

The Bristol Method

how to become a more sustainable food city

In it for good

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Contents

Introduction	3
The key players	5
Bristol's food journey	7
Progress made during 2015	11
Practical steps	13
Challenges and obstacles	15
Replicating what Bristol has done	16
Further reading and resources	18

If you are interested in the topic of food in the context of a city, you may also be interested in these Bristol Method Modules which can be found online at www.bristol2015.co.uk/method:

- How to encourage food growing in the city
 - How to tackle food waste in cities

Introduction

Why should Bristol work towards becoming a sustainable food city?

All cities take responsibility for improving the quality and provision of aspects like transport, energy, housing, air quality, waste management, health and wellbeing. Food, which is woven in numerous ways through dimensions of the economic, social and environmental life of the city, in stark contrast, gets left to market forces. However it could be viewed and used as a driver to help address these wider issues.

'Imagine you lived in a truly sustainable food city, renowned for the vibrancy and diversity of its food culture, and for a food system which, from field to fork, is good for people, places and the planet. A city where good food is visible and celebrated in every corner and where everyone has access to fresh, seasonal, local, organic and fairly traded food that is tasty, healthy and affordable, no matter where they live...'

Bristol Good Food Plan vision

Good food is vital to the quality of people's lives, health and wellbeing in Bristol and also to that of the people who produce it. 'As well as being tasty, healthy and affordable the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local businesses and good for animal welfare.' (Bristol Good Food Charter)

However, the steady and systematic changes that have occurred to our food culture over the last few decades have left our society in a dangerous and vulnerable position. The impact on our health has reached epidemic levels; our diets are largely to blame for the obesity crisis, for the diabetes crisis, for some cancers and for much heart disease. Economically, the toll has been severe, with the disappearance of small and medium sized farms, processors, wholesalers and retailers as an ever increasing proportion of food sold in the region is imported from elsewhere in the UK or abroad.

Our high streets, especially in the more deprived parts of a city, are dominated by empty shops, poor quality fast food, charity shops and off-licences. Since the UK's first supermarket opened in 1951, the picture has changed from diversity and balanced competition to consolidation and monopoly. The impact on employment, from farm-workers to school cooks, is fewer jobs of low value and low status.

The people of Bristol - as individuals, as grassroots groups, as organisations - and through the City Council, are exploring ways to exercise their power to address aspects of its food system over which they have some control. The first step is to understand how the city and city region's food supply system operate and how the different elements of the system are interconnected. The second step is to understand strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to food system sustainability and longer-term resilience. The third step is to find integrated ways to address food issues in a way that bring practical solutions and benefits to other strategic and policy concerns. For example, short supply chains and localised food production have the potential to generate local jobs, address issues around related high energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and engage city residents in making better food choices through the opportunity to visit and learn about local food enterprises and to buy and prepare the products themselves.

To reform the food system in this way has not yet been built into any UK local government policy and strategy, nor could a local government achieve such changes alone. It requires the commitment and participation from a wide range of city and city region stakeholders within strong partnership structures. It also requires engaged citizens who exercise their collective buying power to increase demand for good food. These are all things that Bristol is trying to address.

Key points:
**How cities can view and approach
the urban food challenge**

Food is the business of a city and an integral part of the urban agenda. It should be seen 'as a driver for other sustainability policies related to health, transport, land use, social and economic development, waste management and climate resilience'.

Supurbfood Partnership policy briefing 2015
(See further reading below)



Who are the key food players in Bristol and how do they connect up?

With a population of about 442,500 to feed, there are literally thousands of people involved in food work in the city of Bristol. One in ten jobs are in the traditionally defined food sector, predominantly in catering and hospitality. There are the retailers, the wholesalers and distributors, the food processors and manufacturers. Then there are the businesses and organisations that deal with food waste and with wasted food; the education institutions and organisations providing skills training and learning; the community food groups involved with growing and cooking; the vegetable and fruit growers in and close to the city.... And more!

There are groups and partnerships and informal networks operating at various levels around the city, many of which are focussed on specific aspects of the food system such as: providing cooking skills in local neighbourhoods; redistributing edible wasted food to community organisations; bringing chefs together to look at ways of improving sustainable food sourcing; helping urban growers cooperate; organising seed swaps, networking and open day events on urban food growing sites; helping food businesses find new food waste collection solutions; connecting up healthy school initiatives with school gardens and school meals; campaigning for the safeguarding of best value agricultural land for food; and promoting independent food businesses.

The challenge is to find a way to help connect all this amazing work and together to pool efforts to create more positive, scaled up changes; and to do this as part of developing wider city sustainability with the right supportive policies in place.

In Bristol, there are three main partnership structures that help to create opportunities to link up shared interests. In the very centre of these structures are a few individuals that are concerned with strategic integration as well as enabling practical linkages to happen. The world of food is highly complex and these structures are of course imperfect. However, underneath these structures are many different networks that have their own communication mechanisms.

Practical integration and coordination

Bristol Food Network is a community interest company (CIC), which emerged from the 'Bristol Food Links' project in 2009 as a network of food activists and was formally incorporated in 2014. It is a practical delivery organization that aims to support, inform and connect individuals, community projects, organisations and businesses that share a vision to transform Bristol into a sustainable food city. To date it has operated on minimal resources, mainly small grants to deliver specific projects and tasks that support the Bristol Good Food Plan and the work of the Bristol Food Policy Council. It produces a bi-monthly Bristol local food e-newsletter update and coordinates much of the communication within the wider city food networks including bi-monthly networking sessions. It is also home to the new annual 'Food Connections' Festival (see below).

Driving new food policy and strategy, influencing and linking stakeholders

Bristol Food Policy Council takes a strategic view in relation to building and embedding a resilient food system for Bristol. It combines 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. It is made up of a small group of key stakeholders in the food system, including an elected member of Bristol City

Council, whose shared aim is to put Good Food on the agenda and keep it there, mainly through their influence and networks. Established in 2011, following a 2010 conference that launched the Who Feeds Bristol Report, its terms of reference and membership were informed by a review of the literature on FPCs in other parts of the world, and by a survey of Bristol Food Network members and other relevant stakeholders. The FPC meets at least four times a year, has a communications subgroup that meets monthly. It hosts events, published the Charter and the Good Food Plan, and is developing ways of measuring progress.

'Who Feeds Bristol' baseline study and in 2015 co-hosting an event to develop a 'Good Food Action Plan'. It offers a mechanism for communicating and connecting food at a strategic level with other issues of city sustainability.

Connecting food to wider city sustainability dialogue

Founded in 2007, and then established in 2014 as an independent community interest company, the Bristol Green Capital Partnership (BGCP) is an independent leadership organisation whose aim is to make Bristol 'a low carbon city with a high quality of life for all'. In 2015 its focus has been to ensure that its members (over 800) play an active leadership role in the delivery of the Bristol 2015 European Green Capital Programme, and that it becomes a dynamic and fit for purpose independent legacy organisation after 2015.

The BGCP has assisted with a number of strategic tasks along the food journey including support in 2010 for the

Key points: How cities can address food issues and sustainability through partnerships

Every city faces the enormous challenge of joining the dots and of creating synergy between different city council departments, key businesses, institutions, organisations and community groups. A way of doing this is to develop effective partnership structures which themselves inter-connect. It is important that such structures involve and relate to the local authority and also find positive ways to be a 'critical friend'. When it comes to food, the only way to change the food system is through working together in partnerships and networks.

Partnership Structures

- Local Government
- National Health Service
- Businesses
- NGO's
- Education Institutions
- Voluntary Sector





What has happened on Bristol's food journey?

Getting started

In 1992 an international commitment was made at the Rio Earth Summit to develop an Agenda 21, which included the UK. A Local Agenda 21 is the strategy and action programme for implementing sustainable development at a local level. Bristol was among the group of UK local authorities that included food in its strategy, and following a feasibility study, established a 'Bristol Food Links' project in 1996. It went on to produce a 'Local Food Guide' and start Bristol's Farmers' Market in 1997, (the second in the UK following Bath in 1996). At the same time there was a lot of activity around improving school meals and developing school gardens. Most years there was a food conference organised by Bristol City Council for the city food network. The Soil Association ran high profile annual 'national organic food and drink awards' and an organic food and drink festival in Bristol for a number of years.

Notable milestones

1992 - 2015

Developing the strategy

In 2009 several important things happened close together, which moved the debate forwards. Stimulated by Transition Bristol, a report on the impact of Peak Oil was published, including a section on how food supply might be affected. The Bristol Food Links project transformed to become what is now Bristol Food Network, a network of food activists that wrote its own ambitious ‘Sustainable food strategy for Bristol and the West of England’. At the same time officers in Bristol City Council, although they couldn’t adopt the network’s strategy, wrote their own internal ten-point ‘food charter’ which helped to connect up different departments and in particular to support work on school meals and public procurement through shaping and underpinning the Council’s approach to food provision and use of its buying power. This was published in 2010.

Work on food was growing stronger at several different levels – private entrepreneurs, community groups, city and national organisations – but there was no specific Bristol City Council policy to support this work and no clear food system facts and figures to help inform policy decisions. However, the Bristol Food Network strategy had galvanized the creation of an internal working charter within the Council along with a ‘Food Interest Group’, which in terms of influencing practice fell only a little short of developing new food policy. This was therefore a pivotal moment in terms of getting food onto the city agenda in a more formal way and enabling individual officers in the Council to align their various departmental interests around food issues.

Building an evidence base

The ‘Who Feeds Bristol? Towards a resilient food plan’ report was published in 2011, commissioned by the NHS Bristol with support from Bristol City Council and the Green Capital Partnership. This report was the first of its kind in the UK: a baseline audit of how the city is fed, and where the systemic strengths and vulnerabilities lie. The suggestions for action led to the development of the Bristol Good Food Plan, published in 2013. It has since inspired many other cities around the world to work on similar issues. Since then a number of other reports have been produced to help gather more facts and figures, for example a report on food poverty (see further reading).

Establishing food governance

One of the first tasks of the Food Policy Council was to agree on a holistic ‘good food’ definition and vision that could bring institutions and individuals together around a common agenda to guide ‘a sustainable food transition’ in the city. A working group developed the Bristol Good Food Charter, (different from the earlier internal Bristol City Council food charter) which defines good food as food that is ‘good for people, for places, and for the planet’.



The Bristol Good Food Charter is public facing, champions a better, more resilient food system for our city and shows how everyone can be part of the shift to regional, seasonal, fairly traded, organically grown food. The Charter supports Bristol’s renowned food culture,

and sets out a vision for using food to improve health and wellbeing and create a stronger local economy. There is a short film animation - 'What does Good Food mean for Bristol' - to help communicate the vision (see link below).

The simple wording of the Bristol Good Food charter has since become enshrined within the materials of a number of other cities participating in the UK Sustainable Food City network. In 2012 when the network began, there were only 4 cities working in a joined up way through city-wide food partnerships, of which Bristol was one. Many other UK cities are now working on similar issues and the Sustainable Food City Network encourages use of a food charter.

City-wide participation

Over the last decade there have been annual food-related conferences and events.

- 2010 'Feeding Bristol in the Future' conference with Bristol café owner named as first city food champion for serving healthy locally sourced meals.
- 2011 Launch of 'Who Feeds Bristol' report and the new Food Policy Council.

Since 2011, annual participatory Food Policy Council conferences bringing together the wider city food community have been held on the following themes:

- 2012 Launch of 'Bristol Good Food Charter'
- 2013 Launch of the 'Bristol Good Food Plan' and planning the Bristol Food Connections Festival 2014
- 2014 'Bristol Good Food and the Low Carbon Challenge'

The Bristol Good Food Plan

In 2013 the Bristol Good Food Plan was launched. It takes a 'whole system' approach and outlines the main areas of food system change required, providing a mechanism for helping to connect up different types of work on food in the city. These eight areas, summarised in the diagram below, include both strengths that exist already and also areas of vulnerability that the city collectively needs to address. The purpose of the food plan is to enable every organisation in the city to see how they influence the food system and where they can take action. It is designed to enable different groups to take a lead on different themes according to their expertise; to develop a clear advocacy and food policy leadership role for the Food Policy Council and to enable effective connections within a clear strategy to create positive step-change in the next 5 years.



Case studies that illustrate the food plan aims

Pioneering individuals and organisations lead much of the inspirational work going on in relation to food. The Good Food Plan documents case study examples that relate to the eight areas of food system change:

- A cookery school teaches people to cook from scratch with fresh healthy affordable ingredients and helps to transform food culture at a community level.
- Bristol's local currency, the Bristol Pound, used by many of the city's food businesses to keep money in the local economy and also used by community groups buying local food collectively helps to strengthen the local economy and support business diversity.
- A grassroots network campaigns for the safeguarding of best value agricultural land for food production and uses all sorts of creative and educational activities to help people learn more about why soil is so important to future resilience of the city.
- A commercial urban farm providing education, training and employment and producing high quality salad leaves for cafes and restaurants in the city is demonstrating that urban food production and distribution is possible at a larger scale.
- An organisation that redistributes good food that otherwise would go to waste, and feeds thousands of vulnerable people each year, is raising awareness of food waste issues and pioneering practical solutions.
- A fruit and vegetable wholesale market in Bristol supplies virtually the entire greengrocery and catering sectors across South Wales and Southwest England and buys UK produce in season from many of the smaller scale growers in the region. It is an important part of local supply infrastructure that needs to be valued and supported.
- A large Hospital Trust with kitchens that prepare meals using fresh seasonal local ingredients helps to provide new market opportunities for producers in the region and also to provide good healthy meals for patients and staff.
- A community organisation in an outer city housing estate that runs cooking classes, market gardening and a food co-op shop is an example of a community enterprise designed to meet very specific neighbourhood needs.
- Accredited at 'Silver' by the Soil Association Catering Mark, 2,000 meals are served daily in 114 primary schools (75% food from fresh ingredients, using only meat that is British Red Tractor, Marine Stewardship Council assured fish).

Key points: How cities can embark on a longer-term food journey

The journey to date has included examining the case for whether and how the city should address food issues and connect it up with wider work on city sustainability; establishing a influential body of multi-stakeholders to put and keep food on the city agenda and help to develop clearer city food policy; developing visionary but also practical communication mechanisms that enable groups and individuals to work towards shared goals. All of this is part of an ongoing and dynamic 'food system planning process' that is overseen by the Food Policy Council. Bristol City Council has enabled small pieces of strategic work on food to be commissioned from external experts where there is none or only limited in-house skills and capacity and has supported annual conferences. A wide range of organisations are addressing their own specific food challenges and the food plan helps to join up the pieces of the city food challenge jigsaw.

Photo credit: North Bristol NHS Trust



What inspirational progress on food has been made in 2015?

Highlighting food within the European Green Capital award

Although food is not one of the criteria of the European Green Capital award, Bristol included food as one of the five sustainability themes of its Green Capital year. It was felt that food is so much part of the fabric of a green and sustainable city, that it should be included. The work on food in Bristol takes a holistic approach because the system that brings food from the farm to our dining tables is intricately connected with nature and the environment, with energy use, with transportation, and with resource management including water and waste.

Funding for new collaborative food initiatives that link to the food plan

As part of the Green Capital year, Bristol established a grant awards programme to support community-led initiatives delivering work on each of the five themes. Almost £0.5 million has been awarded to over 30 food projects. Bristol Food Network worked with Green Capital Board to help align 2015 funding criteria with the Good Food Plan and also helped to coordinate monthly meetings for grassroots groups to develop collaborative project plans.

Green Capital 2015 food priorities

Building on the Bristol Good Food Plan the Green Capital 2015 food priorities are:

- Promoting healthy, affordable & sustainable food to the public
- Increasing access to affordable good food
- Making food growing/production visible across the city
- Scaling-up urban agriculture
- Encouraging healthy eating in schools
- Reducing wasted food
- Transforming catering & procurement

Bristol Food Connections Festival and food outreach

Bristol Food Connections is Bristol's flagship sustainable food event: a nine-day, citywide, immersive educational food festival with a focus on sustainability and health. In 2013 the BBC approached Bristol with the idea of a joint food festival. Bristol Food Connections Festival was born, running for the first time in May 2014, followed by a second festival in May 2015 and over the two years

communicating with more than 265,000 people at over 300 events. The festival is a unique, citywide partnership that helps to connect up and strengthen strategic relationships between Bristol Food Network, the BBC, Bristol City Council and other key institutions. In order to ensure that the festival is connected into all the existing strategic work on food, it is coordinated and managed by Bristol Food Network.

A detailed food action plan and sustainable food city award

For the Food Policy Council, the 2015 focus is to agree a detailed 3-5 year action plan of whom is doing what by when, and developing a way of measuring progress. It intends to apply for a Silver Sustainable Food City award as part of the 2015 food theme legacy. In applying for this award a major collation of evidence of action and outcomes across six key food issues is underway.

New food-related social innovation

Examples of innovative and collaborative food initiatives that emerged in 2015 include:

- A 'Big Picnic' project where schools grew plants to swap and ingredients for their shared mid-summer picnics.
- A pilot with GP's to offer patients with long-term health conditions access to community kitchens and nutritional advice – for example a ten-week course designed for people diagnosed with heart disease or diabetes.
- A project that aims to reach the 91 different language groups in Bristol through sharing food stories, recipes and personal food journeys.
- An urban food producers support hub to help scale up food grown and distributed in and close to the city.
- Bristol Fish Project that is exploring the commercial viability of community-supported aquaponics.
- 'Pop-up' cookery demonstration events that use basic cooking equipment to prepare simple affordable seasonal low-carbon ingredients from local suppliers.
- As part of the campaign to safeguard best value agricultural land for food, a 'Soil Culture' month of workshops and art exhibition about how conservation of soil is linked to human health. It has led to the collective writing of a first ever 'City Soil Declaration'.

- Buzz Lockleaze - a new community shop selling affordable fresh produce to the local community and encouraging healthy eating through training, workshops and volunteering.
- 'Going Local Going Green', a year long journey of discovery of what it means to go local and go green by a small group of local residents passionate about being, and inspiring others to be, agents of change in their communities and the city of Bristol.
- Food Route is a collaboration between three organisations covering Bristol and Bath, to redistribute surplus food to where it's needed most, making use of an online platform that to date involves over 30 local companies, with an equal number of charities and organisations ready to make good use of surplus food.

These are just a few examples of the inspirational creativity and innovation around food that people in Bristol are initiating, some with funding and some without... The food plan again helps to connect all these different projects into strategic aims with the aim of enabling collective contribution to create greater step-change.

Key points: How cities can support a joined-up process to work on food

Taking a whole system approach to looking at food issues is essential. Otherwise the silos and compartmentalisation continues. The Good Food Plan looks at the whole of the food system. It provides a simple practical mechanism that underpins coordination and enables clear communication on what is otherwise a very complex picture. The Green Capital year has enabled Bristol to establish a grant fund for innovative projects in line with the five key themes. The Food Policy Council is applying for a silver sustainable food city award to help embed progress and raise the profile of Bristol's work on food. It is also producing a detailed food action plan to help the city improve collaboration and impact, with a focus on the next 3-5 years. The Food Connections Festival provides fun and experiential opportunities aimed at engaging with new audiences on food issues. The residents of Bristol continue to innovate and create solutions to their own food, health and wellbeing challenges. Good mechanisms for coordination and communication are essential.

Kitchens on prescription



What practical steps have helped to smooth the way?

Being a European Green Capital has helped to progress Bristol's journey to become a more sustainable food city. However, a number of things were already in place, which has made that journey smoother and easier. These include clear plans, and well-articulated evidence of the need for change as well as practical events and physical meeting spaces. Listed below is a summary of some of the aspects which have helped Bristol succeed:



Photo credit: James Barke

Interest in a sustainable future transition

Following a year of awareness raising by Transition Bristol in 2007/8 this interest was cemented amongst some influential thinkers in Bristol with the publication of the Peak Oil report in 2009 that outlined amongst other things the potential impact on city food supplies. There has also been commitment to being a Fairtrade city for over 10 years.

A Bristol city council internal food charter and working group

Following completion of the Bristol Food Network sustainable food strategy in 2009, Bristol City Council developed its own internal food charter that became the

guideline for much of its food procurement work. While not formal policy, this charter helped to support work on food sustainability and brought together an internal working group from different departments helping to connect up work on parks and allotments, health, and sustainable futures.

Green Capital support for innovative solutions

Following the Peak Oil report the Green Capital Partnership put out a call for ideas to take things forward, one of which was the Who Feeds Bristol report. Another was the Bristol Pound, which has been influential in encouraging more local food trade.

Strategic plan

The existence of the Good Food Plan with clear outcomes helped to shape the funding criteria for Green Capital 2015 food projects. It also helps with briefing people who are new to the food arena but keen to get involved.

Format

The Good Food Plan format and approach inspired the development of a Good Transport Plan in 2015.

Mailing lists

The existing food conference databases and the Bristol Food Network mailing list (more than 1,400 people choose to receive local food updates) meant that there were already connections and communications between people working on food.

Physical venue

The Feed Bristol project, run by Avon Wildlife Trust, is Bristol's largest outdoor food networking venue and works with several other groups to run regular skill sharing and discussion events open to the public such as the annual Food and Land Forum, often attracting numbers in the region of 200 to 300 people. It also supplies plants and organises seed swaps.

Open garden weekend

Bristol Food Network already runs an annual 'Get Growing Trail' in June to encourage the public to visit over 30 community orchards and gardens.

Survey and evidence of need

Building on this urban food network, BFN conducted an urban food growing survey to quantify the amount of land and food and numbers of people involved in community food growing around the city. This helped to inform the development of a Bristol Food Producers project, a group initially convened by Bristol Food Network which received project funding in 2015.

Key points: How cities can put critical practical steps in place

To some extent there is an order in which things need to happen but the most important thing is to start putting steps in place and preparing for a time at which they can be galvanised into action. Bristol food community's collective step by step approach, although not perfect, has been to bring together influential thinkers, gather evidence and make a clear case; develop a simple outline strategic plan based on that evidence; develop contact databases to facilitate easy communication; organise practical events to help inform the public; and continue to gather and review specific evidence of need. Having these various elements in place has helped to facilitate more collective and coordinated action in 2015, especially in the absence of any significant funding and resources for this kind of development



Redland Green Allotments and the Get Growing Trail
© Patrick Graham

Food and Land Forum discussion at Feed Bristol

Where next? Challenges and obstacles

Despite all the positive work on food to date, there remain huge challenges, in particular as the city continues to face cuts and austerity measures and difficult decisions regarding priorities. As the city grows in the years ahead, there will be even more tensions in relation to food and all of this requires careful forward planning now.

These are just some of the areas identified by Green Capital Partnership members and the wider city food network as issues that they would like to see addressed with support from the Food Policy Council:

- Incidence of poverty, food affordability, availability and the subsequent impact on buying choices, eating & food-related ill health
- The need for new homes and planning decisions around housing design which impacts on cooking/eating choices through provision (or not) of adequate gardens, kitchens space for food storage and for waste/recycling.
- City expansion and subsequent impact on land use and soils, with a tension between safeguarding best value land for food versus the need to generate more clean energy, or to provide more sustainable transportation and other urban development.
- Use of urban spaces to grow food and the need for positive support from the Planning System.
- Increased supply into Bristol from the surrounding regions in a way that supports farmers and has a positive impact on rural businesses, especially using the drivers of sustainable food procurement and of city street markets.
- On-going work with schools and colleges around food issues and the need for as much centralised coordination as possible in order to enable education institutions to participate in an efficient and informed way.
- More support and incentives for sustainable food business innovation and food waste reduction.
- The need for an updated wholesale market that supports increased regional food supply and mechanism for low-emission, low-carbon transportation.
- The potential for community gardens and community kitchens to become part of the commissioned services of the health sector and the need to support a development process that enables this to happen.

Key points: How cities can continue to address food issues as part of wider sustainability strategy

Identifying the future challenges is part of the ongoing journey and needs to happen now. Agreeing on future strategic priorities, especially in the light of reductions in government funding to the city's administration makes for very difficult future planning. To some extent, seeing food as a driver and tool for other sustainability concerns including climate change and future resilience will help identify smart cross-cutting solutions. Making space to identify and create dialogue around future challenges is an essential part of the ongoing food systems planning process.

Bristol wholesale market, St Philips © Jackson Drowley



How to replicate what Bristol has done?

As a leading sustainable food city, Bristol has still only scratched the surface of the food-system challenges and has far to go. However, these are some of the main first stage ingredients for success that Bristol can share with other cities, and will also continue to address itself:

Agree there is a problem

The first step a city can take to support the development of a resilient food system is to agree there actually is a problem and to articulate a need for change.

Refuse to allow the food system elements to be viewed as isolated issues

Concerns around health, sustainability, fair trade, affordability, local businesses etc are all part of a single food system problem.

Relate it to the 'city region'

While political and administrative boundaries serve an important purpose, when it comes to food these create obstacles and it's important to start a dialogue with neighbouring administrations as soon as possible. Issues like safeguarding land, and regional food supply are the business of 'city regions'.

Establish informed dialogue

Creating opportunities for conversation and discussion are crucial.

Establish facts

Looking at facts and figures of how the current system operates will shed light on what is actually happening (or not happening), helping to open eyes and ears.

Networks and partnerships

Find out 'who's doing what, and where' and then enable those people & projects to share what they're doing with each other and with a wider audience, so as to share experience and avoid duplication.

Food governance

Establish a multi-stakeholder partnership like a Food Policy Council to create the space for food on the city agenda, to take an overview and to start to influence supportive food strategy and policy.

Mechanisms to help coordination and communication

The Good Food Plan is an example of this, including the simple summary diagram above. Bristol Food Network bi-monthly local food update provides a way of sharing information across the city's food activists. The Food

Connections festival provides an opportunity to showcase initiatives and reach new audiences.

Finding the right language

The Good Food Plan is written intentionally in the language of the every day food system rather than more generic policy. This is to help inspire a sense of ownership and build confidence across a wide range of food interests. It is also important to find suitable language for framing action, for example 'safeguarding retail diversity' rather than saying anything negative about specific types of retail.

Influencing, validating, and increasing visibility

These are priorities for the Food Policy Council as it strives to keep food on Bristol's very full and competitive agenda.

Build smart working groups that bring together different policy and strategy interests around food

An intensive one-day peer review of Bristol City Council officers from different departments helped to identify where there was a crossover of interests in relation to food issues (see below for link to the 'Food and Planning Developmental Review')

Build on the multi-functionality of food

Specific functions of a Council can encourage localised food systems. These include public sector catering and commitment to buying good quality fresh seasonal food from regional food producers, and planning policy that safeguards land for food production in urban and peri-urban areas. Wider policy levers can be found where food connects with other concerns of a city: the local economy, the social economy, the green economy, green infrastructure, new homes and spatial planning, public health, community cohesion and social inclusion.

Develop an action plan with a clear monitoring process against specific agreed outcomes and indicators

This is currently being developed and will help the city to begin to monitor actual change. It will also require more resources to support the process. (For outcomes and indicators see below link to the preparatory report 'What We know About the State of Good Food in Bristol')

Work with other cities; learn from others

Finding out what other cities are doing also helps create inspiration and momentum. EU programmes like URBACT are a good source of information. Bristol City Council facilitated the city's participation in a three-year URBACT programme 'Sustainable Food in Urban Communities' with nine other European cities. This provided some finance, the focus of an official EU project structure and set of targets with which to help develop work on the Good Food action plan. It also provided opportunities for Bristol participants to both share with and learn from practical initiatives in other cities.

Keep an up to date overview!**Key points: How cities can establish good food governance**

Keeping an overview is essential. Finding a process of engagement is part of good food governance and is as important as addressing specific practical food system issues. While it may seem onerous and somewhat academic, it is essential if a city wants to effectively coordinate action and to monitor and review progress. Participating in formal food projects with other cities can provide helpful tools, resources, new insights and a practical structure for building on existing work.



© James Barke

Further reading & resources

Bristol City Council

2010 internal ten-point food charter
<http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/bristol-city-council-food-charter-2010/>

Bristol Food Policy Council

The Bristol Good Food Charter and Good Food Plan, more information on the FPC,
<http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/>

'What does Good Food mean for Bristol' film animation:
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG9Kp8DUJao&feature=youtu.be>)

Bristol Food Policy Council publications

'Food Poverty: What does the evidence tell us?' (2013)

Bristol City Council 'Food and Planning Developmental Review' (2014)

'What We know About the State of Good Food in Bristol' (2015 baseline indicators to help with future monitoring)

<http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/category/publications/bristol-food-policy-council-publications/>

More Bristol food-related publications

<http://bristolfoodpolicycouncil.org/category/publications/other-publications/>

Bristol Food Network

Newsletters and project updates
<http://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/>

Bristol urban growing survey report:
<http://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/?s=urban+growing+survey&op.x=45&op.y=12>

Bristol Food Producers

<http://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/bristol-food-producers/>

Bristol Food Connections Festival

<http://www.bristolfoodconnections.com/>

Bristol Green Capital Partnership

<http://bristolgreencapital.org/>

'Who Feeds Bristol?' report

<http://bristolgreencapital.org/who-feeds-bristol-towards-a-resilient-food-plan/>

'Building a positive future for Bristol after Peak Oil'

<http://transitionbristol.net/transition-bristol-timeline/>

URBACT NETWORK:

Sustainable Food in Urban Communities

Bristol participation in developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems, by focusing on three areas: growing, delivering and enjoying food
<http://urbact.eu/sustainable-food>

Supurbfood Research Partnership

EU project on sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning. Bristol city region case study and summary food policy/practitioner briefings:
<http://supurbfood.eu/documents.php>

'Building a Bristol Food City Region from the Grass Roots up: Food strategies, action plans and food policy councils': Supurbfood programme case study 2015, by Matt Reed and Dan Keech
http://www.ruaf.org/sites/default/files/UAM_29_p26-29.pdf

<http://www.ruaf.org/building-bristol-food-city-region-grass-roots-food-strategies-action-plans-and-food-policy-councils>

Comparison of Bristol and Malmö

Moragues Faus and Morgan 2015 Reframing the foodscape: the emergent world of urban food policy
Environment and Planning A July 2015 47: 1558-1573
<http://epn.sagepub.com/content/47/7/1558.abstract>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT BRISTOL 2015

European Green Capital is a prestigious annual award designed to promote and reward the efforts of cities to improve the environment. Bristol is the first ever UK city to win the award.

European Green Capital is run by The European Commission, recognising that Europe's urban societies face many environmental challenges – and that sustainable, low-carbon living is vital to the future of our cities and our people.

The award was first won by Stockholm in 2010. Since then, Hamburg, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Nantes and Copenhagen have carried the torch. Bristol will hand over to Ljubljana at the end of the year.

THE BRISTOL METHOD

The Bristol Method is a knowledge-transfer programme aimed at helping people in other cities understand and apply the lessons that Bristol has learned in becoming a more sustainable city, not just in 2015 but in the last decade.

Each module of the Bristol Method is presented as an easy-to-digest 'how to' guide on a particular topic, which use Bristol's experiences as a case study. The modules contain generic advice and recommendations that each reader can tailor to their own circumstances. The Bristol Method modules are published on the Bristol 2015 website at www.bristol2015.co.uk/method

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