

FeedingManchester #11 Minutes

Saturday 10th November 2012, 10am – 4pm

**Creative living Centre
Bury New Road
Prestwich
Greater Manchester
M25 3BL**

Session 1: Introductions & Welcome to FeedingManchester #11

FeedingManchester (FM) coordinators Rob Allen and Nona Ethington welcomed everyone to the event, running through the agenda and housekeeping arrangements for the Creative Living Centre. It was noted that this was the first FM event to take place outside central Manchester, and thanks were given to members of food and growing groups in Prestwich for assisting in organising the event.

Attendees were invited to write past events and achievements on a flip chart pad at the back of the room, by way of providing an update to fellow attendees, as well as writing down details of future events and opportunities.

Following the welcome, ten second introductions went ahead, giving everyone the opportunity to say who they were, where they came from and their interest in the event and the sustainable food movement in general.

Session 2: Welcome to the Creative Living Centre and Prestwich

George Heron, the organiser of Incredible Edible Prestwich and member of other steering groups aiming to further the sustainable food movement in Prestwich offered a welcome to Prestwich and the Creative Living Centre.

He then took attendees through a presentation which detailed the history of Prestwich and its food production over the last two centuries. Subjects covered included:

- Historic land use in and around Prestwich, with specific reference to the Philips family of industrialists and growing in and around the family's home at Philip's Park
- Prestwich Hospital and its role in the community as a major employer and food consumer/land owner/growing site
- The decline of industry and farming in the area, the sell off of hospital land to Tesco and the resultant negative impact on Prestwich high street
- The development of proactive community business, growing food production and energy creation groups/projects in Prestwich and the envisaged future of Philips Park as a community resource

George took brief questions from attendees and it was noted by one how inspiring it was

that Prestwich had achieved so much using only time offered by volunteers.

The organisers of FM are grateful to George Heron for sparing the time to prepare his presentation and give such a comprehensive introduction to the projects that make Prestwich such an exciting place for action and ideas.

Session 3: Establishing a community bakery...the Prestwich journey so far

Siobhan Teader, a member of Prestbake, Prestwich's Community Supported Bakery project, gave a presentation introducing the background to the initiative and progress made so far.

A broad range of local people are involved in the project, including established food business owners who would act as customers and members of other well established cooperatives. Key issues for the group included deciding on a business model, the acquisition of premises and the personnel required to fulfil likely interest.

Siobhan gave an overview of the market research the group had undertaken to ascertain local interest in buying bread that Prestbake would produce. It was clear that Prestbake would be a welcome community asset, but the organisational issues and potential funding sources had delayed the first loaf being baked.

Session 4: Handmade Bakery – Presentation and problem solving

Simon Taylor from the established community supported bakery, Handmade Bakery in Slaithwaite, West Yorkshire, spoke to the group about the origins of the bakery and where it is today. He also shared samples of the bakery's bread with attendees as he spoke.

A summary of the bakery's journey was provided including:

- The founders being unhappy with the quality of mass produced bread that they were feeding to their young children and deciding to start making their own rather than accepting sub-standard, poor quality bread
- Other families in the area trying the bread, noticing the difference in terms of taste and likely nutritional value, and asking for surplus loaves to be made for sale to them
- Establishing a system of once-weekly baking and providing the loaves for sale, by subscription, and leaving them for collection in a local pub. This had a knock on effect of bringing more people to the pub, in Marsden, to drink a local ale when they picked up their bread
- The escalation of Handmade Bakery's popularity and the opportunity to set up a bakery as a community resource. The sale of 'bread bonds' provided investors with bread for a year in return for their investment
- The continuing success of Handmade Bakery, it's structure as a cooperative and the maintained ethos of a quality product being produced, using traditional methods at a fair price

Simon also gave detail about the way in which the bread is made and the variety of the

loaves on offer at the bakery, stating that a sourdough loaf will typically take approximately 27 hours to make from start to finish.

A number of questions were raised, including issues relating to transport and the expertise needed to ensure a consistent standard of product.

Session 5: Refreshments and Discussion Groups

Over coffee, the room was split into four quarters, creating four discussion groups. Each group was provided with a prompt scenario and asked to follow the same formula of identifying potential barriers to success and how those barriers could be overcome. A relaxed, informal session, half an hour of discussion went ahead before a member of the group fed back the outcomes. The four prompts were:

- What are the barriers and solutions for establishing a community supported bakery?
- What are the barriers and solutions for establishing a community cafe?
- What are the barriers and solutions for establishing a community farm or garden?
- What are the barriers and solutions for establishing and furthering the work of a region-wide sustainable food network?

The outcomes of each group are provided as an appendix to these event minutes.

Session 6: 5 Minute Speed Presentations

To reintroduce some pace to the day after lunch, and inspired by the presentation-based events Pecha Kucha and Betta Kultcha, a series of five minute, speed presentations were given by guest presenters. Everyone was invited to volunteer for one, with spaces being allocated on a first come, first served basis in advance of the event. The speed presentations went ahead as follows:

- **Cracking Good Food: Adele Jordan**
Adele gave an overview of the Cracking Good Food mission, to teach people to cook good food with the best ingredients. In five minutes, Adele was able to describe the wide variety of paid workshops attended by cooking beginners and enthusiasts, plus the funded activity they undertake to ensure more people have the benefit of their expertise.

- **Bolton's Growing and Food Projects – Kath Baron**
Kath's presentation gave attendees an insight into the projects underway in Bolton, in North West Greater Manchester, including a number of community growing initiatives and The Kitchen community, vegetarian café in central Bolton.

- **Real Food Wythenshawe – Faith Bulleyment**
Faith provided an introduction to Real Food Wythenshawe, a new project which aims to bring sustainable growing to Wythenshawe and engage its communities. Amongst the five projects set to go ahead, there are plans for an indoor growing space connected with The Manchester College and an initiative to turn more communal, green spaces into growing areas.

- **Ordsall Heritage Seed Library – Lindsay Bridge**
Lindsay from Ordsall Hall in Salford gave a presentation based on the heritage seed library being established there, aiming to secure the future of traditional seed varieties and

provide a lending service for growers to supply varieties of traditional seed and grow from those provided via the library.

All presentations were completed within five minutes, using no more than twenty slides on each occasion, with the computer changing the slides at strict fifteen second intervals.

Session 7: Workshops and Discussion Groups

Two separate, half hour sessions of four 'Learning' and 'Action' groups went ahead in the final session of the day. This provided each attendee with the opportunity to attend one 'Learning' session and one 'Action' session, spreading the expertise, enthusiasm and interests of attendees to ensure positive outcomes and experiences from each.

The four sessions went ahead as follows:

- Learning - Social Media

Hosted by Sarah Irving from Action for Sustainable Living, with support from Rob Allen, two groups came together to discuss their interest in using social media to further their activities or that of their group. The primary areas of interest were Twitter and Facebook, with Sarah providing practical advice, people exchanging knowledge and challenges and leaving issues for Sarah to resolve one-to-one on e-mail afterwards.

- Learning – Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

Kirstin Glendinning from The Big Dig, assisted by Margaret Jackson from Harpers Lane Allotments in Bolton, took delegates through their first hand experience of recruiting and retaining volunteers for community growing projects. Through discussing actual experiences in relation to issues attendees are experiencing, they went away with practical advice.

- Action – Getting more local produce onto Manchester's markets

Groups got together to discuss the problems and opportunities available on Greater Manchester's markets in relation to local growers being able to sell their produce. Conclusions reached included the fact that if there is disappointment that local produce isn't prevalent on markets, including tourist-focused farmer's markets, then personal responsibility should be taken to set up a business that targets the gap in the market.

- Action – Helping Prestwich to fulfil it's growing potential

Two groups gathered to discuss the opportunities in Prestwich, led by George Heron from Incredible Edible Prestwich, with the aim of providing practical advice and guidance including gaining wider community buy-in, securing volunteers and funding for future projects.

There was no time for the groups to feedback to everyone at the end as these sessions had run over and the day was coming to a close.

Session 8: Summing Up and Close

At the end of the day, Rob and Nona spoke to the group to express their thanks for everyone taking part in such a vibrant and high-spirited day of networking, information

sharing and discussion. Special thanks were again given to George and Barbara Heron for the provision of the venue and helping to organise such a memorable gathering.

All attendees were asked to keep the FM coordinators up to date with their news and events, regardless of the area of Greater Manchester they were from, to ensure that their information could be promoted.

Helen Woodcock from the Kindling Trust was invited to speak to the group to mention the origins of FM four years prior and the opportunity at the next event to revisit some of the core aims at the time to ascertain their current relevance in guiding ongoing work.

The focus of the next FM, planned to take place in Bolton in March 2013, would not only be to engage with local groups there, but to ensure that the definitions of FM and it's members and their aims. The outcome of reviewing them will go ahead if the group agrees that it is necessary.

Following the meeting, a large number of attendees continued discussions in The Church pub in Prestwich.

Appendix - Outcomes from Group Discussions at FeedingManchester #11

What are the challenges of establishing a community supported bakery?

Challenges

- A lack of time for volunteers
- Having the right people and skills
- Acquiring premises

Solutions

- Potential Premises – industrial units, find a pizza oven, local restaurants, Bury College
- People/Skills/Time – Need to start working on bringing more people in to the group with more focused skill sets.
- Need volunteers for baking. Just invite people down to come and learn and go from there but do need one person to oversee everything. This will teach people but also help bring in some volunteers.
- Plunkett Foundation for mentoring a possibility
- Stronger links with Handmade and other bakeries, even if informally
- Research into “Unlimited” in Leeds as a funding source. Hard to find on Google but keep searching.
- Wellbeck “School of Artisan Food” for graduates and volunteers

What are the challenges of networking and working in partnership within Greater Manchester’s sustainable food sector?

Challenges

- No time!
- Seen as outsiders (when working with councils, etc.)
- Geographical distance
- Lack of digital media know-how
- Difficulties identifying who has what skills
- Unknown where resources are locally
- The importance and value of networking needs to be emphasised.
- Lack of confidence to approach organizations.
- Not enough coordinators/paid employees to develop links
- Restricted by paid work

Solutions

- Easing up communication and matching up organizations
- Using Feeding Manchester/Foodlink coordinators
- Membership-based organizations such as Prestwich Life
- Using Feeding Manchester website for events, etc.
- Training for local groups
- Support workshops for skill-sharing

- Use forums
- Develop online resources for networking
- Bulletin boards/forums on Feeding Manchester where members can share skills
- Develop partnerships during the less busy food months of Jan/Feb
- Agencies could provide advice on communications and networking.

What are the challenges to setting up and running community cafes?

Challenges

- Initial reliance on (probably very busy) volunteers
- Finding a venue that's accessible and affordable
- Broader challenges of working with volunteers.
- Labour-intensive
- Gathering skills together (design, construction, materials)
- Finding money/known when local fund funds are available
- Keeping things going after the initial set-up
- Getting all your systems in place
- It's a lot of work!
- Finding people willing to take responsibility!

Solutions

- Division of labour, skills, and governance
- Keep everyone informed
- Develop good communication skills
- Schedules and task lists help (but should be reviewed periodically)
- Weekly de-brief to see if anyone needs help and to share information
- Well-facilitated meetings
- Develop coordination role with someone to oversee the while and keep information flowing
- Stay connected to local friendly partners and networks and work together for advice, guidance and to conduct research
- Couple meetings with tasks
- Have a communication book/board
- Annually or bi-annually have a day set aside to revisit long-term goals, make strategy, etc.
- Develop policies and procedures (it's easier to refer to rules than people)
- Solutions are dependent on goals
- Create opportunities to transfer knowledge
- Make to visit other projects, share ideas, help and materials

What are the challenges to urban food growing?

Challenges

- Do you buy in or get backing from council?
- Planning the use of non-temporary structures

- Labour – volunteers, recruiting people with true skills
- Distribution gluts
- Identifying and accessing markets
- Education and awareness
- Finding, identifying and acquiring space
- Access
- Price and cost of land
- Security and safety of site
- Quality of land
- Acquisition of tools and development of infrastructure

Solutions

- Recruit cross-generational mentors
- Buy-in labour for high-skill jobs
- Make it pay with bonds
- Think creatively and work with private sector
- Develop partnerships
- Be realistic and use case studies as inspiration
- Linking cooking and eating with demos
- Provide tools for growing and cooking
- Recruit volunteers in public and private sector
- Make it attractive by focusing on issues like health and the environment
- Good understanding of community as result of access points