

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

Response to the Brighton & Hove City Council Downland Consultation 2021

Submitted by email to

Brighton & Hove City Council: citydownlandestateplan@brighton-hove.gov.uk

March 2021

Introduction

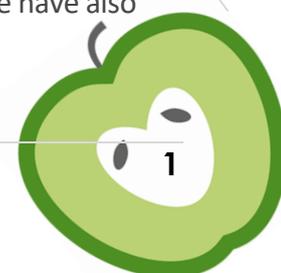
[Brighton & Hove Food Partnership \(BHFP\)](#) is a nationally respected not-for-profit organisation that coordinates a strategic citywide approach to food issues. We also run projects including

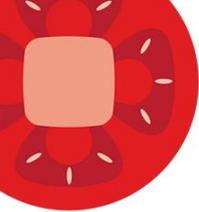
- [The Community kitchen](#)
- Community orchards and community gardens
- Tips and advice on reducing food waste at home
- Setting up community composting sites across the city
- Advice on food poverty and support for food banks
- Support networks including emergency food network, surplus food network and caterer's network
- Support to businesses e.g., on food waste and plastics reduction
- Support to other areas and sharing learning on our approach

BHFP is an independent non-profit organisation working with a wide range of partners including community organisations, statutory agencies, local businesses and individual residents. We coordinated the city's community food response to the Covid-19 pandemic working alongside 46 organisations. We are an active participant in the Sustainable Food Places Network and coordinated Brighton & Hove's successful bid to become the UK's first ever Gold Sustainable Food City in Autumn 2020.

Brighton & Hove's cross-sector strategic approach to food is set out in a food strategy and action plan Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper. There is more information at www.bhfood.org.uk/food-strategy.

We strongly welcome and support the commitment to a 'whole estate' approach to the City Council's Downland, as endorsed in the food strategy action plan, and the opportunity to contribute. As part of the Brighton Downs Alliance (BDA) and we endorse the BDA's Position Statement of Feb 2021. We have also contributed to the various consultation workshops and online consultation mechanisms.





10 Key principles

These key principles need to underpin the approach to the Dowlands Estate:

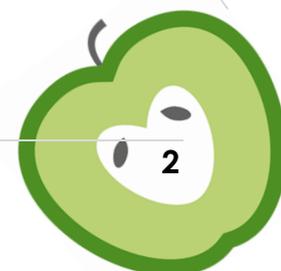
1. The South downs is not a 'wild' landscape. It is a managed landscape – largely a farmed landscape. Many of the special characteristics including the iconic chalk grassland have been shaped by how we produce and distribute food over many hundreds of years.
2. Food and farming practices are a crucial though often overlooked way to tackle the climate emergency, the biodiversity emergency, and also play a key role in protecting the water supply
3. Food is a key 'ecosystems service.' We need to encourage local food production - good food is vital for health, and a sense of connection with our food production plays an important role in wellbeing
4. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, over one in five people in Brighton & Hove were experiencing household food insecurity rising to one in three if they have a disability or health condition¹ Access to good quality food is vital for addressing food poverty. Localised food production also strengthens food resilience – exposed as an issue during the Covid-19 pandemic this will be an increasing problem due to climate change.
5. The food we eat directly contributes between a quarter and a third of our total carbon footprint so must be part of the solution– yet is often forgotten in plans for achieving net zero.
6. In the UK, agriculture is the biggest driver of wildlife loss, with 67 percent decline in the abundance of priority species since 1970 and 13 percent of them now close to extinction.
7. The food sector is a key part of the local economy, with a spotlight shone on the key role of food supply chains and evidence of consumer behaviour shift towards more local purchasing during Covid 19 and a willingness to continue this².
8. There is a unique opportunity for 'green economic recovery' however new entrants to farming and food production face many barriers including lack of supply routes and infrastructure and there is a particular difficulty with access to land
9. In 2020, Brighton & Hove was awarded the first **gold sustainable food place award in the UK**. The City Downland Estate Plan needs to build on that achievement and, acting as an example of excellence and providing inspiration locally and nationally.
10. **Encouraging shifts in food and farming practices must be placed at the heart of the City Downland Estate Plan.** Food must not be seen as an add-on.

We are members of the Brighton Downs Alliance and support the 2021 position statement including:

- a) All new or re-let farm tenancies to be run using regenerative and organic methods of farming.
- b) Council commitment to nurture / incentivise farming and food businesses that create fair farm-based employment, equal opportunity and diversity; improve soil health and biodiversity; connect local producers and local consumers; support community, co-operative farm businesses.

¹ Brighton & Hove JSNA topic summary, 2019 [Food poverty, diet and health](#) p 8

² Research by [Food Matters](#), 2020, in partnership with BHFP (Unpublished)



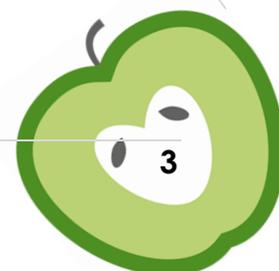


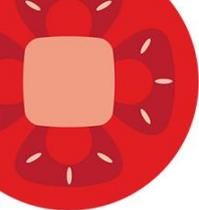
Land Management – 10 key asks

The Downland Estate plan should include:

1. A commitment to bringing into community management the next suitable farm tenancy which becomes vacant (i.e. one adjacent to city, with sustainable accessible transport connections). This would act as showcase locally and nationally for community-led climate and nature friendly farming, and for community access and involvement by providing a model which could be replicated and would also act as pilot to explore whether this approach could work for the wider downland estate going forward. Brighton & Hove Food Partnership could broker /or manage if necessary.
2. Future management of estate tenancies should choose a structure which will maximise the opportunities for added value i.e. health, economic, recreational and wellbeing benefits – this could be in-house farming, or management externally e.g. via a land trust.
3. All new tenancies should require climate and nature friendly agriculture – i.e. wording within future tenancy agreements to require regenerative or organic methods of farming.
4. There should be an equal commitment to supporting existing tenants to work towards regenerative or organic practices. This should include a mechanism for connecting tenants with each other and for taking a holistic view of management. Biodiversity benefits require scale & connectivity and opportunities for joined up management and funding e.g. through ELMS could be lost if tenancies are looked at in isolation
5. Land management approach should include -
 - a) Taking a 'zonal' approach starting with an assessment of what should go on what kind of soil e.g. thin soil for downland restoration; pockets of better soil for orchards/ food production; recreational use etc. Different land uses can be compatible.
 - b) Moving away from ploughed arable land. Ploughing loses carbon, whereas permanent grassland sequesters carbon as does 'rewilding' and horticulture using agro-ecological methods (including orchards and fruit & veg production)
 - c) Ensuring that meat and dairy are pasture fed not intensive ('less better' approach)
6. Sustainable grazing contributes to landscape of south downs – but we need should ensure that the meat produced is locally branded and can enter local supply chains (see below)
7. There should be a concerted approach to remove barriers for smaller producers. This should include conversations with SDNPA on planning policy changes e.g. removal planning permission requirement for polytunnels and simple structures and a conversation as to how planning policy can better protect local food infrastructure (see also below)
8. Making land available for new entrants to farming and agroecological food production is particularly important and whilst embracing a 'whole farm' approach there should be consideration as to where tenancies should be split, or parts sublet or otherwise made available to new entrants where the existing tenant would also benefit provided these fit with a wider joined-up approach to land management. BHCC should look at maximizing any opportunities for funding or support from the Government's proposed New Entrants scheme.³
9. BHCC should look at routes to provide capital or interest free loans to buy necessary equipment to do farming differently such as buying young trees for orchards or agroforestry
10. Any changes suggested via this consultation process to deliver on carbon reduction via the Downlands Estate Plan should **fully consider the impact of any food production space lost**. For example, we are troubled by the emphasis on biofuels in the consultation materials. Additionally changes of land use from agricultural land to renewables or rewilding need to factor in the 'carbon gained' by loss of locally food and should explore ways for land use to be multipurpose. New rewilding or tree planting can still 'include the food' – by considering agroforestry, orchards and edible landscaping.

³ [Agricultural transition plan 2021 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024) p54 introduces the scheme.

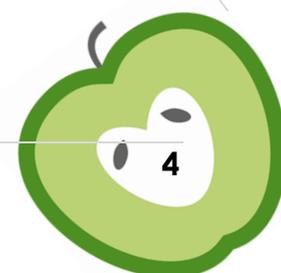


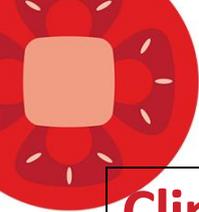


Community and Economic benefits – 5 key asks

The Downlands Estate Plan should also seek to achieve or add value to the following -

- 1) Educate and connect people with food production – e.g. via accessible open farms / orchards/ demonstration centres for food production. Food engagement activities provide tangible ways to deliver national park purpose 2 – allowing understanding and enjoyment of national park. A pilot project under community management (see above) could also play a key role. The Green Wellbeing Alliance is also a key route to public involvement <http://greenwellbeingalliance.org.uk/>
- 2) Encourage local supply chains/ routes to market (including CSA schemes such as sheep share, veg boxes, food hubs, direct buying etc.) and ways to match suppliers with buyers, which reduce carbon emissions from transportation and processing and increase food resilience.
- 3) Use the power of procurement – BHCC can add value by agreeing to purchase produce from the farms for local needs, schools and anchor institutions; and linking to current development Brighton & Hove City Council minimum buying standards.
- 4) There is a need to protect - and in most cases reconstruct- the physical local food infrastructure (the middlemen) – markets/wholesalers/ abattoirs/ Henfield (STM) & Heathfield are nearest abattoirs. Consideration should be given as part of this process to the role of mapping and enhancing local food infrastructure, with a view to encouraging and protecting existing and future food infrastructure.
- 5) Whilst the wider food economy is not under control of the estate plan, there are opportunities within this process which should be used to encourage the following:
 - a) proper jobs in agriculture and food production – especially given so many of these experiencing food poverty are involved in food production, distribution, retail and hospitality
 - b) Training and skills provision – teaching and learning opportunities in ‘good food’ production
 - c) Adding value to the hospitality and restaurant sector by increasing the local food offer
 - d) Linking to economic strategy and the commitment to increased food resilience
 - e) Exploring unrealised potential for south downs ‘branding’ for example of locally reared lamb, At the very least it should be possible to ensure that more of our locally produced meat can be purchased locally.





Climate, carbon and Biodiversity

Many people are unaware that the food we eat contributes between a quarter and a third of our carbon footprint. In the UK, agriculture is the biggest driver of wildlife loss, with 67 percent decline in the abundance of priority species since 1970 and 13 percent of them now close to extinction.⁴

Encouraging organic and agroecological methods allows the ground to hold more carbon as well as helping wildlife, regenerating soil, and protecting water supply, which risks contamination through pesticide use. Our infographic is also at <https://bhfood.org.uk/resources/food-and-climate-change/> shows why we need to 'include the food' in action on carbon and on biodiversity.

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership
Gold Status 2020 | #goldfoodcitybid | www.bhfood.org

Food: the missing ingredient for tackling the climate and ecological emergency



What's going wrong?

The food we eat contributes up to 30% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the UK.



Agriculture and livestock farming are by far the biggest contributors to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and soil pollution, as well as land and water use.

The UK wastes 10 million tonnes of food every year.

90% of our fisheries are fully exploited or overfished.¹

And what can we do?



1. Include food! In...

- Climate Emergency action plans
- Nature / biodiversity action plans
- Planning, transport and economic policy



2. Buy and eat better

Both individuals and organisations such as restaurants and caterers adopt a climate friendly diet:

More plant – less meat²

More seasonal – less processed

Lower carbon supply chains including:

- Food depots
- Markets
- Direct buying
- Tech solutions
- Electric delivery
- Dynamic procurement



3. Care for land – and sea

- **Climate friendly agriculture:** Carbon capture – biodiversity³ – soil regeneration – new skills and jobs
- **Pesticide reduction:** more pollinators – better food supply
- **Carbon leadership:** City Council Whole Estate Plan, South Downs National Park Authority, The Living Coast UNESCO World Biosphere Region, Sussex IFCA, allotments and community gardens



5. Act in partnership

- Support the Food Partnership!
- Deliver the Food Strategy
- Communication and connections
- Build a movement



4. Think circular

- 25-30% of all food produced is lost or wasted⁴ – we have to halve that by 2030⁵
- **Think food use not food waste: Reduce, Reuse, Redistribute, Recycle**
- **Innovation** e.g. Surplus Food Network, new repurposed products



¹ Our Planet Our Health: House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee 2019

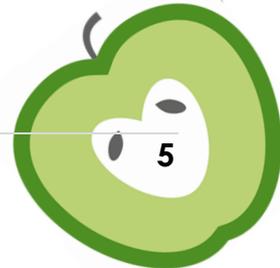
² "Consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes will have to double, and consumption of foods such as red meat and sugar will have to be reduced by more than 50%." The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health, 2019, which brought together 37 world-leading scientists from across the globe to answer this question: Can we feed a future population of 10 billion people a healthy diet within planetary boundaries?

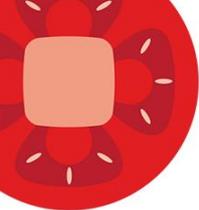
³ In the UK, agriculture ... is the biggest driver of wildlife loss, with 67 percent decline in the abundance of priority species since 1970 and 13 percent of them now close to extinction." Our Future in the Land, RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission

⁴ The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land

⁵ UN sustainable development goal: 50% reduction in food waste by 2030

⁴ Our Future in the Land, RSA Food, Farming and Countryside Commission 2019





Examples of good practice in land management

Kingsclere Estates - <https://www.kingsclere-estates.co.uk/> use the estate to 'stack' farming/growing enterprises that follow regenerative systems. Also use their infrastructure (e.g. barns) to support other types of food businesses that are not necessarily farmers/growers.

Tablehurst and Plawhatch Community Farm Cooperative - <https://tablehurstandplawhatch.co.uk/> started in 1996, the Coop is a community supported biodynamic agriculture enterprise in Forest Row, East Sussex.

Useful Research and further good practice

Reviving county farms - report, prepared for CPRE by the New Economics Foundation, Shared Assets and Who Owns England?, shows that the opportunities that county farms offer – in terms of local benefit, income generation and training in farming – are sizeable, but that numbers of county farms are dropping (2019)

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/discover/county-farms-a-potted-guide/>

Also [Back to the land: rethinking our approach to soil - CPRE](#)

Paper setting out the potential of the Downland Estate for local and ecological food production (2018) -

<https://steps-centre.org/publication/brighton-hoves-farmland-potentials-for-a-more-local-and-ecological-food-supply-2/>

Informing the above paper – Workshop on Food and the Downland Estate (2018): <https://steps-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Downland-Estate-Workshop-July-2018-Report.pdf> plus earlier briefing (with some inspiring examples from elsewhere in the UK): https://steps-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/MLS_2_7August_screen.pdf

Tenant Farmer Association guidance on how tree planting could be better supported in tenancies

https://www.tfa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/20November17Trees_and_woodlands.pdf

Putting good food jobs at the heart of the economic recovery briefing by Sustain (2020) makes the case that good food, farming and fishing should be put at the heart of investment and policies to support an economic recovery, and make it a green, fair and healthy one. <https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/economic-recovery-briefing/>

Food farming and countryside commission - Farming for change report

<https://ffcc.co.uk/library/farmingforchangereport>

'our future in the land' -

<https://ffcc.co.uk/library/our-future-in-the-land>

