



## Minutes

FL July General Meeting: 27 07 20: Zoom / online

### Attending:

**Martin Hemingway** (Vice Chair), **Rosie Atkins** (Leeds Rotters, Kirkstall Valley Farm, LESSN), **Sonja Woodcock** (FoodWise Leeds, Treasurer), **Tom Bliss** (Chair and minutes), **Jeremy Isles** (Green Future Associates CIC), **Becky Mears** (Season Well), **Camille Thomas** (Space 2), **Lucy Williams** (Zest; Veg Cities/Good to Grow campaign officer), **Derek Chandler** MyHedgeVeg, **Neil Hollingworth** (North Leeds Joinery).

### Apologies:

**Paul Ackroyd** (MVUF) **Alan Thornton** (Yorkshire Orchards), **Damian Nicholls** (FL Farm Lead), **Caroline Scott** (Patchwork Farm).

### HEDGE VEG / LITTLE VEG LIBRARIES



This was the main topic of the meeting - prompted by the photo left shared by Sonja on Facebook, which triggered more online enthusiasm than all the other lockdown period posts put together.

Derek, who runs <https://www.myhedgeveg.com/> and Neil from North Leeds Joinery joined us specifically to contribute.

Derek explained the origination of **MyHedgeVeg**, the Alderney trial (which is going well - as you'd expect on an island of only 3 square miles with a strong community ethos), and his plans to take the project to the UK and eventually global. We discussed whether Leeds

could be a useful second trial, with points raised including the extent to which (as is currently the case in Alderney) commercial shops should be involved, and if so what the inclusion criteria might be and how this would be policed.

Phase two of the project, funds permitting, should include geolocation, so the map would centre to the user's location and show perhaps a 30 mile radius, this being one suitable definition of 'local'. We talked about the extent to which home growers would use the site and decided that most are probably happy to just leave veg out in a box for free, so would not bother to log in and announce their 'offer', but some allotments and many larger community schemes including schools and perhaps health and faith sites might be interested. Veg box schemes, as run by Growing Better, Meanwood, Kirkstall etc. are a separate delivery system (by area, rather than pin-located), but the website could be useful for surplus. There was also interest in revisiting the 'Food Assembly' / 'On-line Farmers Market' idea, which was tried and failed in Leeds and Halifax recently (possibly partly because of the 'franchise' element of the scheme, exacerbated by site location issues), as this would fit well with MyHedgeVeg - the only difference being that hedge veg sites are in theory permanent (in season), as opposed to growers / producers delivering to a hub location, at a pre-arranged time, for collection by customers - as in the Assembly model.

A city-wide harvest surplus scheme is a requirement for our Bid for Silver, and Derek's website comes very close to fulfilling our brief (had we written one)! We also discussed if/how we could find funding, either to assist Derek to roll out to Leeds, or to build our own website. Access to MyHedgeVeg is free for now (people may pay the producers directly, as agreed - but this is external to the website model). Derek's not doing this for money, but there might need to be a small charge or donation to use the site at some point in the future. However, the plan would be to keep the fee very low, and achieve necessary scale by adding new areas to the map.

Neil then joined the meeting to discuss Sonja's idea of creating some trial '**Little Veg Libraries**'.

To quote from the funding bid written by Sonja; during lockdown there's been increased interest in growing food. People who have never gardened before are giving it a go, and sharing seeds and seedlings. Now that the growing season is in full swing, there's a need to easily share surplus produce too, as well information and mentor support.

Joe Foster conducted some useful research in the allotment community last year, which tells us that many associations do have a free or donation-based hedge veg box, either in or outside the fence. A couple even have shops, where they sell to association members; you have to join to buy, even if you never take on a plot, as this makes the transaction legal. But allotment sites are seldom in the right place for 'passing trade' - which is where Little Libraries score - they are a cherished feature/beacon in a local community. So, the idea is to take a leaf out of their book, and provide 'shelf appeal' by designing and building 3+ prototype free-standing stalls, similar in quality if not size and shape to the Leeds Little Free Libraries, a couple of whom have even added veg boxes to their offer.



We've spoken to Jane who runs the Facebook page for Leeds Little Free Libraries (there are lots of other libraries and groupings) and she likes the idea, though it's not been widely shared with that community. We don't need a strong link to the book sharing initiative - but we do feel the word Library is useful, partly to echo the book libraries, but also to flag up the availability of knowledge as well as food, and maybe foster a sense of lending - well, some of the plant parts may even wind up being returned in the form of compost! (We could eventually include hoppers for both veg waste and trowel-ready compost, with the composting being done in a nearby Leeds Rotters hub).

The stalls will need to cover the three stages of food sharing – seeds, seedlings and surplus produce (and possibly compost) - and also provide leaflets on growing, cooking, composting, contacts for nearby support groups etc.

The stalls would be placed outside people's homes or in community garden - so long as it's somewhere protected and maintained, and would give local people a place to share resources and skills, while building a local food growing community.

Neil offered to test the idea by designing and building three stalls, using reclaimed wood - creating a prototype that has a distinct, rustic look that can be easily recognized and copied. The intention is to provide a sense that the library is part of a wider community of food sharing, engender trust in the people involved, and provide an asset to the community.

After the pilot stalls have been built and installed, we will promote the idea so that other communities will commission or build their own. We will pass on the design to local social enterprises, such as Leeds Wood Recycling and Feed Leeds members equipped for joinery work, thus supporting a circular economy.

Potential locations for the trial include Incredible Edible Guiseley, Incredible Edible Garforth and Rainbow Junction - please let us know if you fancying hosting one too. Feed Leeds will create and maintain a Facebook page (how this would interact with MyHedgeVeg or similar to be decided), and encourage the growth of the scheme. We discussed the extent to which it would be better to try to create a strong brand, or whether to allow more of a free-for-all. Further discussion will be needed, especially on whether the stalls would be just one contributor to MyHedgeVeg (or whatever the local name would/will be if we develop our own version), or whether the Little Veg Libraries brand

should encompass all hedge veg. It was noted that we do need to avoid brand overload, and agreed that whatever the final decision might be, we should aim to co-brand with Feed Leeds, as this is the best way to deliver city-wide cohesion.

## **LEEDS KINDNESS REVOLUTION FESTIVAL**



Leeds Kindness Revolution is a social movement led by Compassion and Wellbeing 2020 (an unincorporated community organisation) which aims to help make Leeds a kinder city. A Festival of Kindness, Compassion and Wellbeing is being planned for 5<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020 - with the 12<sup>th</sup> being all about food. They would like Feed Leeds to be involved (FoodWise and Permaculture Assn have also been invited), specifically in a pre-recorded discussion or talk around food waste, animal welfare, pollution, climate etc. Other groups such as Zero Waste Leeds will contribute on other days. <https://kinderleeds.org/>

Tom has agreed to make a powerpoint video about both Feed Leeds and FoodWise Leeds - time permitting.

## **RESEARCH WORKSHOP/S: Climate, Pandemic and Obesity responses re local sustainable healthy food**

Sonja and Tom, working with Lead Researcher Paola Sakai, plus Margo Hansen, Prof Caroline Orfila and Tom Knowland, (also Andy Goldring - schedule permitting) are now actively planning the next workshop, which will take place on-line in September and feed into the next meeting of the **Climate Emergency Advisory Committee** on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. (Councillors asked for this input at the last meeting).

Possible dates include the 2<sup>nd</sup> (looking likely) or the 8<sup>th</sup>, for an approx 2hr workshop to investigate: 1) how can we increase the capacity of growing food in the city, 2) Barriers and enablers, and 3) what steps/actions or decisions need to happen to reach a local food scenario which promotes health and sustainability.

We will need strong support from the network, please, to be sure that the extensive expertise we have across Leeds informs the research outcomes. This said, numbers may need to be limited as zoom does not work so well if there are too many participants. Please let Tom know (Rosie and Luke have already asked to be involved).

We hope the policy brief will also go forward to the next West Yorkshire Economic [Pandemic] Recovery Board at the end of the month. This was established by West Yorkshire's five council leaders, and brings together senior representatives from organisations that will be integral to the region's recovery, including the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP), all of the region's chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), the Integrated Healthcare Partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioner, plus trade unions, universities and the community sector. We also aim to feed into the Place-Based Economic Recovery Network, and other current initiatives of which there are a lot now - and of course it's a slam dunk for the UK Government's sudden new interest in obesity.

We feel there's been something of a sea change at the council and across the city around local food production, so this is an opportunity to go beyond the usual warm words into concrete (that should be topsoil actually) action. The local covid response is being held up as the best in the UK, and Leeds CEO Tom Riordan, who we've already met about this and know to be on board in principle, is now returning after leading the national test and trace programme). This all adds to Leeds' strong position on zero carbon progress started by the first Mini Stern Report, and now being driven by the Leeds Climate Commission.

We have (almost) all the relevant academics, local politicians and council officers, as well as key landowners and food businesses either on board or firmly in our sights, and are confident that this work will help finally to deliver the objectives we've been working towards all these years in a meaningful, tangible way.

We will either co-brand the workshop as a CARA (Climate Action Readiness Assessment - which to date have not focused on either food or resilience) or to follow up with a third workshop to this end. [Update we are now planning for the workshop to stand separate to CARA, with a mitigation-based CARA workshop to follow, and a resilience-adapted CARA workshop after that).

## **FOOD CHARTER**

**WE STILL NEED FOOD CHARTER PHOTOS PLEASE.** (We're looking horribly numpty that so few have signed from the group who kicked the whole Food Strategy work off, so please help us to look less numpty by doing this easy thing). 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.



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

## **SPACE 2 - SHED WANTED**

Camille is after a cheap/free shed for their garden in Gipton - anyone have one going spare?



## **FARM NEWS**

MEANWOOD VALLEY URBAN FARM has reopened to the public on reduced hours; 10am-2pm. They're asking people to make use of the hand sanitisers at the entrance and down near the café. On those areas with narrow paths they're operating a one way system, and asking people to social distance around the farm. The café is operating a reduced take-away and outside seated service. For the time being they're not selling animal feed for people to feed to the animals because of covid-19 and the playground remains closed.

They've now finished the 7th week of their CSA scheme. There have been no cancellations, and feedback has been very good. They have a new fridge that has improved workflow greatly, and are steadily increasing sales with local cafés that are starting to reopen in the Meanwood and Leeds City Centre areas. The Market Garden

business plan has been approved, subject to receiving funding to invest further by building paths, retaining walls, restoring polytunnels and laying efficient irrigation systems, so that they can increase production next year, with a planned increase from the current 25-box trial, to 60 boxes by the 2023/4 growing season.

KIRKSTALL VALLEY FARM is progressing well, though the tenancy has still not been finalised. Tom was able to share contacts and barrier / circulation suggestions from prior work, which might potentially help with the planned planning application. The farm is inviting people to visit and talk to Steering Group members. and Roger, the Farm Chair, will be leading groups of 6 on walks and talks on Fri 14th, Sat 15th and Sun 16th Aug at these times: Fri - 6pm Sat and Sun - 10am, 1pm and 3pm. Booking essential to keep group sizes down. Email [roger.plumtree@kvdt.org.uk](mailto:roger.plumtree@kvdt.org.uk). They are currently seeking an architect to help with the planning application for a new container-based building - something like this:



PATCHWORK FARM Update next month.

### **VEG CITIES CAMPAIGN OFFICER**

Lucy writes: *I am Zest's newest employee, working alongside FoodWise Leeds as the Veg Cities campaign officer. FoodWise Leeds is working with local partners to encourage the growing, sale, sharing, cooking, eating and composting of vegetables across Leeds.*

*We are keen to support and encourage individuals, groups, organizations and businesses to celebrate veg in all its fabulous forms! My role involves contacting and building relationships with these partners and businesses to join our Veg Cities campaign, by making a pledge to share the love of veg.*

*A way to promote and encourage growing veg will be through the Good To Grow project, Which is an online platform to support food growing in the UK. It's all about getting people involved in their local community garden. I will also be highlighting this platform, by sharing and talking with growing communities around Leeds to spread the word, and encourage people to register their garden.*

*Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me in the future on this email: [Lucy.williams@zestleeds.org.uk](mailto:Lucy.williams@zestleeds.org.uk)*

### **NEXT MEETING**

As usual, Tom forgot to discuss this. Again. But we'll probably have another Zoom next month, target date being August 24th, which happens to be his birthday. So how about we have it at 4 pm, call it Potting Shed Drinks, and those that wish to do so can join him in creatively damaging a phial or other vessel of mildly toxic or otherwise stimulating or refreshing tincture, and then imbibing an appropriate quantity of the contents.

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