



Feed Leeds 2021

Monday 21st June, 4:00pm (zoom meeting)

Attending:

Adam Ogilvie (FL Chair, Meanwood Valley Urban Farm (MVUF)), **Tom Bliss** (FL, SowX), **Sonja Woodcock** (FL Treasurer, Leeds Food Coordinator at FoodWise Leeds), **Sarah-Jane Mason** (FL, RHS), **Rachael Fox** (FL minutes), **Rosie Atkins** (FL, Leeds Rotters, LESSN), **Paul Magnall** (FL, Rainbow Junction, Leeds Rotters), **Emma Andrews** (Growing Friendship), **James Harrison** (FL, Patchwork farm), **Joe Foster** (FL, Leeds Allotments Federation), **Emily Alsop** (Masters student - Sustainable food growing and role of communities)

Apologies: **Dan Robinson** (FL, IE Garforth), **Dorota Hajdukiewicz** (Growing Better CIC), **Alan and Gini** (Fruitworks), **Becky Mears** (FL, IE Aireborough / Season Well CIC), **Michelle Baker** (FL member), **Sue Ottley-Hughes** (FL, Friends of Stanks Hall)

Agenda

1) Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

2) Updates on current projects #getgrowingleeds: (SowX / Growing Friendship / LVL & LHV)

FeedLeeds has had a very good year for us so far, lots of enquiries, great projects and new connections. Adam, Tom and Rachael will keep local councillors updated to ensure they are aware of the growing movement!

LVL The advice leaflet on how to make a LVL is now available [on the website](#).



Tom confirmed that the press release had been issued that morning, with a good response including interest from Leeds TV, YEP and Look North. Filming and photo ops are planned for later in the week,

with Sonja co-ordinating, Emma offering to be interviewed with James advising in Guiseley, and Sarah covering the photo op in Chapel Allerton.

At least 4 LVLs have been created across the city and added to the [map](#) *Garforth, Guiseley, Chapel A, and Woodhouse (Chemic)*. We know of 3 others in gestation, *Bramley, Halton and Kippax* which Tom will add once we have photos and locations.

SowX Joe confirmed that Leeds Allotment Federation had shared the information with allotments across Leeds and some had shown interest and agreed to share with their members via newsletters and facebook. Hollin Lane allotment received some donations which have been taken to MVUF. Currently lots of basil plants to share.

Lucy Moore has been donating plants to Stanks for distribution.

Tom has got rid of some of his mountain of seed trays. It is now only as tall as the Matterhorn.

Growing Friendship Emma confirmed that she has been working with Becky on this project and will be leading on the facebook page. Both workshops had been well attended and the facebook group is being used to share growing tips and answer questions for new growers. SJ confirmed that plants had been donated to Growing Friendships for their workshops at CATCH and the Healthy Holidays Club in Yeadon.

CATCH asylum seekers workshop fostered social interactions and they have created a whatsapp to share pics of their plants and it is used daily to chat and keep in touch.

Healthy Holidays had over 20 children attend

GF are planning a harvest celebration and recipe sharing event in October, more details nearer the time.

ACTION ALL Please like the following to hear the latest from this project and get seasonal growing tips

[Growing Friendship Facebook Page](#) - for GF project updates + general growing content with a focus on growing whatever the space you have, low-cost growing, getting started with growing etc.

[Growing Friendship Facebook Group](#) - for a more community-focused space, for asking questions/sharing tips and experience. Any experience levels (new to growing > experienced growers) are welcome!

3) Updates from Feed Leeds members

Rachael confirmed that she will be trialling a **Repair Café** with BuyNowLS6 at Heart in July using an old petrol mower. Hopefully the first of many.

Foodwise Sonja confirmed that it is the last chance to enter the #GetGrowingLeeds competition

Sonja was approached by Hannah at Radio 5 to run a story around food poverty looking at the markets and MVUF to hold interviews. Nothing concrete as yet.

Also that the funded Veg City position that Lucy was recruited for has finished, no further funding available for this project.

#PeasPlease campaign has been really successful and nominated for a Food Foundation Award. Currently looking at using Peter Rabbit 2 film to engage children with Healthy Eating.

Veg Cities - Still looking for updates and stories to share as case studies about growing across the city on their website.

ACTION ALL

Please contact Sonja if you have a story to share sonja.woodcock@zestleeds.org.uk

Share your images to enter by 30th June <https://doinggoodleeds.org.uk/blog/lets-getgrowingleeds/>

Hollin Lane Allotments Joe confirmed that the allotments are getting ready to take part in the Leeds Piano Trail <https://pianotrail.welcometoleeds.co.uk/> and will have installations on site during September.

There has also been a lot of interest from residents in the creation of new allotments across Leeds but so far nothing coming back from the council. One good news story is the Alwoodley Allotments group who managed to lease land for the new site from a local farm.

MVUF lots of exciting projects happening on site currently, Isabel recording 'How to Grow' at the farm, Luke and Bens Growing CSA going from strength to strength – supplying 40 families and a local restaurant.

ACTION ALL Anyone interested in signing up can express interest here https://meanwoodfarm.shop/csa-register_interest/

Kirkstall Valley Farm The lease has now been signed and their box scheme launched. Lots of exciting info on [this link](#)

Anyone wishing to visit the site should use Ready Steady Store on Kirstall Road for satnav - the entrance is just beyond it, opposite Burley Wood Mount (but check before going as the gate is routinely locked)

Bloomberg Bid Unfortunately the bid for Holbeck Farm Start Up was not successful. There was lots of great collaborative working in the bid, so Tom and Sonja are hoping to use the model to develop further fundable projects across the city.

ACTION TOM & ADAM Speak to Polly, Paola and Cllr Marshall to discuss what could be next steps.

Emily Alsop Masters student carrying out a Masters in Climate Change with a special interest in community food growing. Looking for groups who would be willing to be interviewed. Many of the FL groups would be suitable; Camille at Space 2, Sue at Stanks, CATCH in Harehills (YP growing) etc.

ACTION ALL Please contact Emma to discuss your project ee20ea@leeds.ac.uk

Leeds Parks Forum working with local councillors and interested parties to look at the Green Spaces Agenda. Tom has fielded inquiries from a range of people looking at starting growing projects in East Leeds, which already has a good collection of groups operating; Zest, Together for Peace, Friends of Wykebeck valley, Greening Gipton etc.

XR group update by Paul M. Picnic in Park very successful, now looking at a Feast in the Street this Autumn (date tbc, but hoping to be held on Briggate), all events listed on the website and social media <https://rebellion.global/groups/gb-leeds/#events>

ACTION ALL anyone wishing to register interest in having a stall please contact Paul paul.magnall@gmail.com

Jenny Fisher and Lizzie P looking at the NPA local food policy being modelled in Monmouthshire to see if something similar could be achieved in Leeds. The Brecon groups aims are “We want to help establish and grow a strong local food economy. We want to help diversify the variety of food produced within the Brecon Beacons and make it easier for consumers to purchase food produced in the area at an affordable price for the benefit of the local environment and economy”.

See Appendix A - How to rebuild a local food economy? for more details

Urban Agricultural Consortium A Leeds Univ student will carry out 130 hours of research and begin a feasibility study on the Farm Start initiative for Leeds. This research will then be used to form a funding bid for a full feasibility study.

RHS new children’s competition with BBC Radio 2 Big Bee Challenge 6-12 years old can enter but resources available for anyone to use <https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/Resources/Info-Sheet/BBC-Radio-2-Big-Bee-Challenge>

RHS Flourish fund launched for horticultural learning The RHS want to inspire everyone to grow, and the Flourish Fund is part of our pledge to attract and support a wider range of people to connect with horticulture. Consisting of grants up to £15,000, the Fund aims to support organisations across the UK that are helping people acquire horticultural skills. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/bursaries-grants/rhs-bursaries/flourish-fund>

Patchwork Farms – James confirmed that the project is still stalled, much progress was made (business case, finances and a constitution) but that funding needs to be sought for a project manager to take it forward

ACTION James and Sonja to look at options for funding together.

4. AOB

Tom likely to be away for much of July and so will share any further press interest with the committee to take the lead. Also will be schmoozing some interesting people and looking at potential funding opportunities and projects.

Leeds Climate Action is the new name for the Climate Emergency Community Action Programme(CECAP). Sonja is contact for this via FoodWise.

5) Date of next meeting

Monday 19th July 4pm zoom

SJ and Tom send apologies for the July meeting. Rachael will be sending out a request for agenda items nearer the time.

Please send apologies, updates and agenda items to Rachael, not Tom

APPENDIX A How to rebuild a local food economy?

An ambitious plan to rebuild a local food economy is underway in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons.

Like countless other rural areas, the vast majority of food grown in our region is exported straight out, and the vast majority of food eaten here is imported in. Local food chains, where all the profits lie, have shrivelled. What is left of the local food chain is small and niche – fantastic, but for the few.

From this shattered base, we need to re-build a local food economy that is (1) local and foundational, (2) accessible to people who do not own wealth or land, (3) carbon negative, (4) generating healthy nutrient-rich food from healthy soil, and (5) creating more jobs per acre. These are all key features of Welsh Government policy, they can all be delivered. But only with a vigorous locally driven implementation plan.

Rebuilding a local food economy is a formidable task when so much is broken. Everything has to be fixed at the same time for anything to happen. Not only have local production and local food chains withered away, but there are not enough people to farm the land and no affordable homes for them to live in even if they came here. There are no small farm cooperative structures needed to be commercially competitive. There is little financial support for small farm start-ups: Government subsidies and capital grants exclude all farms less than 5 hectares – such farms are the backbone of a new local food economy.

One big positive thing is already in place: local demand for locally grown food currently exceeds supply. This is good news for new farming enterprises: the business opportunities are immediate.

But how to start? How to make things actually happen commercially at scale beyond a niche or a pilot? How to act at the speed required by the climate/nature crisis and by the existential threats currently faced by local farms post Covid, post Brexit and as the Australian trade deal looms?

In May 2021 the “1200 Working Group” was launched as part of the [Our Food](#) project in the region. The group of local entrepreneurs, food professionals, farmers and growers have agreed a solution to the chicken and egg conundrum for the Brecon Beacons and Monmouthshire: how to start rebuilding a local food economy? The proposed answer is directly to acquire land and transfer it into a very different kind of farming enterprise – small scale (1-5 acres), high employment (1 person/acre), quick to generate revenue (1 year), highly productive/profitable (net £20,000/acre), low start-up cost, and most importantly, carbon-negative. (Figures based on JM Fortier, [The Market Gardener](#), 2014 and reduced for the different context of Wales.)

Then to do all this at such a scale that it stimulates a mainstream local food economy serving everyone, not just a niche. This would open the way to a new market for many other local farms producing a wide variety of food. Local farms will make more money if they can sell their food directly, without third parties taking the profits of the food chain.

1200 refers to the number of acres of land that the Working Group is now seeking in our region, either through purchase or by leasing from landowners. Why 1200 acres? If this amount of land was put into the kind of small-scale agriculture outlined above, with productivity levels reaching those established in multiple farms internationally, it would produce weekly veg boxes for all 56,400 households in the region. This would stimulate a whole new local food economy supplying multiple customers – households, hotels and restaurants, public bodies, markets in nearby cities.

The Working Group’s first job will be to set up a local Land Trust to secure and manage this land and kick-start the economic transformation. The Trust will make small plots of land available to a new and diverse generation of farming entrepreneurs. Currently these young people are largely locked out of farming because of astronomically high land prices, because the plots of land for sale are usually far too big for a start-up enterprise, and because leasing land like you would lease accommodation in the city for a business is not an established practice.

This approach to farming has multiple benefits. It focuses on combining farming and growing with building soil health and restoring biodiversity – known as “regenerative farming”. Healthy soil is the basis for a healthy

human diet, high in essential micronutrients. It's also a vast global carbon sink, drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and locking it away, actively helping to reverse climate change.

That's why regenerative farming avoids ploughing, which damages soil structure, causing it to release carbon dioxide. Likewise, this kind of farming also eschews artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides, which all have negative impacts on soil health and biodiversity. The pay-off comes in increased soil fertility and yields, but there are other benefits, too. Healthy carbon-rich soil holds massively more water. This reduces runoff during heavy or prolonged rain, helping to prevent the kind of destructive flooding we're increasingly seeing in our region. It also retains water better in times of drought, reducing the need for irrigation and improving crop security. Heavy rain and drought are with us to stay.

Regenerative farming is also highly productive economically and generates about 1 job per acre. If land is leased, the start-up costs are low because heavy machinery needed to farm larger tracts of land is not needed. A good business plan ensures that production starts quickly, generating revenue within a year. In future, cooperative structures among small farms will enable them to reach bigger markets, for example, farmer-owned local supermarkets, nearby cities, and the public sector.

When farms are supplying locally, the profits from the food chain stay with the farmers. It is mission critical that these farmers own the local food chain and keep all the profit "near the roots".

The business models that lie behind these figures have been extensively demonstrated internationally by pioneering farms such as [Ridgedale Farm](#), a 10 hectare smallholding in central Sweden, and are being tested right now in our region by a number of growers and producers. Success for them will mean meticulous planning and extreme attention to marginal productivity gains – shaving off time and cost at every tiny opportunity. This requires precision planning and specially designed tools.

In parallel to the 1200 project, a whole range of additional activity must take place. Securing the land is necessary but not sufficient by itself.

A new "Regenerative Alliance" of regenerative farms is being created in partnership with the not-for-profit Conservation Farming Trust. This is emerging from a current project, [Our Food](#), co-funded by Rural Development Programme Funding via Monmouthshire County Council and Sustainable Development Funding from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. Future funding has been applied for – from Welsh Government and from Powys County Council.

A key priority will be to find people to farm the 1200 acres. Fortuitously, a new [regenerative horticulture course](#) is being launched this September in our region by Black Mountains College. The opportunity to work in farming in our region will be promoted to young people living here (e.g. school/college visits to the farms) and through the UK-wide networks of farming entrepreneurs ready to start but currently unable to access land.

Housing is a major challenge. Young people already have to leave this region, as housing is bought by retirees and urban at-home workers, and as second homes and holiday cottages. House prices are sky-rocketing. Meanwhile building housing on or near agricultural land is a big no-no under current planning policy. We will explore the possibility of farming settlements built on One Planet Development principles, with zero carbon impact. This will be hard: the well-intentioned Welsh One Planet scheme is proving immensely difficult to implement.

We must also secure start-up funding for these new farming enterprises. Bigger farms get subsidies and capital grants, but farms under 5 hectares are locked out of this. (Using the business models developed internationally, it would be possible to make a net income of £240,000/year on 5 hectares and employ 12 people. But current Government policy says this a hobby, not a business. This illustrates well the insanity of the current situation.)

Overall, we believe the key to achieving real change in the food and agriculture economy is a strongly led local approach that tackles every problem at the same time and aims not just to pilot new approaches, but to mainstream them. The show is on the road in Monmouthshire and the Brecon Beacons.