are a huge issue –universal credit and people having to wait six weeks for payment. People come here who are waiting on their money, or universal credit just doesn’t provide enough. We find winter is harder, with poor weather, people need to use heating.”

Other issues raised as most important by smaller numbers of study contributors include:

- food waste, with challenges around relying on gifted end of life food with too much of one type than can be distributed. Commonly this is bread/bakery. In addition, some supermarkets give food to emergency food providers that is not fit for human consumption, which is seen as undignified;
- lack of co-ordination in the 'system';
- mental ill-health, isolation and loneliness;
- challenges for older people: capability; and they remain scared to go out;
- dignity;
- maintaining and supporting volunteers;
- addiction;
- loss of community development worker;
- hidden rural poverty;
- people having time to cook;
- lack of food resilience (not enough food growing to respond to shocks like COVID and climate change); and

4.3 Public Sector

A small number of study contributors work in public sector organisations including councils, NHS and education institutions. The food issues highlighted are similar to those raised by the other groups of study contributors:

- access to food;
- knowledge and skills;
- poverty;
- lack of co-ordination in the 'system'; and
- providing dignity.

5.

Challenges and Needs

We asked study contributors about needs, for themselves, their organisations and their communities and we asked about the challenges organisations face in delivering services.

5.1 People Using Emergency Food Services

The needs highlighted by people using emergency food services flow directly from the issues they face, described in Section 4, above. The needs identified by people using an emergency food service in Forth Valley are summarised in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: What would help make things better?

Income	<p>“For me personally if I could work more, but childcare is so expensive, there is no balance.”</p> <p>“If Universal Credit was weekly that would be better, as I could manage it a bit better.”</p>
Access to healthy food (for which there is a demand)	<p>“I am trying to lose weight so more vegetables would be good, more salad”</p>
Access to affordable food	<p>“A lot of people can’t drive or can’t travel”</p> <p>“For my mum she can’t make it up the hill to get this help”</p>
Skills (for some)	<p>“I think basic skills might help other people, I can cook, for me it’s time pressure to cook and having money”</p>
Digital inclusion	<p>“A lot of people don’t have access to the internet so it’s hard to know when it’s on, particularly the elderly”</p> <p>“I don’t do computers neither does mum, so we sometimes don’t see the reminders”</p>
Support for food growing	<p>“I think the community garden should be really brought back into use, and get people out gardening growing food, we just need folk to help us”</p>

5.2 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

5.2.1 Challenges in Providing Services

A consistent group of challenges were raised across the voluntary and community sector. Asked about the challenges they face in delivering their services, study contributors discussed several common themes: resources; supporting volunteers; operational co-ordination; and wider support requirements of people using services.

“The relentless nature of the need is the biggest challenge”

The number of consultees raising each of these challenges is described in the table below, along with the proportion of this group of 34 consultees.

Table 5-2: What challenges do you face in delivering your activity?

Challenge	No. of consultees (%)
Resources - funding, people, transportation, equipment	24 (70%)
Maintaining and supporting volunteers	8 (23%)
Lack of operational coordination (logistics, food supply, communications, etc)	7 (21%)
Wider support to people using services (especially mental health)	7 (21%)

Resources: Funding is the overwhelming challenge for organisations involved in delivering food security activity. For the organisations citing resources, funding was the most important challenge faced. Often, the challenge is around very small amounts of money simply to keep operating with no paid staff resource. Other resource challenges include finding people to support activity, affording and maintaining vehicles and transport, and equipment. There was no pattern in the type or location of organisations struggling with resources – this issue is common right across the system.

“We had an initial grant of £600 from Council but this is not ongoing.”

“Funding for supporting food and poverty is very difficult to find.”

Maintaining and Supporting Volunteers: Most organisations challenged by supporting volunteers are those providing emergency food, along with two organisations focussed on community growing. The level of volunteer fatigue experienced by emergency food providers is stark. As we come out of lock down and people are returning to work, there has been a loss of volunteers, but without a similar reduction in the level of need or service. Many organisations are operating with volunteers who are now also working and these people are stretched to their limits. Many study contributors feel the vital role played by these volunteers is not recognised within anchor institutions and that expectations of what they can continue to deliver are unreasonably high.

“We are entirely volunteer led, with some people doing 40 hour weeks for the last year, and that doesn't include fielding desperate calls for help in the evenings”

Lack of Operational Co-ordination: Lack of operational co-ordination is recognised as a challenge among the larger and more mature organisations within our sample of study contributors. Challenges include finding who to refer people on to for other types of support, addressing issues of food supply and finding people within the sector and in anchor institutions with whom to collaborate on specific issues.

Wider Support to People Using Services: The issues of working with people in crisis have been introduced in section 3.2 above and these bring considerable challenges for delivering services. Services are overwhelmingly delivered by volunteers, who feel ill equipped to help. Organisations seek but cannot secure the support required by people coming to them for emergency food. In some cases, these are people that statutory agencies label as “hard to reach” – emergency food providers have this reach, but work in isolation.

“Our volunteers not trained in mental health and struggled with this.”

“People in the community trying to access mental health support couldn't get any. There's a lack of provision for people in extremely bad circumstances”

“We can refer people to Citizens Advice, but they mostly don't want to take that step.”

Other challenges raised by several contributors include:

- lack of strategic coordination;
- space - for storage, distribution, growing food;
- relationships with 'anchor institutions';
- tackling people's isolation, delivering social connections; and
- physical security of premises.

“We're freezing. One of our bills was £1000 for running an oil heater. We've no proper building.”

5.2.2 Organisation Needs

We asked study contributors: “What does your organisation need to help maximise its impact?”. The responses reflect closely the challenges described above:

- funding – the overwhelming issue;
- finding and supporting volunteers;
- having a paid member of staff;
- knowing how to support people in crisis, beyond providing food;
- better partnership working from the Council and NHS; and
- being listened to and valued.

“We’re a well-supported group locally, but the service is run by me and six volunteers and we all work and all have families too. If this service has to be a permanent solution it needs an employed person to do it.”

“Training so we can properly help people ourselves where they are already engaged. Suicide training – mental health first aid.”

5.2.3 Wider Needs to Create a Better, Fairer Food System

Asked about the wider needs of the area to create a fairer food system, study contributors from the voluntary and community sector reflected on the issues and challenges described above. Wider needs are to:

- address the underlying issue of poverty;
 - focus on the strength of communities and places;
 - improve transport;
 - facilitate partnership, collaboration and networking;
 - release assets such as land for growing and space for community kitchens.
-

“Mobilising hyper local networks is key as well as regional support systems, a whole system approach.”

“It needs to be a more local level message from local community members who are accepted locally.”

“A network or hub for sharing knowledge and assets, more partnership working.”

“A proper hub, a network – somewhere you can go to work with people.”

6. Forth Valley and Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain. Its programme is founded on the belief that that a transition to a healthy, sustainable and more equitable food system requires not only strong national policy but also collaborative action between policy makers, businesses and civil society at the local level.

Sustainable Food Places promotes a systems approach that involves and connects key actors at all levels and across all parts of the food system. This approach is encapsulated in the six 'key issues' of its framework for action:

1. Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
2. Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
3. Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
4. Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy
5. Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains
6. Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste.

The position of Forth Valley against each of these issues is described below.

A Strategic and Collaborative Approach

- There are several anchor institutions in Forth Valley which are working on the strategic food agenda. Each local authority is developing a strategic approach to food and working with community planning partners on the issues involved. NHS Forth Valley is working on this issue at a regional level. Forth Valley College is actively engaged in collaborating across the food system on food security issues.
- Collaboration is evident across the system and strong relationships exist. However, activity is disparate and uncoordinated. This study provides evidenced of the need and demand for a networked 'system' to allow collaboration across Forth Valley on the range issues highlighted in section 3, above.
- All of the organisations contributing to this study have a wealth of skills, experience and assets and an appetite to share these, were a structure available to facilitate this.

Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

- The food security organisation map (section 2, above) demonstrates there is a wide and varied range of organisations, services and assets across Forth Valley. The study consultation programme provides evidence of the vibrancy and

commitment of the voluntary and community sector organisations delivering activity that supports food security.

- NHS public health resources are working across Forth Valley, in partnership with voluntary and community organisations.
- The local authorities are each contributing to public awareness and citizenship. There are different objectives and stages within and between local authorities.

Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food

- 62 voluntary and community organisations working on food insecurity across Forth Valley, often working together to address challenges in local areas. These are distributed across each local authority area.
- NHS public health resources are applied to this issue also and local authority support is provided, especially during COVID.
- These resources and assets are disparate and not co-ordinated across Forth Valley.

Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy

- FEL and other organisations have engaged with food producers over the last year on a range of projects. For example, FEL and Zero Waste Scotland have worked with food producers on food waste.
- Emergency food providers collaborate with supermarkets and small businesses and have strong and enduring relationships with them.
- Business engagement in this study is limited and will remain challenging in the harsh commercial environment caused by COVID. This area requires further work, particularly to engage medium to large scale businesses.

Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains

- There was a willingness from public sector contributors to this study to work on this, and work is already ongoing particularly in school meal provision.
- Some local authorities acted as a buyer for emergency food providers during COVID. There is potential for development.
- Study participants highlighted a lack of resilience in supply chains in light of COVID and climate change.

Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste.

- There are eight organisations working specifically on food waste in Forth Valley, included within the food security organisation map. 25 organisations are growing food (excluding farm businesses and local authorities).
- There are links to Neighbourfood and the Forth Valley Food and Drink network.
- Each local authority is working on climate and nature emergency plans, as is the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority.
- The organisations and resources included here often collaborate, but collaboration is patchy and uncoordinated.

7. Next Steps – A Route Map

This study set out to broaden the understanding of food security across Forth Valley and describe different perspectives of need. There has been a wide and varied response to our request for contributions from across the food system, including people using emergency food services.

Engagement from voluntary and community organisations has been strong, with over half of all organisations working on food security in Forth Valley contributing to one-to-one consultations. This means we can be confident that the issues and challenges described by consultees are representative of the sector as whole. The contributions of people working in anchor institutions have also been included, these being councils, NHS organisations and the region's education institutions.

Commercial businesses have not been included in this study, with fieldwork delivered during the COVID lock down, when businesses were not available to participate.

The scale of engagement in the study has supported the development of the following conclusions and recommendations.

7.1 Conclusions

The study mapped the location and activity of 95 organisations contributing to the food security agenda across Forth Valley, operating in areas of food growing, food education, emergency food, food waste, community cafés, and food related support services. Over 90% of organisations have no restriction on who uses services. Those with restrictions were focussed on working exclusively with older people. There is a good split of activity and services across each local authority area in Forth Valley.

Study contributors highlighted several common themes when discussing issues and challenges.

Poverty is an underpinning theme raised by people in the emergency food system, including those using services, volunteers and workers in the voluntary and public sector. In work poverty and challenges inherent in the welfare system drive the need for emergency food as well as driving demand for support and advice that volunteers in the food system struggle to provide;

Community and place are of fundamental importance. Most community organisations are focussed on their immediate locality. This study has highlighted the advantages of place-based, community led support. A sense of place, history and local culture is crucial to the successful delivery of services that address the dignity of those using them.

Access to food is a consistent challenge right across the Forth Valley. Access issues include the prohibitive cost of healthy food, lack of healthy food availability in many communities, lack or cost of transport to get to places where food is affordable, and access issues for specific groups with older people highlighted in particular.

The intersection between **mental ill-health** and food insecurity is circuitous. Organisations operating at the ‘coal face’ of food insecurity are consistently challenged by the mental health crises faced by people needing their services. Volunteers are often ill-equipped to support people, while sometimes being the only source of support that they have.

There are issues around **knowledge and skills**. These include skills and confidence in food growing. While there is demand for lessons and courses involving cooking, this appears to be for expanding people’s repertoire, for social connections and access to well-equipped facilities, rather than for basic cooking skills.

Larger organisations noted the lack of **operational and strategic co-ordination** in the system as a challenge, and organisations of all types and sizes raised the need for a system to allow collaboration.

These issues and challenges lead to a clear set of requirements:

- to address the underlying issue of poverty;
- to reduce transport barriers that limit access to affordable food;
- to properly resource organisations working on food insecurity;
- to support volunteering, recognising the hours, pressure, and significance of volunteers’ contribution;
- to provide access to wider support for people using emergency food services, helping address underlying causes of food insecurity;
- to increase assets in the food system, including community growing spaces and making available well-equipped kitchens to community groups and organisations;
- to develop a system that co-ordinates operations, supply chains and supports collaboration; and
- to facilitate partnership working with anchor institutions for all actors in the food system.

7.2 Recommendations

There are seven interlinked recommendations that deliver the study aim to “make recommendations to support a more sustainable and collective approach to addressing food insecurity in Forth Valley”:

1. The issues, challenges and needs identified through this study are addressed by a **whole system collaborative effort**. Sustainable Food Places should be used as the basis for developing a strategic approach to food security across Forth Valley;
2. **Each local authority in Forth Valley continues to work towards its own strategic approach** to food security and feed into the Forth Valley plan;
3. **Sustainable Food Places is embedded within the Community Planning Partnerships**, where joint action among anchor organisations can be coordinated;
4. Co-ordination and action planning should be resourced at a Forth Valley level under a Sustainable Food Places umbrella. **It needs to be resourced with an**

overarching central co-ordinated funding mechanism and a team, for a minimum of three years.

5. **Resourcing voluntary and community sector organisations** working on food security **should be a priority** within any action plan developed.
6. Stakeholders should **build on the momentum created over the COVID emergency**. Regular meeting and networking on this agenda by Councils and Forth Valley wide anchor organisations should progress the agenda. These meetings need to be coordinated, focussed on developing support, change and impact, for all partners.
7. **Enhance the understanding of needs for people experiencing food insecurity and those supporting them**, to help develop better solutions and to be able to tell their stories so that we can engage decision makers and drive change.

7.3 Route Map

One of the objectives of this study was to “make recommendations on key priority actions to change the current food insecurity and food access programmes to provide those in need with improved dignified access to sustainable, nutritious, food”. To deliver this objective, a ‘theory of change’ model is presented below. This proposes a route map, Forth Valley Good Food, that uses the Sustainable Food Places framework to direct resources, activities, outputs and outcomes towards the overall goal.

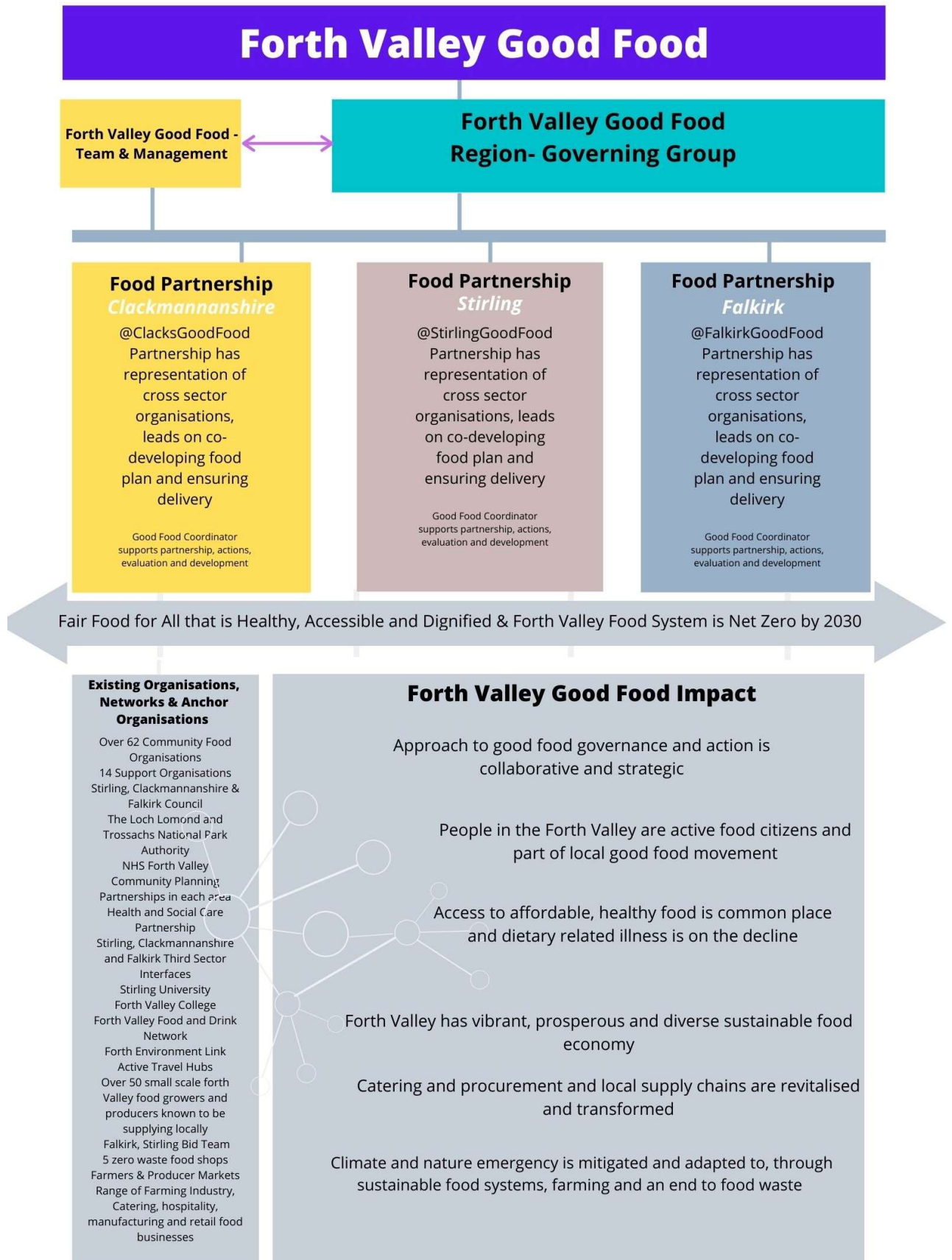
Forth Valley Good Food Goal:

“Forth Valley Food System is healthy for both people and planet”

The challenges and needs identified through this study have fed a set of proposed outcomes and objectives for Forth Valley Good Food, which are presented below the figure, from page 24. The tables propose resources, activities, outputs, interim and long-term outcomes.

These outcomes fit within Forth Valley’s existing landscape of organisations and activity, shown in the figure below.

Figure 7-1: Forth Valley Good Food Landscape



Outcome 1: Approach to good food governance and action is collaborative and strategic.

Objective 1a: Create a Forth Valley wide body that oversees and increases collaboration for Sustainable Food Places work, across Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk.

Resources

- Resources required: 1 full time regional manager resource, that works to the directive and reports to FV overarching body. Funded for minimum of three years.
- Host organisation and equipment
- Web, marketing and communications budget/resource
- Academic/Research skills

Activities

- Commitment from FV anchor organisations
- A series of engagement events targeting cross sector decision makers, to increase commitment and offers of support, collaboration and co-production
- Maintenance of up to date Food System Database and associated map, produced as part of this study
- Terms of reference/MOU created for overarching body and accountability drawn up and discussed
- Evaluation strategy with metrics for measuring impact created

Outputs

- A detailed strategic regional action plan for first 6 month - 1 year, projected year 2/3 actions
- Terms of reference/MOU accountability agreed and adopted

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- Funding Secured for SFP FV region coordinator (2-3 months)
- Short term actions achieved

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- Forth Valley Wide SFP body created with long term action plan, governance and operational process in place and delivering milestones within plan, reporting on, and understanding impact via robust evaluation

Objective 1b: Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Falkirk are all members and working through the SFP framework actions, as prioritised by their respective needs.

Resources

- 3 coordinators for SFP in each region report to each area SFP partnership and FV overarching body
- Host organisation
- Web, Marketing, Comms and events budget/resource

Activities

- Dissemination of needs assessment to local leaders, CPP, community and cross sector partners
- Each area signed up to SFP with indicative local partners recruited, MOU/TOR developing for each food partnership

Outputs

- TOR/MOU for each governing partnership
- Funding bids & business case for SFP coordinators developed

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- Funding secured for coordinators and associated budgets (secured 3-6 months) and team in place

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- Each area SFP body created long term action plan, governance and operational process in place and delivering milestones within plan
-

Outcome 2: People in the Forth Valley are active food citizens and part of local good food movement.

Objective 2a: Engage and enable all population on food citizenship from health, social, environmental and economic perspective segmented to home life, community, partnership.

Objective 2b: Create a local good food movement at all levels to promote access to healthy and sustainable food.

Resources

- SFP team and partnership by area and collaborate regionally
- Combine/Collaborate resources across partnerships, with skills, services, offers of help
- Budget/resources for marketing/comms/PR
- Communication channels Digital and Non digital understood by each area and regionally

Activities

- Assessment of what is understood as food citizenship and current food citizenship levels by sector
- Charter or similar created/developed to understand what is meant by active food citizens to signed up
- Assets created to help deliver food citizenship
- Networking, events, training and meetings scheduled in order to progress agenda of SFP

Outputs

- Series of online and face to face campaigns to encourage civic society to sign up to and become active food citizens
- Civic society participate at individual level and
- Communities, Third, Private, Public and Health sectors participate in order to take forward campaigns and actions that develop their food citizenship and contribute to local food movement

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- All current mapped food organisations understand and are working towards food citizenship goals/charter, trained/supported to bring non- food organisations into the agenda

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- 50% of all civic society (individuals, groups, by sector) are active food citizens and involved in local good food movement (approximately 150,000 people)

Outcome 3: Access to affordable healthy food, is commonplace and dietary related illness is on the decline.

Objective 3: Identify a route map, with a suite of solutions that are well networked, pragmatic, resourced and are cross thematic and have full commitment of cross sector partners.

Resources

- Project Team to coordinate and develop route map
- Participation and active co-development of solutions within the partnerships by LA and by Region
- Advisory group created with emergency food users and emergency food providers to help guide solutions, campaigns and service delivery
- Funding (combination of capital/resource, could be from a variety of funders/investors)
- Training for volunteers involved in emergency food provision, paid team members and wrap around support to them for their wellbeing

Activities

- Deepen understanding of Community Food Groups' function by numbers of people supported, income of organisation, resource needs such as transport, funding, people, food growing, equipment etc, to enable financial modelling requirements for funders/investors, and split into capital and resource funding to inform developments in regional/local grant funder design of support, scopes of budget
- Local authorities, CPPs and food partnerships support individuals and communities to grow more of their own food
- Partnership engages business sector, to garner support and engage them in the agenda

Outputs

- Project team and food partnerships work together to attract more and longitudinal funding to the community sector to support both access to healthy food and food health support
- Series of networking and events delivered to support developing current community food sector
- Ensure that anyone accessing emergency food provision is provided with income
- Maximisation/welfare rights support
- Series of networking events specifically targeting businesses to stimulate more support (e.g. food donations, using their teams to help with solutions)

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- Funding allocation confirmed for Emergency Food Provision support via councils and Forth Valley Food Futures Grant Fund secured (multi-investors e.g NHS, Scot Gov, Community Renewal, private etc) Grants designed to best respond to needs to maximise efficiencies and outcomes.
- Partnerships deliver against outcomes such as health and food education, providing wellbeing to volunteers delivering emergency food support
- Better combined support to community food organisations by anchor organisations, such as governance and organisational development

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- Funding secured for subsequent years of support
- Partnerships can demonstrate impact more confidently, via collaboration and more streamlined networked funding packages and subsequent evaluation of funds
- Emergency food volunteers, and paid workers involved in emergency support, to be able to deliver some support around mental health, suicide prevention, money support and know how to refer

Outcome 4: Forth Valley has vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy.

Objective 4a: Support the emergence of new local food growers (community and SMEs).

Objective 4b: Support existing local food growers/producers to become sustainable, ethical, environmental and secure safe routes to market and fair price for their product.

Objective 4c: Support and encourage medium to large scale food businesses (growers, producers, manufacturers) to produce healthy, sustainable good food.

Objective 4d: Support non-food businesses to collaborate on better food systems (e.g packaging, logistics).

Resources

- Project Team to coordinate and develop route map
- Participation and active co-development of solutions within the partnerships by council area and by region
- Existing Forth Valley Food and Drink network supported
- Funding (combination of capital/resource, could be from a variety of funders/investors) to start ups and SMEs
- Food and Drink to feature prominently in local authority climate, nature and economic strategies

Activities

- Networking, consultation and development sessions held with food businesses and wider business community
- Supporting agency, public health and education bodies work with business community to support the development of plans, and integrating into wider strategies - health, social, economic, environment
- Investment packages developed to resource support to the community as well as current mapping of available support

Outputs

- Networking events delivered with target audience
- Support agency increased levels of interaction with business community
- Creation of new funds to support community and food business start ups
- All support resources mapped and promoted to communities and start ups

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- Forth Valley Food and Drink is sustainable and the go-to for food business networking, support, PR etc for small-medium food businesses
- Emergence of 5 new community food production initiatives (e.g. grow, manufacturer, space rental, community cook hubs)
- Larger food and non-food businesses support food system development

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- 50% of all FV Food businesses are recognised as good food businesses
- Community and social enterprise food businesses are growing in number and diversity
- More local food is grown and eaten locally, in particular fruit and vegetable supply
- 5 new innovative food businesses – digital, transport, production, ethos, circular economy

Outcome 5: Catering and procurement and local supply chains are revitalised and transformed.

Objective 5a: Public, Education and Health partners collaborate to improve procurement, work with Food For Life (Soil Association).

Objective 5b: Small/Medium food producers supported to bid for food supply contracts.

Resources

- Project Team to coordinate and develop route map
- Participation and active co-development of solutions within the partnerships by council area and region and national agency

Activities

- Series of engagement sessions with heads of leadership re. Food for Life (Stirling already signed up and silver accredited)
- Series of engagement sessions with existing food producers/growers to develop strategies for fulfilling larger procurement contracts and for new start ups to identify gaps in provision that may translate to a business opportunity

Outputs

- Commitment from all councils to participate in Food for Life.
- SMEs and medium sized food businesses are better equipped to bid for and deliver larger food supply contracts

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- Clackmannanshire and Falkirk commence Food for Life process and Stirling plans to become accredited as Gold

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- Stirling becomes Gold Food for Life
 - Clackmannanshire and Falkirk become silver Food for Life
 - 30% of food supplied into local food system via public, private and health sector is of local origin supporting local economy
-

Outcome 6: Climate and nature emergency is mitigated and adapted through sustainable food systems, farming and an end to food waste.

Objective 6a: Work with Zero Waste Scotland and partnerships to reduce food waste from our food system.

Objective 6b: Work with NFUS, Scotland Food and Drink, Soil Association to support more sustainable farming, production, manufacturing with all sizes of businesses.

Objective 6c: Develop more local food social enterprises (grow, produce, cater, sell).

Objective 6d: Develop more community scale vegetable growing for personal/community consumption and for supply into hyper local food systems.

Objective 6e: Work with technology and academic institutions to develop new lower carbon/lower nature impact solutions to food production.

Objective 6f: Work with Local Authorities, SEPA and regulators to support and enable food businesses and farmers to be net zero & nature friendly.

Resources

- Project Team to coordinate and develop route map
- Participation and active co-development of solutions within the food partnerships by council and by region and national/regional or wider agency such as soil association, NFUS, Academic institutions
- A budget for events and seminars
- City Deal or other fund to provide innovator seed funding for food systems ideas from business community

Activities

- Full mapping of range of support available to business and community food growing/production
- One stop shop of resources created and made available
- Full mapping of support frameworks/accreditation process available to food growers makers e.g. red tractor, organic
- Food Labs - Networking, learning seminars and events bringing together the sector to understand how they can improve business in terms of nature, climate emergency or develop more circular economy food systems

Outputs

- Support resources map made available, and promoted via networks like chamber of commerce, bid groups, academic institutions
- 12 monthly Food Labs delivered (networking, sharing, learning, co-development.)
- 1 dragons den style pitch and bid for innovation funding for food systems business proposition
- Support and recruit 10 farms, 10 SME food businesses and 64 community food organisations to create climate, nature and waste plans.
- 10 new community led growing projects are supported to develop their projects/growing businesses

Short term Outcomes (6 months-1 year)

- 10 farms take forward actions to reduce carbon emissions, increase nature and biodiversity and reduce waste
- 10 SMEs take forward actions to reduce carbon emissions, increase nature and biodiversity and reduce waste
- All 64 current community food orgs commit to develop their own carbon, nature and waste plans

-
- 5 new climate/nature/waste innovation feasibility projects underway
 - 5 new community led growing projects/businesses receive seed investment
 - 5 new community led food production projects start up

Medium Term Outcomes (1-3 years)

- All 64 current food organisations have climate/nature and waste plans, and are actively reducing carbon footprint
 - Further 100 food business have created and actioned climate, nature and waste plans
 - 5 new food system innovation projects receive start up funds to progress the business proposition
 - Forth Valley is recognised as an exemplar food business community in terms of its commitment and action toward mitigating the climate, nature and food waste emergency
 - 10 new community led food grow and produce projects/businesses have started up
-

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