



Minutes

FL General Meeting: 22 06 20: Zoom / online

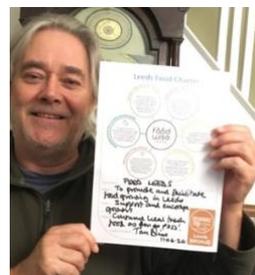
Attending:

Rosie Atkins (Leeds Rotters, Kirkstall Valley Farm, LESSN etc), **Paul Magnall** (Leeds Rotters, Rainbow Junktion), **Dorota Hajdukiewicz** (Growing Better), **Sonja Woodcock** (LFP and Treasurer), **Tom Bliss** (Chair and minutes), **Luke Justice** and **Adam Ogilvie** (MVUF) **Jeremy Isles** (Green Future Associates CIC), **Damian Nicholls**, **Caroline Scott** (Patchwork Farm, Rooted etc).

Apologies:

Jenny Fisher (LCC / Moortown Allotment), **Becky Mears** (Season Well). **Joe Foster** (LAF), **Paul Chalmers** (Farms to Feeds Us) **Sue Ottley-Hughes** (Stank Hall Barn), **Paul Ackroyd** (MVUF).

LEEDS FOOD CHARTER



This is now ready for pledges and signatures. **Please visit the link below**, then download and print a copy, write your pledges, sign it, take a selfie holding it like what Tom done, then send the photo to Tom or Sonja to add to the slideshow. **WE NEED LOTS OF THESE NOW PLEASE.**

<https://leedsfoodpartnership.wordpress.com/leeds-food-charter/>

UPDATES

Tom reports via lead researcher Paola Hernandez Montes de Oca that the **Leeds Food Systems Resilience Project** is emerging from lock-down with a second workshop planned. The report from the first workshop is currently with Polly Cook, LCC Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality currently seconded to the Covid team. We are acutely aware the pandemic has made many of our points for us, so there should be both a renewed urgency upon resumption, as well as a clearer understanding of the vital importance of city-level resilience. (Luke later expressed an interest in being involved in this work). Anyone who has not seen the report from the first workshop, contact Tom for a copy. **Tom, who had to dip out of this work at the start of lockdown, to catch up with Piers Forster and Andy Gouldson on where food fits into the UK and road maps to zero carbon post pandemic.**

*Tom has since had a catch-up with Margo Hanson from the Climate Commission, and a plan is forming potentially to combine the delayed second Food Resilience Workshop with an additional Climate Action Readiness Assessment (the Commission has run two on Housing and Commercial Buildings, but so far no mention of food, which is a major omission). There are other avenues we should and will pursue. Tom suggested a dual-branded workshop to the key people involved and Piers replied in positive terms offering full support from the Priestley. **Tom, Margo and Prof Caroline Orfila to liaise with Prof Andy Challoner who is best Priestley contact on food.***

Jenny Fisher reports that the **Moortown Allotment** is doing well as they now have the East Leeds Project involved.

Sue Ottley-Hughes reports re **Stank Hall Barn**: *The site will go live again at the end of the month due to restricted access by Council. We have been growing on and distributing from volunteer gardens in South Leeds and offering grow your own advice and donated goods including seeds and seedlings to local individuals and families wanting to get started themselves. Lots of income restrictions at this end of the city so expecting more food poverty need to become apparent over the next few weeks through to Autumn, depending on redundancies and small business issues at the end of lockdown. Food banks working at capacity so more grow needed to plug some gaps.*

Tescos have expressed interest in sponsoring Stanks as a small community site, which means at least two onsite staff working days before the end of the summer and some small financial or practical goods donations - we are probably going to opt for practical goods in terms of compost and wood to repair and provide additional raised beds. If anyone has the need for Tesco involvement on other sites in this way give me a shout out and I will sort introductions to the relevant stores.

*We could do with some advice in terms of hydroponics [**Dorota please note :-)**] which looks to be our next development arm. Water management due to vandalism looks to be a continuing problem onsite so until someone authorises small arms fire or actual use of a battle rhino we need to work on other solutions which will probably include the continuation of secondary volunteer garden growing.*

Hope we are all well. Feel we may need to brace for the need of additional grow - there are some nasty levels of additional poverty incoming, some of it in quite unexpected places.

Following contact from the owner some months ago and various discussions since, Tom has checked up on the current availability of land offered for a growing project on **Elmete Lane**, but it looks like this opportunity has now slipped by.

COMMITTEE

Tom invited **Damian Nicholls** to join the committee and he was duly elected - welcome aboard Damian!

Following a degree in environmental science Damian moved into project management, but is now doing a permaculture course (the course is still running and will continue on-line in future) and is currently scoping work options / projects in this field. He is a founder member of Roundhay Residents Assn, is involved with the REAP Forest and is closely connected with the Zero Waste Leeds (NB the Facebook group and <https://www.zerowasteleeds.org.uk/> are different organisations, but convergence is currently under way). Damian

is also involved with the Patchwork project (see below) and is considering a number of larger-scale food ideas, including one of significant size, with a strong focus on marketing and routes to market (something he's been researching with local farmers who want to localise their customer base, cut out the supermarkets and/or move away from sheep farming), so Tom has asked him to accept a brief to 1) help monitor/assist the various projects currently ramping up, to make sure Feed Leeds is as involved as would be considered useful, so we'll have data to hand for the Silver bid, and, 2) to help to create a new network of local farmers wanting to find direct markets in Leeds, (via shared resources like Food Assemblies, Hedge Veg, Community wholesale, Food Hubs, box schemes etc).

FARM SCALE GROWING

We had agreed to focus on larger / farm-scale growing, so updates and discussions now centered on this, in a very positive and useful way:

Patchwork Farm / Food Hub

Caroline and Pete Tatham have been developing this, building on their longstanding Food Hub research which was so useful in the early days of the Kirkstall project, with the pandemic now providing extra impetus. Various successful collaborative wholesalers exist, including some which cater for organisations of different sizes. Best examples include the Patchwork Farm in Hackney. Caroline and Pete have secured a small development grant and are currently contacting growers and looking at a range of options, including the acquisition of land, shared marketing, collective wholesale and more. We have lots of small growers in Leeds, but not many larger farms which we do now need. There are local farmers in the group who want to move away from sheep and find local markets instead of having their produce going into the national systems. The group aim to create a really strong brand which can bring together and help market produce from a range of sources, making smaller schemes ever more viable and valuable.

As Feed Leeds was planning something a little along these lines because we need it for the SFC Silver Award, there was discussion on the extent to which Feed Leeds could just leave this to the Patchwork team, or whether a FL subgroup would be required to work up any areas not addressed by Patchwork but needed for Silver. There was a Patchwork meeting involving many of the people in the FL zoom immediately after it where this was discussed further.



Dorota from **Growing Better** expressed strong support for the Patchwork Farm, which is a good fit with GB. They are now working with various schools and delivering veg boxes from the hydroponics unit at the West Leeds Activity Centre and, soon, a polytunnel at Herd Farm. They are further looking at securing two commercial scale polytunnels - the problem being lack of land to put them on. She later also explained that the land they need does not need soil as they grow hydroponically, so they can utilise brownfield sites, empty buildings etc. and she asked how LCC could facilitate the finding and use of this. She agreed strongly with the need for shared marketing partnerships.

Dorota asked if there was any surplus available from the other farms present, which there isn't yet at Kirkstall, but salad bags are available from Meanwood and a plan was made to trade, perfectly proving the need for a joined-up network approach and which can connect growers, customers and the necessary people in between. Dorota and Caroline will meet soon for a tour round the GTB sites.

Growing better launched an upgraded website with a new logo this week: <https://growingbetter.co.uk/>



Adam and Luke from Meanwood Valley Urban Farm reported on the veg project, which has just delivered the first boxes. The farm has kept going through the lockdown, thanks to a generous fund-raising effort, and will be opening for business again in a few weeks (sadly the children's activities are unlikely to happen this year). Box membership is going well with a strong sense of community building up. They will fill 25 boxes for 20 weeks in this trial period, at which point they will assess progress and decide what to do next. There has been some vandalism on site, but the veg is growing well and being harvested now.

The nursery is also going well and they are producing edibles seedlings using soil blocks, which are a major innovation. Meanwood plans to offer soil block mixes to growers using a cement mixer - which will be really useful for kids and community growers working with people who have motor skill problems.

Kirkstall Valley Farm

Rosie reported that progress is going very well (see the update from Jenny at the end) with people on site most days, either on the allotments or the farm itself. They are still hoping to employ a grower in January, ready to start full production next season. Membership stands at around 300 thanks to a strong recruitment drive, and they plan to begin with around 40 boxes a week next spring. Being a CSA relying mainly on a volunteer workforce, there are lots of plans for community events and improved access to the site.

Vandalism problems persist, as does the flooding risk (FAS2 will be using the downstream field as a compound throughout the engineering works, but it should revert to the farm eventually) - so the polytunnels will be put on the highest land. The lease is still not signed due to access complications, but should be soon. There is a veg demonstration plot to show visitors, and a very active wildlife / biodiversity team, with surveys of various species now in progress.

GREEN FUTURE ASSOCIATES

Jeremy from Green Future Associates CIC provided background on his national project which he set up after retiring as Chief Exec of City Farms, the idea being to develop urban agriculture in parallel with Sustainable Food Cities/Places and others. He has met with Tom and Sonja a number of times, and they now have a grant from Esme Fairburn to develop good urban nature-friendly models, with a target of 20 towns signed up by the end of the 3 year project. Andy Goldring (CEO Permaculture Assn and ex Chair of Feed Leeds) is one of the partners in the consortium, as is Suzy Russell from CSA Network. He aims for Leeds to be one of the pilot areas and is impressed by how joined-up the city already is, with current plans improving that situation still further. There is no money available - this is a learning exchange - but having Jeremy on board as an observer will help to share lessons from Leeds to other projects, and vice versa.

See Appendix for more details.

Other Farm-scale projects

Tom then shared a little background info on two other larger-scale projects who could not make the meeting, **Farms to Feed Us** (National, but Paul lives in Leeds) <https://farmstofeedus.org/> and **The Sustainable Communities Alliance** (Wakefield) <http://suscom.org.uk/tackling-poverty/>. **Tom to put Damian in touch with Paul Chalmers and Simon Jose from these two organisations (done).**

LCC Lead on Food / Agriculture / Farming

Damian had, before the meeting, raised a topic which Andy Goldring has been pushing for years: The lack of any senior officer at LCC with 'food / agriculture and/or farming' in their job title, something we now urgently need to help focus the many disparate food activities across Leeds - bearing in mind that the District includes about 50% farmland, which offers both revenue and major employment opportunities for the city.

At this stage we would not expect this to be a new post, or even for it to involve any material extra work for anyone - just to provide a single, senior point of contact between members, officers and the public to increase efficiency. There are already a number of senior officers who deal with food in various ways, but it is almost impossible for outsiders to know this. Sonja and I raised this at the last LFP Partner meeting with Emma Strachan, who leads the LCC officer food group but is by her own admission not senior enough to fit the bill, and she agreed to pursue the idea through her group and line management. Tom asked Adam, who has good contacts with the LCC leader, Cllr Judith Blake (who we know to be very interested in the food agenda) to see what progress could be made there, which he agreed to pursue. And later Sonja pointed out that Cllrs Charwood (Health) and Mulherin (Climate) are two of only a handful of council members nationally to have signed the letter issued by Sustainable Food Places endorsing Food Partnerships, and asking for national support - so we should also make this suggestion to them. At the meeting, Damian shared his insights into how LCC may next respond to the pandemic (such as declaring bankruptcy, and possibly following the Preston localisation model) - there are major opportunities to be seized, especially around new jobs in food production. **Adam to pursue with cabinet members, Sonja to share the SFP letter with Adam.**

General Points

Rosie pointed out that the drive to recruit **land workers** is not going well so could present an opportunity, and also raised the dangers of addressing food poverty as just a food issue, without tackling the **causes of the poverty**. Dorota asked how we can best encourage LCC to facilitate the **provision of green and brown land, empty buildings etc** - something for the proposed LCC Food and Agriculture lead, perhaps. Caroline is creating an edible garden at **The Real Junk Food Project**. Tom mentioned Alderney's **My Hedge Veg**, <https://www.facebook.com/myhedgeveg/> who are keen to roll out the scheme to the UK and interested in Leeds, so he is in discussion about a potential pilot as this might be a good way to find and connect allotment and other surplus produce, as required for the Sliver bid. Luke reminded us about the excellent work of the **Landworkers Alliance**, and especially the North West group who held the excellent Farm Hack at Meanwood last autumn: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1647058965523457/> - they are running a campaign asking people to put up a sign saying '**local food is for life, not just covid**' then take a photo and share - **everyone please do this along with signing the Food Charter!** Dorota reminded us about the postponed SPROUTS! event and suggested we might manage a socially distanced gathering in the autumn, perhaps at the West Leeds Activity Centre - which we should do, as we always planned a **harvest event**. Sonja mentioned **Lean Lunch's** Good Boxes being launched in LS8 and 17 a strong with social focus - Sat Mann (who is chair of Leeds Food Partnership / Foodwise Leeds) reports that they can't access local food because there is not enough of it - even Vicky at Whitely's farm cannot contribute as they don't have any surplus. **Q. E. D!**

NEXT MEETING

As usual, Tom forgot to discuss this but we'll probably have another Zoom next month, target date being July 27.

Kirkstall Valley Farm Update



Soooo much has happened in the last few weeks

The farm is now the proud owner of the big tractor, and Keith has already given it a thorough work out. The top fields have all been cultivated and are (almost) ready for seed sowing of green manures. Keith has now started on the lower fields, which have been left fallow for a number of years.

I plan to use a summer green manure mix that contains Italian Ryegrass, Mustard, Fodder Radish, Trefoil, and a range of clovers. This mix will fix Nitrogen from the air into the soil, and the deep roots will help to break up the deeper soil. Later we will decide if we mow it with the flail mower, or incorporate it into the ground and start again with a winter cover green manure. I think it will depend on the level of weed cover that develops. There is so much couch especially around the edge, but this warm sunny weather is great for helping to kill it off as it is dragged to the surface through the cultivation.

I have already sown a mixture of Buckwheat and Phacelia into the plot in front of the poly tunnel, and there are signs of germination, but it has been so dry!

The veg plot is now beginning to look like a veg plot, with potatoes emerging, and the onions growing strongly. In fact that is about all you can see as the rest is covered by swathes of white cosytex, which is a crop cover designed to keep the pests away and to give some weather protection. We did get caught out with the frosts the other week though, as the potatoes and outdoor tomatoes that we had just planted looked very brown, but do seem to be making a come back. After that experience I have held off planting the pumpkin and squash plants out, that many of you have grown and brought down, but we will make a start on that next week.





Things are happening in the poly tunnel as well. So one day a volunteer turned up with a load of free wood on her roof rack, and said that a local industrial unit was dismantling their section, and there was plenty more to be had. Fortunately Keith had his big trailer so after two further visits, we now have quantities of 4 to 5 meter lengths of 2 x 6 and lots of plywood. With this we have built sturdy bed frames for the tunnel, and 4 of those are now planted up with tomatoes: 64 plants in fact., and I have cucumber, chillies and aubergine plants growing on to plant up another 4 frames. The frames are designed to stack together to make a raised bed for winter use.

The structures group have started on designing and constructing a compost toilet, mark one, behind the tractor shed. There are plans for 'mark 2' and 'mark 3' later as well. All that free timber will be put to good use. Talking of free things, we have been gifted with 3 polytunnel frames, by Leeds City College, from the old Horsforth campus site. They are very large tunnels, 8m by 26m, and will be a tremendous asset to our year round growing capabilities. Just a small matter of dismantling and transporting back to the farm. We will then need to construct and cover. So between us we are going to be learning quite a bit about building tunnels. We only found out yesterday, so need to sit down and work out a plan of how to go about it. Very grateful already for offers of help, but if you have experience with building work, and would like to help, we would like to hear from you! One thing we will need to sort out is transport, as we will need a flat bed or similar to transport 6m (20 foot) lengths, so if anyone knows a company who could help us, or if you have a suitable commercial license to drive such a vehicle, that we could hire, then again please get in touch. Ideally we get the tunnels dismantled and moved by July. We will aim to get them up again in the autumn. Also, please start saving your fruit punnets, as they could be good for our tomato harvest !

*Best wishes, and happy gardening
Jenny*

Jenny Lawrence (Land Group Lead) - kvfarm.ji@gmail.com



Press release: For immediate release, 9 June 2020

New funding to promote urban agriculture

Green Future Associates is delighted to have been awarded a £199,000 grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to help support & catalyse the growth of nature-friendly food growing & tree husbandry in urban & peri-urban areas across the UK.

Working as part of the **new Urban Agriculture Consortium** we will offer policy advice, advocacy, business, land, planning & legal support, peer-mentoring, training & coordination to support pioneering projects to meaningfully up-scale at all levels.

We will work with urban food producers, community food networks, universities & local authorities in 20 pilot towns and cities to see what will work in the wake of Covid-19, and to explore models which can be replicated elsewhere in the UK.

We will contribute to a greater strategic understanding about how to support urban food growing, as well as providing immediate, practical benefits such as skills-sharing, business enterprise support, and policy support for practitioners & local authorities & other key stakeholders.

Jeremy Iles, heading up the Urban Agriculture Consortium said:

“This is a valuable and timely intervention: food security in Britain has been shown to be under threat from unsustainable global supply chains. At the same time there has been a huge upsurge in interest in growing food with many new urban growers starting since the Covid lockdown began.

“Urban agriculture offers many environmental, sustainability, community, and well-being benefits, but faces specific challenges: new approaches to land access & security, procurement policies and financial models are needed”.

“We’d like to see all our towns and cities becoming Growing Places – it’s a win-win opportunity as part of a new more sustainable normal”.

Laurence Scott of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation said:

“At Esmée Fairbairn we’re interested in more sustainable food systems. We feel that urban agriculture, at scale, has the potential to shorten supply chains, reduce the emissions associated with food production and to enable local communities to become more engaged with how their food is produced. We expect that expert advocacy and the provision of specialised expert support in a number of demonstration locations will help make the case for the wider uptake of urban agriculture across the UK”.

Notes to Editors:

1. **The Urban Agriculture Consortium** is a new grouping of established stakeholders working collaboratively to support and catalyse the growth of urban and per-urban nature friendly food growing.

Stakeholders include: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network UK, Green Future Associates CIC, Middlesbrough Environment City, Open Food Network, Permaculture Association, Regather Sheffield, & Social Farms & Gardens. Dr Jess Davies (Lancaster University) is part of the steering group.

Further supporting stakeholders include: Friends of the Earth, Groundwork UK, Grow Bristol, Incredible Edible Network, Nourish, Real Farming Trust, RSA Food Farming & Countryside Commission, Shared Assets, Sustainable Food Trust, & The Orchard Project. Sustain & the Sustainable Food Places Network have also offered their backing. Further consultations with the Landworkers' Alliance, Farm Start Network & others continue.

2. **Green Future Associates CIC** (GFA) supports organisations and communities to achieve a more sustainable future, with a specific interest and expertise in the community and environmental benefits of local food growing. contact Jeremy Iles at: jeremy@greenfuture.org.uk 07950 266389

3. **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF)** aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. They do this by funding the charitable work of organisations who are building an inclusive, creative, and sustainable society. The Foundation is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK. In 2019 EFF made grants of £36 million towards a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment, food, and social change. They also have a £45 million allocation to social investments for organisations with the aim of creating social impact. For further information see www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Ends