



# Towards a sustainable food city – Glasgow

## Event report

Wednesday 30th April 2014  
St Andrew's in the Square, Glasgow

Glasgow Centre for Population Health  
August 2014



*Glasgow  
Local  
Food  
Network*



## Introduction

There is increasing awareness that the way we produce, transport and consume food needs to become fairer, healthier and more sustainable if we are to tackle some of today's social, economic, environmental, and public health problems. Discussions have been taking place in Glasgow regarding how Glasgow might become a sustainable food city. As part of supporting these discussions and agreeing next steps, a coalition of organisations worked together to organise a seminar, 'Towards a sustainable food city – Glasgow', which was held on 30th April 2014 in St Andrew's in the Square, Glasgow. The organising group consisted of the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH), Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow Local Food Network, the Soil Association and Nourish Scotland.

The aims of the seminar were to share thinking regarding a vision for food in Glasgow in 2020 from previous events and meetings, open up the conversation to a wider range of people and organisations, and identify some next steps which might be taken in pursuit of a sustainable food city.

The seminar attracted 79 delegates from diverse backgrounds (see Appendix 1 for the delegate list). The format of the morning consisted of presentations followed by table discussions during which participants were asked to consider key questions under a number of themes (see Appendix 2 for programme). Fiona Crawford (GCPH) chaired the morning's proceedings; Pete Ritchie (Nourish Scotland) facilitated the discussion session.

An artist (Graham Ogilvie) was recruited to capture conversations and discussions during the event through drawings which he produced in real time and displayed in the venue. Participants were encouraged to study the drawings and indicate which they identified with through the use of a small sticker. An example of Graham's work is shown below.



*Examples of Graham Ogilvie's reactive illustrations*

## Presentations

**Alastair Brown, Head of Sustainability and Environment at Glasgow City Council** provided an opening address highlighting some of the work already underway in Glasgow to enhance sustainability. This included [Sustainable Glasgow](#), a public-private partnership between the academic sector, local communities, voluntary groups and Glasgow City Council with the aim of achieving greater sustainability across a number of different arenas including energy, transport and food.

Alastair informed the audience that Glasgow had come second in a competition to become 2015 European Green Capital (Bristol won). Alastair confirmed that the city will bid again for the award in 2018. This will involve reaffirming the city's green credentials and establishing 2015 as a ['Green Year'](#) in order to encourage everyone to think about what else they can do in relation to the green agenda, with sustainable food being an integral part of that agenda.



*Alastair Brown, Head of Sustainability and Environment at Glasgow City Council*

Alastair also noted that Glasgow had been successful in joining the Rockefeller Foundation's [Resilient Cities Network](#) to help Glasgow become a resilient city which will involve improving energy and transport networks, communications, and sustainable food. Alastair concluded by stating that we need to make sure that we, individually and collectively, are doing everything we can to ensure that we are working towards becoming a sustainable food city. He also welcomed participants' input and ideas during the morning as to how we can work together to achieve this aim.

Following Alastair's opening address, **Prof Kevin Morgan, Dean of Engagement at Cardiff University**, provided the keynote address of the morning.

Kevin's introductory comments drove home a number of important points.

Food has a multifunctional status; it is increasingly regarded globally as a national security issue; food production and waste management contributes to greenhouse gas emissions; there are growing public health concerns regarding the rise of food poverty/obesity across the UK. However, conversely, food can also symbolise joy, pleasure and congeniality. Kevin went on to point out that local and urban food movements are among the fastest-growing social movements in the world. He asserted that food is also slowly emerging as a political and planning priority, highlighting cities in particular as key to urban food debates. Kevin proposed that every institution should have a food policy, because it has a duty of care to its citizens.



*Prof Kevin Morgan, Dean of Engagement at Cardiff University*

Kevin then went on to describe 'Food Policy Councils', established initially in Canada and the USA but which are growing in number in the UK and Europe. Food Policy Councils are coalitions that bring together a city/region's key food stakeholders including representatives from grassroots organisations; government advisory bodies; and voluntary sector organisations in order to improve food systems particularly in relation to public health, social and racial justice and sustainability.

Of particular interest is Malmö, Sweden, where the city's [food policy](#) forms part of its broader urban sustainability policy. One of the food policy's commitments is that by 2020, all schools and kindergartens in Malmö will serve exclusively organic produce in a cost-neutral way. This is going to be achieved by a SMART strategy (**S**mall amounts of meat, **M**inimising intake of junk foods/empty calories, **A**n increase in organic, **R**ight sort of meat and vegetables, **T**ransport efficient). Kevin advised that the reduction in quantities of meat used was particularly radical because this reduces costs and also

lowers greenhouse emissions. Seasonality is also important in terms of fruit and vegetables as they are less expensive when in season. In Malmö the emphasis is on 'leading by example' and the 'Good Food Plan' uses public procurement to produce good food on 'public plates'. School food is also being used as a way to better integrate immigrant children.

Another example of good practice which Kevin cited was Bristol – winner of the 2015 Green Capital Award. Bristol employed an urban food audit (['Who Feeds Bristol?'](#)) to help stakeholders understand how the city feeds itself and how much waste is produced. Kevin also highlighted Brighton and Hove which was one of the first UK cities to publish a city-wide food strategy. Its initial 2006 food strategy has been developed further leading to the publication of ['Spade to Spoon: Digging Deeper'](#) published in April 2012. Further afield, the activities of Mayor Bloomberg in New York City also provide learning for cities. The Mayor attempted to introduce the 'soda cap' – a levy on high sugar beverages in order to try and tackle excessive consumption of high-sugar drinks in the city. This attempt was ultimately thwarted by a [high court decision in June 2014](#) which ruled that the ban could not be introduced to the dismay of local public health leaders and to the delight of the soft drinks industry who had opposed the ban. In London, Sustain produces a [Good Food for London](#) annual report and uses a 'naming and shaming' strategy, listing boroughs by their progress across certain criteria. For example, the school food map of London boroughs shows how many schools have achieved a bronze award for catering. Kevin advised that making food 'visible' and holding bodies to account is important. However he proposed that the age of austerity is adversely affecting school food programmes and so merging activities and drawing upon the energy of civil society partners is part of the solution. Kevin asserted that food policy at a UK level has been somewhat disjointed and he criticised the use of voluntary deals with industry (in terms of fat/sugar/salt reductions) as ineffective. He commented that responsibility for healthy food policy has to come from cities, municipalities, devolved governments and from civil society.

Kevin provided some suggestions for actions that he felt could be taken by Glasgow in working towards becoming a sustainable food city. These included:

- Learning from the past, such as from previous policies such as the Glasgow Food & Health Action Framework (2001-06).
- Learning from others, such as Brighton, Gothenburg and Edinburgh.
- Forming a Food Policy Council.
- Working closely with community and grassroots organisations. This is particularly important as the public sector cannot and should not progress this agenda on its own.
- Including sustainable food in the Commonwealth Games legacy.
- Undertaking an urban food audit – *Who Feeds Glasgow?*
- Highlighting exemplar, good and not so good practice and making sure that every organisation has a food policy.

Kevin concluded by wishing Glasgow well on its journey towards becoming a sustainable food city. Kevin's presentation can be downloaded [here](#).

## Group discussions – facilitated by Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland

Table discussions then took place which provided participants with the opportunity to discuss a set of issues under the following themes: economy; environment; procurement; culture; open space (for free discussion).



*Table discussions*

Facilitators guided table discussions using the following questions as a rough framework:

- What do you think of Kevin's vision?
- How do you feel about the ideas generated by the two previous visioning exercises?
- What are the unique characteristics of Glasgow as a city in relation to your theme?
- What sort of possibilities or opportunities does the future hold for Glasgow in relation to your theme?
- What would be the best result and how could it be enhanced?
- What is the worst that could happen and what actions could avoid this?
- What should happen next and who should be involved?

### **Plenary and feedback**

Pete Ritchie facilitated a feedback session capturing elements of table discussions and issues participants wanted to highlight. There were many examples of exciting initiatives and activities that are already taking place and lots of ideas about other possible pieces of work. There was also discussion around some of the current barriers, how these might be addressed and what would facilitate the development of Glasgow as a place where good food is central to the city. Other key issues that emerged in plenary included the view that a Glasgow urban food audit might be a useful exercise although some participants were less sure of the potential value of this. It was suggested that it would be useful to understand more fully and learn from the audit that had taken place in Bristol before pursuing an urban food audit in Glasgow. There was consensus that we could and should learn from other UK cities who have been working on a sustainable food agenda for some time; and that there were also important lessons to be learned from further afield. It was felt that a co-operative approach involving key public, private and community stakeholders was the best approach and that the creation of a Glasgow Food Policy Council was a sensible next step.



*Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland*





**Closing comments – Frank Strang, Deputy Director, Food, Drink and Rural Communities Division, Scottish Government**

Frank began by providing his views regarding the national context. He felt that food is a success story in Scotland when viewed in terms of exports, economic success/jobs and tourism. Although these are important, he considered that Scotland needs to tackle food security and affordability, obesity, and Scottish food culture. In particular he felt that we are better able to articulate our economic targets than our cultural aims in relation to food.



*Frank Strang, Deputy Director,  
Food, Drink and Rural Communities Division, Scottish Government*

Frank was also struck by the idea that a society that cares about food cares about itself and that cities are emerging as new players in the food movement. He proposed that it was important to integrate rather than compartmentalise policies and agreed with the need to ‘talk’ and ‘do’ as well as the importance of having an optimistic, ‘can do’ approach.

Frank concluded by asking delegates to consider the following three issues:

1. What will people do when they go back to their organisations/places of work to take forward what they’ve heard/discussed today?
2. How can we change the culture that it is ‘posh’ to care about food/food provenance? Are we doing enough about inequalities in this area?
3. How can we emphasise the pleasurable aspects of good quality food to promote it rather than solely focusing on the health aspects?

## Next steps

Evaluation feedback confirmed that participants enjoyed this event and found its content both interesting and constructive. All of the speakers' inputs, particularly Prof Kevin Morgan's, were rated very highly. In terms of next steps, there was consensus that Glasgow should pursue the ambition of becoming a sustainable food city and that a Glasgow Food Policy Council should be formed. Food Policy Councils bring together stakeholders from diverse sectors to examine how the food system is operating and to develop recommendations on how to improve it. The rationale for establishing a Food Policy Council is to create a high-level strategic grouping combining the different elements of the food system (including production, processing, distribution, retail, catering, consumption and waste disposal) with the common objective of achieving a healthier, more sustainable and resilient food system.

The consortium of organisations that were responsible for hosting the seminar pledged to work together to progress thinking and actions towards Glasgow becoming a sustainable food city.



*Delegates reacquaint themselves with ideas from previous workshops*

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who attended the seminar, provided stalls/information and who all participated with such enthusiasm. A big thank you also to:

- The organising committee
- The speakers: Alastair Brown, Prof Kevin Morgan and Frank Strang
- Pete Ritchie for guiding the table discussions and plenary feedback session
- All those who facilitated table discussions
- Alison Linyard and Andrew Lyon from International Futures Forum, for advice and support with planning and delivery
- Graham Ogilvie, our artist in residence
- GCPH staff for practical organisation and delivery of the event.

## Links

Glasgow Centre for Population Health: [www.gcph.co.uk](http://www.gcph.co.uk)

Glasgow City Council: [www.glasgow.gov.uk](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk)

Glasgow Local Food Network: <http://glasgowlocalfood.blogspot.co.uk>

Glasgow Allotments Forum: [www.glasgowallotmentsforum.org.uk](http://www.glasgowallotmentsforum.org.uk)

Soil Association: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)

Nourish Scotland: [www.nourishscotland.org](http://www.nourishscotland.org)

Sustainable Glasgow: <http://www.sustainableglasgow.org.uk/>

Rockefella Foundation's Resilient Cities Network:  
<http://100resilientcities.rockefellerfoundation.org>



[www.gcph.co.uk](http://www.gcph.co.uk)