

SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2024

This form is for completing an SFP Bronze or Silver Award application. **If you are considering applying for a Gold Award, please contact the SFP team at sfpawards@soilassociation.org to discuss the process.**



Before starting your application, please fully read this form as well as the following documents:

- SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants: [SFP Awards - Guidance for applicants 2024](#).
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: [SFP Awards - Activity and Impact 2024](#)

Please do not alter the formatting of this form or redesign it and only return as a Word document not a PDF. This is essential for you application to pass the initial eligibility check.

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Mura Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, Belfast City Council
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Belfast
Award you are applying for*:
Bronze

Please provide us with background information about your place (not scored)*: Advisory word limit: 400 words

This is to help the panel understand the context in which you are working. *You may include (but not limited to): Population and demographic information, location/geography & economic and social challenges.*

ANSWER:

Belfast is the capital city of Northern Ireland and is a maritime city located along the River Lagan and the mouth of Belfast Lough. The local government district had a population of 345,418 in the 2021 census but the metropolitan area is much larger than this, equating for 37.1% of NI's population in according to 2011 figures. It is one of the youngest cities in Europe with young people up to the age of 21 making up nearly a third of the city's population, while a fifth of the city is under 15 years old. Belfast has 24.88 persons per hectare, compared with the average for Northern Ireland of 1.34 (Census 2011) making it the densest local government district, however there is an ambition to densify and grow the population of the city by 66,000 more people by 2035 (Belfast Agenda, 2018).

Belfast city accounts for 18% of the population of NI and 30% of all jobs at over 220,000. 93% of jobs are in the services sector, with almost one third in the public sector. The median gross weekly pay in 2019 was £575. The city is growing older, with today 15% of the population 65 and older. By 2035 this will rise to 20%. Life expectancy for males is 75.9 years, whilst for females its is 81.1 years however the gap between the 10 percent most deprived and least deprived areas of NI is 10.7 years for males and 7.7 years for females.

Belfast has 66 parks, totalling an area of 946.6 hectares, 38 growing spaces, totalling 1.8 ha, and overall a total of 2388.4ha of open spaces including playing fields, play areas, amenity space, civic spaces and cemeteries as well.

The Belfast Resilience Strategy (2020) sets an ambition for sustainable food progress in the city. Through a city wide resilience assessment identified a number of shocks and stresses facing the city. Shocks facing the city area infrastructure capacity, public health, cyber resilience, condition of existing housing stock, flooding and extreme weather events and UK Exit from the EU. The Stresses facing the city are its economic recovery capacity, climate change, mental ill health, poverty and inequality, housing supply, use of prescription drugs, population change, segregation and division, governance and financing of risk and carbon intensive systems.

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership (not scored)*: ? Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

The partnership has identified that areas we should concentrate on are race/disability/socioeconomic background and lived experience of food injustice and, because they are linked, gender and caring responsibilities. We have created [a survey](#) which members of the partnership have worked on together, getting expert advice, which all members of the partnership will complete and return to inform our work. We will review partnership membership relating to the results of this survey each year.

Section 75 of the *Northern Ireland Act 1998* requires any public funded authority to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The Act places a duty therefore on the Sustainable Food Partnership to promote equality of opportunities and good relations.

As the Coordinating role of the SFP lies with Belfast City Council, the Partnership aligns with the Belfast Equality Action Plan 2021-2024 which is in place to integrate equality and diversity into all areas of Council service delivery, decision-making and policy development. The Belfast Agenda focuses on reducing inequality gaps in the city and our partnership sits within these governance structures.

As well as adhering to Equality legislation, equality screening and impact assessment will be carried out in the development of a sustainable food strategy for Belfast which will be developed in 2024. As well as this the SFP will be governed by the Council's policies around GDPR, Photography, Social Media, Access & Equality.

As part of the commissioning of a study into sustainable food carried out by Social Farms & Gardens, key recommendations around equity, diversity and inclusion were made, most importantly that younger, older people and ethnic minority groups were represented in the Partnership. In the research, the following groups were interviewed.

- Chinese Welfare Association
- Asia Supermarket Café
- Bryson House (re refugee and asylum seekers)
- Children in Northern Ireland

- NI Commissioner of Children and Young people

Additionally the researchers made efforts to consult with people working in working class communities, some of whom have joined the steering group, and to use a social justice lens in analysing the information.

Members of the partnership have recently been attending training in EDI, and are keen to bring their new skills to the partnership. Our upcoming meeting in November will discuss the role of EDI in our partnership, and a possible identification and filling of any gaps can then take place. The Partnership currently includes partners from social supermarkets who are able to draw on lived experience of those living in food insecurity. This will be kept under review as the Partnership becomes established.

The SFP Coordinator has recently joined the SFP Anti Racism Working Group and is helping to co-design a new UK wide strategy for anti-racism. Representing Northern Ireland specific issues, connections and knowledge sharing and learning is taking place that is building the Partnership's capacity to enhance their work around this issue, and intend to replicate this process for their local area to ensure inclusivity and anti racism is at the heart of our work.

When running events we endeavour to check all venues against our [accessibility checklist](#), and communicate the results to potential attendees.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants: [SFP Awards - Guidance for applicants 2024](#) before completing this section.

Please describe the activity and impact of local food work delivered in your place within the last three years against the relevant key issues (1-6) and action areas (A and B) below.

We advise that you keep answers to within 600 words for each action area (i.e. for each A and B under the key issues). Whilst you won't be penalised for going over this limit, this will help the panel focus on your main achievements. For sections C, 250 words is the mandatory limit.

For Bronze and Silver awards, there are mandatory actions for some key issues. These are laid out in *SFP Awards - Activity and Impact*: [SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx](#). This document also provides a broad benchmark for each award, rationale for SFP's inclusion of each key issue, and example actions for each action area.

Only submit additional documents for food action plans and strategies related to Key Issue 1 mandatory criteria. All other additional documents will not be assessed. You may add links to online documents but always check the links and permissions as we will not be requesting changes from you after submission.

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

NB failure to provide Key Issue 1, Action area B mandatory criteria will result in rejection at the eligibility stage.

- Bronze applications require a one year action plan

1. Have you submitted a current food action plan or food strategy with an action plan?

- Yes

2. How are you evidencing this action plan?

- Attachment as a Word, PFF, Excel document? Yes
- Link to an only document? Yes
- If a link place here as well under Key Issue 1
- Action Plan link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o8yJviERiJDdIMdCf05GojrDVZZmI0XOlaHuPiQHAM/edit?usp=sharing>

3. Has the action plan less than 6 months to run?

- No
- If less than 6 months to run what is happening after the action plan expires? (100 words)

The action plan was updated in June 2024 and sets out an update of progress and actions for the next 12 months activity for the Partnership.

Key Issue 1: Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action

Action area A: Establish a broad, representative, and dynamic local food partnership

In 2016 the Belfast Food Network was successful in securing Bronze Award for Belfast. Since this time various initiatives and partnerships have worked to develop and realise the ambition for the city including the Food Poverty Working Group (FPWG) and the Belfast Climate Commission's Food Working Group.

The BFN needed a refresh, particularly around its governance so that Belfast City Council (BCC) could take more of a central role in coordinating food work across the city. In 2020, the City Council published its Resilience Strategy, with one of its key ambitions to develop sustainable food work more in the city and it was agreed to carry out research into how to revive the partnership and work ongoing in food work in the city. In 2021, Belfast signed up to the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration which is a commitment by local and regional governments to tackle the climate emergency through integrated food policies and a call on national governments to act. Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership has been setup in 2023 via an open public event and workshop.

The Belfast SF Partnership is embedded in the city's [community planning partnership](#) which means there is collective ownership of the initiative rather than belonging to one organisation . The Partnership reports to the city's [Resilience and Sustainability Board](#) is

the reporting Board under the Partnership, with support and advice provided by the Living Here Board. The members of the Partnership are:

[The Larder Social Supermarket](#)
[Footprints Women's Centre](#)
[Bryson Recycling](#)
[Forward South Belfast](#)
[Reclaim the Commons](#)
[Food Ethics Council](#)
[Hahu Organics](#)
[Brink!](#)
[Sustainability Visit Belfast](#)
[Belfast Health Development Unit](#)
[Climate Team, Belfast City Council](#)
[Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Unit, Belfast City Council](#)
[Fish City](#)
[Food, Farming and Countryside Commission](#)
[Nature Friendly Farming Network](#)
Keen to be Green
[Nourish NI](#)
[Social Farms & Gardens](#)
[Queen's University Belfast](#)
[Ulster University](#)
[Two Sisters](#)
[Tourism, BCC](#)

The Partnership steers sustainable food coordination in the city and is the decision-making body. It is made up of a broad representative cross section of organisations working on the food system in Belfast and includes legacy members of previous structures, as well as new partners that want to help build greater partnership working around food in Belfast. Lived experience representatives are involved using established structures within the partner organisations and partners are developing an EDI policy to ensure lived experience advocates are involved in all strands of decision making.

The Partnership has developed and agreed a [Terms of Reference](#) collaboratively in 2023, providing a clear overview of the Group's purpose and expectations of members. The Group meets quarterly and as required and is in the process of establishing sub-groups to lead on specific issues affecting the city. The FPWC, the Food and Drink Tourism Network are examples that are currently setup/being setup by end of 2023. The Terms of Reference for the Sustainable Food Partnership is available in Appendix 1 and a more detailed diagram than below showing the governance structure of the Partnership is available in Appendix 2.

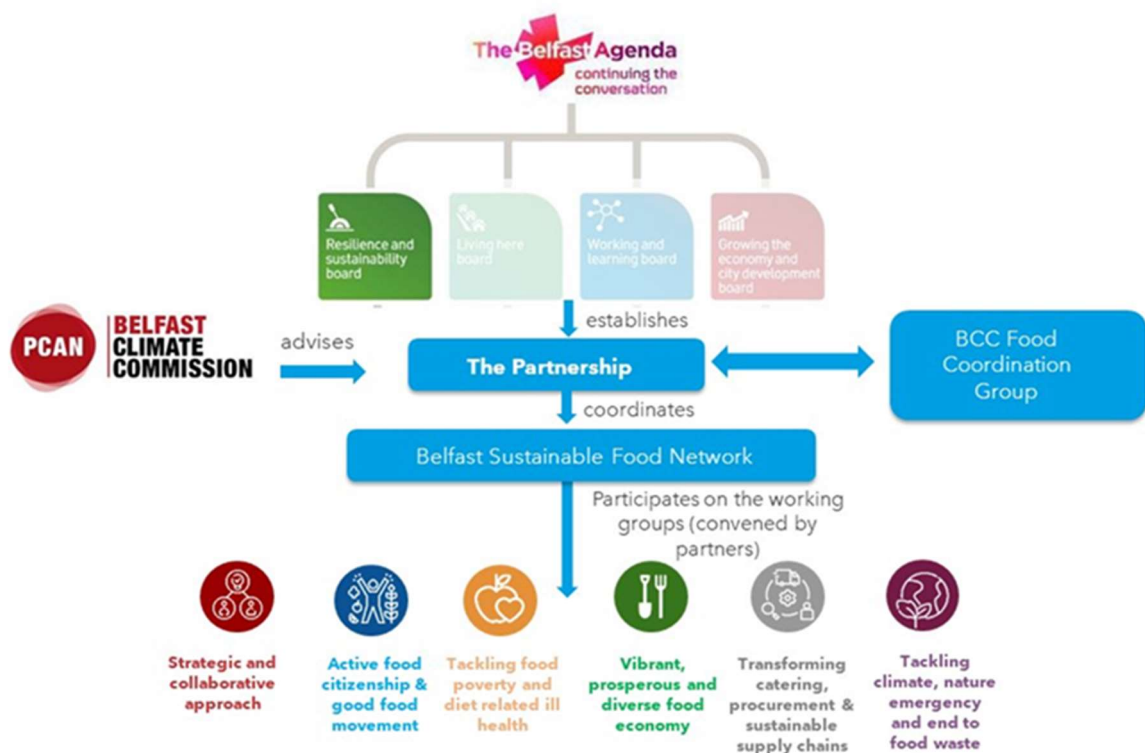


Figure 1: How the Sustainable Food Partnership for Belfast is governed, to include reporting structures into the city’s community planning partnership.

The Belfast SFP also convenes a Network which is open to anyone to attend and is a knowledge sharing/marketplace for connecting food issues across the city. A Network event was held in June 2023 with wide participation and interest across regional and local government, food and hospitality sector, social supermarkets, local food growers and wider voluntary sector organisations.

The report by Social Farms and Gardens identified a need for the Council to coordinate and provide greater leadership in the area of sustainable food. Therefore, a new Council Food Coordination Group has been established and includes officer representation from climate, community planning, health, food insecurity, anti-poverty and inclusive growth, food services, community growing, biodiversity, procurement and regeneration programmes.

The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership was established in August 2023, [meeting bi-monthly](#), using locations across the city to raise awareness of the partnership and develop a genuine partnership identity distinct from Council.

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- 4 working groups convened, with scope of work and membership agreed and meeting regularly

Working Groups

Working Group Leads have been appointed for each Key Area and have organised meetings for their theme.

Key Area 2: Belfast Community Growing Forum Lead: Miriam Turley, SF&G

Key Area 3: Food Access Working Group Lead: Sinéad Furey, University of Ulster

Key Area 4: convened by the Belfast Food and Drink Tourism Network and the Fairtrade Partnership. Discussions ongoing on governance of this area in the city.

Key Area 5: Lead: Sean McDermott, L'Arche Belfast and Source Grow

Key Area 6: Lead: Cormac Dolan, Nature Friendly Farmers.

A role description for working group leaders has been developed.

Branding and Communications

The partnership is developing the original brand setup to establish the Partnership and has been developing ideas for a new name and logo that is codesigned by them and they feel a sense of ownership over. Inspired by vegetables drawn by children who were at the last networking event, we are currently codesigning a brand with partners that truly represents the ethos and inspiration behind our food partnership and which is fun, engaging, relatable to people across Belfast. This brand is due to be launched in late 2024.

Events coordinated by the Partnership

The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership has coordinated a number of public facing events over the past 12 months which have brought key actors in the sector together with members of the public to talk about and experience Sustainable Food in the City.

The Partnership designed and delivered the [Belfast Food Stories](#) event in March, which invited people to tell their story of food in the city. Posters and flyers suggested prompts for [reflections](#) and three [citizens spoke about what food means to them](#) - a community food activist, an alley grower and an organic grower & educator. Over 50 people attended.

In June 2023 the partnership ran a network meeting in Belfast City Hall attended by 51 people.

A [Belfast Food Connections](#) citizen engagement event is planned for the 20th June at BSFP member site Brink, to look at connections in our food system: urban/rural Connections, producer/consumer connections, mutual support networks and what skills we all can bring to connecting our food system.

Action area B: Develop, deliver, and monitor a food strategy/action plan

SFP Framework and Action Plan

In 2022 Belfast City Council commissioned work to map activity and actions to reestablish the partnership. A research team consisting of SF&G, Food Ethics Council and Ulster University carried out the following work which engaged partners, proposed a structure for ongoing partnership work in the City and amassed a large amount of evidence on the baseline activity ongoing, and issues to bear in mind when developing a partnership.

- Developed two key documents: [Belfast Sustainable Food Places Report -Summary](#) and [Belfast SFP Evidence and Research Report](#)
- [Event](#) in June 2022 engaging key partners and consulting on priorities
- Delivered on the recommendations (list)
- [Action plan](#) developed which is now in progress

A Sustainable Food Strategy for Belfast

SFP successfully secured £30,000 to engage the city on a vision and strategy for sustainable food. This is being delivered across the partners. Distribution of this funding is being explored with the partners to ensure genuine collaboration and not top down dispersal of funding. Belfast City Council is providing comms support for the Partnership.

Food Mapping

Over the last 6 months a PhD student has joined the food partnership to provide an initial evidence base and exploration on two central themes of Food Access, and Community growing. This project focuses on spatial access and has allowed a snapshot of the current patterns within the city, providing a baseline for identifying issues within the food system and areas for exploration.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

The partnership opted to have two co-chairs who were appointed after a vote in September. Beth Bell from the Food Ethic Council brings an understanding and commitment to food justice as well as excellent facilitation skills, and Gawain Morrison from Brink! who brings a broad understanding of the Climate Emergency and public engagement techniques.

SFP has successfully built buy in from regional food authority, DAERA, and is actively engaging them to ensure the NI Food Strategy is adopted and aligned to Food work at

local level. Fiona Ferguson (Food Policy Strategist) is an active attendee at partnership meetings and events, and Joy Alexander (Head of Future Food Policy) keeps a watching brief of the partnership through the Climate Commissioner's office.

The Belfast Agenda commits Community Planning Partners to "Enhance and embed sustainable food practices and partnership working across Belfast and provide local solutions for the delivery of sustainable, healthy and affordable food for our citizens". This inclusion is a direct result of work done by the partnership to influence City Wide policy.

Food Matters Social Network Mapping

Belfast SFP is currently taking part in an exercise to map the social network of the partners and understand how we can utilise these connections for better partnership achievements and outcomes. A survey has been distributed to partners in June 2024 and a workshop will be taking place in the autumn. This will be a valuable resource to the Partnership and help maximise our connection and reach across Belfast and NI.

SFP Anti Racism Working Group

Belfast SFP Coordinator is currently sitting on this working group to ensure anti-racism policies for SFP UK wide also can apply here in Belfast and Northern Ireland, given its particular sensitivities and history.

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement

***NB at Silver** we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

Food Citizenship

Belfast has a strong food culture which proudly celebrates the food and associated traditions of the region. The [Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework](#) defines food culture as "the attitudes, beliefs and practices that surround the production and consumption of food" and poses food culture as one of six strategic priorities: Building a Food Culture and Food Conscious Society wherein the social value of food is nurtured and celebrated. Its focus aligns with the SFP Framework, emphasising the creation of a healthy

food culture, reconnecting people with knowledge of where their food comes from, building a [food citizenship](#) movement, promoting our quality produce, and enhancing collaboration around policy agendas. This is important in terms of our food identity, and our connection to food.

The (Growing) Community Growing Movement in Belfast

Community Growing has become recognised in the mainstream as a wholesome activity for individual and community health, and a place for public bodies and active citizens to come together in partnership to serve the community and meet joint aims. There are estimated to be close to 200 community gardens and allotments operating in Belfast, including a growing number of alley gardens. This also includes 17 Council-run sites, many of which were funded through PHA and Peace funding in the last decade. Currently interest in this area is growing, especially since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Belfast SFP has established a Belfast Community Growing Forum, with membership from key landowners, support organisations and growers in the City to encourage a more joined up approach to community growing across the city. They are listed below. The Forum has now met three times, and is developing its own Terms of Reference. See sample minutes of the meetings [here](#).

Belfast City Council provides [allotments and Community Gardens across the city](#), and has a community growing strategy, a copy of which can be requested from the parks office. Council has a [free compost giveaway scheme](#) for schools and community groups. .

The Conservation Volunteers and Groundwork have helped many gardens over the years improve their spaces in a practical way. The Conservation Volunteers have established the [Belfast Urban Garden](#) in the centre of the City, in partnership with BCC.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful provide valuable resources through their Live Here Love Here grants and associated schemes.

QUBSU Handy Helpers, and Scout and Guide groups have helped numerous gardens across the city with clean-ups and materials.

[Social Farms & Gardens](#) has been working intensively in the city over the past year establishing a network of community gardens in the city, arranging inter-site visits and networking events. They have also facilitated meetings for community growing representatives to develop a shared voice in order to be able to communicate their needs to council and other support organisations. Of particular interest has been the growing network of alley and guerilla gardeners in the city, caring for unloved spaces and greening the city.

[9Ft in Common](#) has been working on making public information on land ownership more accessible, as well as sharing inspiration and ideas on how the space can best be used. They have recently been funded by Belfast 24 in an action research project around the growing potential of alley gardening. The alleys selected include a variety of growing conditions including sunlight, ground conditions and gating, in order to test a range of situations and have the results be applicable to the widest range of people in the city and beyond. Ranging from established growers to complete beginners, each set of residents in North, South and East Belfast are working with Jo Facer, the head grower at Laurel Bank Farm in Saintfield over the growing season of 2024. All groups are now well on their way with planting and results from the project - the experience of the participants, quantitative info on how much was able to be grown as well as other intrinsic benefits are expected to start emerging from late summer.

QUB and the SFP Coordinator are partners on the [GroundsWell](#) Consortium, which aims to drive community innovation applying systems science that maximise the contribution of Urban Green and Blue Space to the primary prevention of, and reduction of inequalities in, non communicable diseases (NCD) in urban settings.

[Grow Community Garden](#) in North Belfast, [Anaka Women's Collective](#), [Bomoko NI](#) and [Gaírdin An Phobail](#) in West Belfast are doing important work in making community growing activities accessible to newcomer communities. GaP is a Irish language speaking Community Garden.

[HaHu Organics](#) have partnered with New Leaf Compost to deliver a range of community growing support across the city including:

- a year-long monthly growing workshop in Colin Glen allotments
- Assisted and consulted the Gort na Mona Men's shed with their community garden form inception
- Small growing space in De La Salle College for the school children (NewleafCompost) and volunteer group (workshop every other week hahu organics - myself)
- one workshop and demonstration of no-dig gardening at hydebank community garden with groundwork NI.
- the regeneration of a new community garden in East Belfast which will grow food, and provide a location for community get togethers working with organisations and activists such as local rep of [Transition Network](#) and [Community Together](#), a local organisation with an explicit inclusion ethos.

[Four hives have been installed at the Stormont estate](#) which will be used to educate children and young persons in bee keeping and biodiversity, the hives will be registered as part of the NI wide B-Line project. 4 staff are now trained beekeepers. [Stormont Workplace allotments](#) provide growing space for Stormont staff.

Public Health Campaigns

- [Peas Please](#) is a UK wide initiative to make it easier for everyone in the UK to eat more vegetables. Locally, Peas Please is delivered by [Nourish NI](#) (formerly Belfast Food Network) and partners with [NI Good Food](#).
- [Choose to Live Better](#) - Public Health Agency runs diverse campaigns in NI under the banner of Choose to Live Better - combining information about healthy weight and goals, ways to lose weight, getting active, healthy recipes etc. The key message is 'Smaller portions help you reach a healthier weight. It's still the food you love, just a bit less'. This may give people confidence to try the tips contained in the advice given they are not being advised to completely change their entire diet. The first step is just to eat less.
- [Eating Well Choosing Better](#) - supports small and medium sized food businesses to reduce the calorie, sugar, saturated fat and salt content of the food they produce, sell or serve, as well as reducing portion sizes to help consumers make healthier choices

[The Start Campaign](#) - START is a public health campaign from safefood, the Departments of Health in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Healthy Ireland, the Health Service Executive and the Public Health Agency focused on supporting families to take small steps to eating healthier food and becoming more active.

- All of the Council's 22 community centres deliver healthy eating courses that introduce new ingredients, recipes and aim to develop skills. Programmes across the city include Dig it cook eat it - community garden open sessions where people can come in on open days and learn about growing their own food. Healthy eating information is provided to Belfast residents and Belfast City Council staff in written features on aspects of healthy eating for Belfast City Council [City Matters magazine](#) and Interlink (staff magazine).
- Healthy Living centres are promoting healthy eating through their programmes and with staff and the wider community. Initiatives include basic cooking skills courses, Food Safety training Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering for volunteers providing Seniors Lunch Club. The Healthy living centres are delivering the [SPRING project](#), which aims to connect people with mild physical and health

needs with community initiative which can benefit them, including community growing opportunities.

Food Culture events

The [Belfast Mela](#) is a yearly 9 day event run by ArtsEkta, attracting more than 60,000 people to a feast of world music, dance, food and art to celebrate our city's growing cultural diversity.

Action Area B: Foster food citizenship and a local good food movement

[Reclaim the Commons](#) is a collective of community growing projects facilitated by Social Farms & Gardens which aims to facilitate communication between residents with an interest in community growing in the Belfast City Council area. The network has facilitated over 4 years over 30 face to face networking opportunities and site visits. The network has coordinated two City-wide Community Garden open days (2023 and [2024](#), as part of the Imagine! Belfast Festival) and has produced [a codesigned report](#) developed at a [well attended event](#) detailing the support community growing in the City need to thrive. RtC has a Policy Subgroup which meets regularly and responds to relevant consultations.

Belfast City Council responded to a 2013 Department for Social Development consultation on a [NI wide policy on Community Asset transfer](#), the response [can be viewed here](#). It should be noted that the policy was never established, and NI remains without a community asset transfer policy. Belfast City Council commissioned [a Community Asset Transfer Policy](#) drafted by Development Trusts NI (DTNI) in 2016. Since the partnership has been established, connections made have enabled more effective participation in City wide consultations. This has resulted in a number of significant advances. In November 2023 Belfast City Council adopted a 'Right to Grow' to enable easier access of growing groups to Council land that is not in use. The SF&G Benchmark Standard has also been adopted in the Belfast Agenda, the City's Community Plan.

Key landowners Belfast City Council and NIHE attend SF&G's Policy influencer network meetings, and contributed to the [Benchmark Standard report](#), which aims to advance Community Access to land.

The Housing Executive Support Community Growing through the provision of land and small grants for communities. Gardens at Blackmountain (off the Springmartin Road), and at Louisville Flats, off the Shaws Road are run by and for local communities. NIHE also directly manages gardens around the Belfast estates (for example Hopewell in Lower Shankill). NIHE is currently exploring policy options to support community access to NIHE land for Community Growing.

Mapping

An ongoing project coordinated by Belfast City Council with input from NI Housing Executive, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, The Conservation Volunteers, Groundwork, Social Farms & Gardens and Belfast City Council, is currently mapping community growing initiatives across the city with the dual purpose of quantifying the amount of grow space currently being used in Belfast, as well as supplying a tool for local growers to gain awareness of other grow spaces within the area for network facilitation. The map links access to growing space with Multiple Deprivation Measures, and highlights priority areas for improvement. This builds on [work previously done at a simpler scale](#) by Social Farms & Gardens.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Belfast Food Citizen Socials

In 2023 the Food Ethics Council held a number of Food Citizen Social events in the Sunflower Bar in Belfast City Centre as an opportunity for further discussion and connecting across the food system in the city. The next one is being held by the Partnership in June 2024 and will be a continuous feature of its event programme going forward as it builds its capacity.

Key Issue 3: Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health and increasing access to affordable healthy food

NB at Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Belfast SFP has assembled a diverse, dynamic working group to offer strategic insight into household food insecurity and ethical, dignified approaches to support those on low and very low incomes to access nutrient rich and affordable food. The Food Accessibility working group is led by Dr Sinéad Furey, a leading academic with exceptionally rich knowledge and networks into the causes, challenges and indignities of poverty and hunger. Other members of the group are:

Beth Bell (co-chair of the partnership) - [Food Ethics Council](#)

Louise Ferguson & Alli Steen - The Larder East

Eileen Wilson and Nicola Foster - Footprints Women's Centre

Jacqui Frazer - Belfast Health Development Unit

Katie Hunter - public health dietitian

Jonny Currie and Helen Newell - Trussell Trust

Alongside this primary group, a secondary network has been established with reps from Consumer Council, Department of Education, local Councillors, Food Standards Agency, FareShare, Nourish NI and others to pool expertise, share insights, all in service of driving an anti-poverty, people-led response to hunger and food insecurity.

In particular the approach of partner The Larder East is a core tenet of the values of the partnership in general, and this key issue specifically:

The Larder Community Food Hub (Larder>East) exists to make high quality nutritious food available to all who wish to access it. It has members who are experiencing food insecurity or financial difficulty and members who simply want to purchase high quality food that has been sustainably sourced and has social impact. Larder>East believes there is 'always enough if we share' and has created a model that by keeping a short supply chain and using social pricing does its best to ensure everyone in East Belfast has a seat at the table and a cupboard full of good food.

Footprints Women's Centre is in the heart of the community with very high need, very high disadvantage. It is very much the wraparound support that is so important. Food might be the immediate need, but for the longer term, the ability for a person to make positive changes or positive choices does require support: support with debt, one-to-one life coaching and building up resilience and skills, other six-week peer support programmes in the Centre including food and nutrition classes offering a social space for members to come together and cook together.

Footprints Women's Centre noted in its 2020 Food Store evaluation that varying ethnicities do not use food aid, often due to shame or lack of knowledge of the existence of services (Power et al. 2018). Footprints is a women's only centre, meaning its services are more acceptable for many religions, and is welcoming of all ethnicities). Footprints published a 2020 vision for Newcomer Women and Children, which can be accessed by contacting the Centre.

The Partnership spotlighted the Larder East at a [citizen engagement event](#) as part of the Imagine Festival, providing an opportunity for people in the city to hear about a viable alternative to food banks. For people to be able to believe in different ideas, they need first to know they exist. The Partnership uses its networks, events and relationships to centre ethical approaches, building capacity and belief that they can make a difference. We can build a future without food banks.

Inclusive Growth Network UK

Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership is partnering with the Inclusive Growth Network UK, an ambitious initiative and network working with places across the UK to deliver inclusive growth in practice. It was launched in September 2020 by the Centre for Progressive Policy, and funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation bringing together 14 local authorities across the UK. Belfast City Council is mainstreaming inclusive growth through [a new toolkit which the Food Strategy is using in its development](#). A workshop held in May 2024 brought together a range of Council officers working on food, cost of living, health and climate to discuss how to apply these principles in sustainable food work.

<https://inclusivegrowthnetwork.org/ign-insights/cost-of-living-spotlight-belfast>

All Island Food Poverty Network (AIFPN)

The [All-Island Food Poverty Network \(AIFPN\)](#) is facilitated by the FSA in partnership with Safefood to facilitate a coordinated and strategic approach to tackling food poverty on the island of Ireland through the development of a consensus on related issues, collaboration and shared learning. SFP Partners contribute to the network and help shape policy on this issue on an all Island basis.

Food poverty communications research

University of Galway, University College Dublin and Ulster University were part of a research team that investigated how food poverty is discursively constructed across policy documents, newspaper, and broadcast media in the Island of Ireland. They examined key stakeholder views, perceptions and understandings of food poverty and explored perceptions on how the issue of food poverty is framed in print and broadcast media. The research was submitted in April 2024 and analysis of policy documents (n=48) across Northern Ireland (n=26) and Ireland (n=22) showed that food poverty tends to be presented as problematic food affordability and/or accessibility; food insufficiency; a lack of varied food to maintain a healthy lifestyle; reliance on food banks; and exclusion from social and cultural participation. Analysis of broadcast news media (n=91) – including radio and television – across the island showed that both mediums tended to frame food poverty as driven by upstream macro-level factors, including the cost-of-living crisis, localised issues such as the housing crisis (Ireland) and absence of leadership in Stormont (Northern Ireland), and lack of government action to address the issue through policy measures. Analysis of print news media (n=81) – including local and national newspapers in Ireland and Northern Ireland showed that publications tended to frame food poverty as driven by upstream macro-level factors, including cost-of-living crisis, inflation and wage stagnation, and shortcomings in the social welfare system; some reference was also made to individual level drivers such as addiction issues.

Stakeholders across various sectors share a multifaceted understanding of food poverty, with a focus on inadequate food quantity, poor dietary quality, and social dimensions. Policy-makers stress the need for coordinated, cross-sectoral strategies. Regarding media reporting, professionals advocate for impactful storytelling with personal narratives, yet face challenges accessing service-users for case studies.

Initiatives that SFP partners are helping deliver and connect across include

- QUB student pantry refill station and community fridges
- QUB cost of living support - free breakfasts and lunches for students.
- Ulster University cost of living support re: free breakfasts and free lunches
- Skainos/East Belfast Mission community fridge
- School Meals Coalition

Food Access Mapping

Over the last six months a placement student working with the partnership has mapped [geographical access to food resources](#) and investigated correlation with demographic data, paying particular attention to income deprivation and factors limiting physical access to food resources. This has supplied an initial evidence base of food deserts and “problem” areas where food access is likely to be limited within the city.

Social Supermarkets

The Department for Communities and Belfast City Council fund and support 21 social supermarkets. The supermarkets operate according to the needs of their local community (geographical or community of interest), two are represented on the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership. A registered dietitian from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is available to provide nutrition education and advice to the social supermarkets. The social supermarket staff, volunteers and members are informed about the Partnership’s public events and encouraged to participate.

Ulster University is currently collaborating with the Trussel Trust on research on social supermarkets. This research has been submitted and feedback received with the final report due to be submitted in Mid-June.

In This Together social supermarket using ‘Fareshare’ to provide affordable food to those on low incomes.

Cost of Living Hardship Fund

In 2023/24 the Council delivered funding totalling £1.03m funding under three key strands:

- Support to Children and Families
- Support for Individuals and Families in Immediate (Emergency) need

- Enhance capacity of existing structures and programmes (including social supermarkets).

[Footprints Women's centre](#) takes a community development approach to tackling health inequalities by developing services to address identified need. The immediate need for food is met by the on-site Social Supermarket and a range of wraparound supports, including one to one life coaching are available to support members emerge from crisis to stability. A Community Training Kitchen provides opportunities to develop cookery skills and improve nutritional knowledge

Published research by Ulster University - food poverty chapter, food policy book (including food poverty eco-nutrition and school food)

- Caraher, M., Furey, S. and Wells, R. (2023) *Food policy in the United Kingdom: an Introduction*.
- Furey, S. and Beacom, E. (2023) Nutrition measures and limits: The dominance of the USDA's Food Insecurity and Hunger Module and its adaptations.

World Public Health Nutrition Congress webinar on the topic of social protection and evidence (23rd May 2024). The purpose of the webinar was to begin dialogue about progress and ongoing needs in the Action areas of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025. The webinar examined the mounting evidence for social protection as a means to reduce entrenched inequalities that impede good nutrition, health and wellbeing. What do communities want? What should governments invest in? And World Public Health Nutrition Congress symposium - 11 June 2024 @ Westminster University Re. Social Protection and Food Security (Ulster University).

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

The partnership plays a critical central convening role across nutritious food in the city, bringing together different sectors and actors who would not normally cross paths. This is building knowledge of initiatives in different parts of the city, highlighting what is possible:

The Larder East

Food is sourced as locally and seasonally as possible via small producers and growers ensuring that our spend is kept local. The community gardener and a team of volunteers have utilised the little bit of land around the building to grow herbs, salads and flowers using regenerative principles. They also work with the team to grow produce that can then be used in the 'Dinner's Done' meal kits - everything you need to make a delicious, nutritious meal for 4 people with the recipe attached. Educational workshops and tasting

sessions increase the confidence of members and their knowledge around health, wellbeing and nutrition and Community Meals provide that 'third space' where members from different backgrounds and perspectives mingle in a location that is comfortable, unpretentious and low cost.

Whole Systems Approach to Obesity

The Public Health Agency, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Belfast City Council together with the Active Belfast Partnership are developing a Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. This approach moves away from silo working on isolated short-term interventions to work collaboratively with stakeholders across the whole system to identify, align and review actions to tackle obesity in the short, medium and long term. The SFP Coordinator and a range of partners are involved in this work.

Utilising specialist expertise in promoting good diets

A Registered Dietitian from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is part of the Food Access Working Group. Belfast Trust's Community Dietetic Health and Wellbeing Team works with a number of partner organisations to deliver targeted nutrition training and education programmes.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Through Sinéad, the partnership was represented at the Alliance Party Conference fringe event entitled *The Future of Food and Farming in NI*. The event took the format of an inter-agency panel, celebrating Ulster University's partnerships, Dr Sinéad Furey was joined by representatives inc Nature Friendly Farming Network, Nourish NI (both also partners). Agriculture Minister Andrew Muir, Alliance former DAERA Spokesperson turned Deputy Speaker John Blair and former Alliance leader David Ford all attended. There was also in the audience senior members of the Ulster Farmers' Union, Retail NI, and The Woodland Trust. The Minister was very receptive to the research presented and the highlighted policy alignment:

<https://twitter.com/gracehpeacock/status/1763963142697083178>.

The depth and richness of Sinéad's contribution to the partnership's knowledge and reputation cannot be overstated:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/129323/html/>

<https://x.com/jhnhrvy/status/1792830058714788068>

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7198625449516695552/>

<https://twitter.com/ukfoodcitizens/status/1783899845117223061>

<https://shows.acast.com/food-poverty-across-ireland-past-current-and-future-perspect/episodes>

https://x.com/WFP_UK/status/1593183595757469696

Other food accessibility initiatives include

- Dinners Done - Healthy, affordable recipe packs - convenient (The Larder)
- Community Garden growing for Larder shelves.
- Some work being undertaken by Food Standards Agency
- Groundwork is providing training and support for community members including mensheds, meanwhile gardens and schools etc.
- Schools throughout Belfast are working with organisations such as Groundwork NI, New Leaf Compost, Urban Nature Connection NI, Grow NI to grow food and flowers.
- Community gardens and schools are linking up to work together: see The Larder East, Mumo, Gairdin an Phobail
- Community gardens and alleyways are growing a mix of food and flowers (for biodiversity) throughout Belfast, Examples include Wildflower alley and Grow NI.
- Through Live here Love here, many schools received funding for school pollinator grants. This funding helped re-establish school gardens and start new gardens.
- Medicinal tea workshops, gut health workshops, tastings (food), sourdough bread.
- Has been an UPSURGE in craft bakers making real bread and plant based cafes/restaurants/options etc.

- Northern Ireland School Meals case study and contribution to the UK umbrella case study [are now live on the Research Consortium website](#). They were launched at an event from the Finnish Ambassador's residence (France and Finland are the leads) on 17th November 2022:

https://twitter.com/WFP_UK/status/1593183595757469696.

Key Issue 4: Creating a vibrant, prosperous, and diverse sustainable food economy

NB at Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.

Action area A: Put good food enterprise at the heart of local economic development

Food NI

Food NI promotes sustainable, local food in all communications and events. The Taste of Ulster restaurant award scheme, and Taste of Ulster inspection reports are carried out annually. Restaurants are asked "there has been a lot of publicity about diet and health. How conscious are you of the nutritional quality of the food served here and do you offer "healthier" food options to your customers?" When restaurants pass this independent inspection, Food NI promotes their establishment to the public, in the [Taste of Ulster Guide](#) and on social media. [Food NI also manages the Food Producers Guide](#) which has a list of 200 NI food and drink companies. Food NI ran "A Year of Food and Drink" in 2016, [a month of sustainable food in 2022](#), and are now working towards a year of sustainable food, which will require collaboration across NI. Food NI has run a TV advert campaign "[Our Food the Power of Good](#)" which focuses on how food that is good for us can also be good for the environment. With Tourism NI they carried out some workshops on sustainable food for restaurants, and the "[Taste the Island](#)" campaign. Food NI is the NI partner for PP.

Belfast Food and Drink Tourism Network

The Belfast Food and Drink Development Programme delivered this year was focussed on further establishing the Belfast Food and Drink Network as a functioning body and driving capacity to develop and deliver its priority actions, strategic agenda and financial sustainability.

The programme successfully secured funding support from DAERA through its Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme to deliver the following outputs:

- Support and facilitate the work of the network through a series of workshops.
- Deliver a business-to-business event, bringing the sector together to promote collaborative approaches and enable new connections to be made between local city providers and top-quality local producers.

Council's support for the 23-24 programme was £30,000, with additional investment from DAERA increasing spend to £50,000. Over 300 individuals from the hospitality and food sector took part across the entire programme. New collaborations and sales were generated as a result of this programme.

The Belfast Food and Drink Programme 2023/2024 delivered the following activity:

Governance documentation was further developed in consultation with members. Gemma Austin stood down as Chair and it was agreed that the Network will be led by two Co-Chairs going forward. Paul Kane, founder of Belfast Whiskey Week is currently Co-Chair, with a second Co-Chair member to be appointed. 17 businesses are currently represented on the committee from a range of food businesses and organisation including restaurants, food experiences, producers, local government, destination marketing, tourism and industry representatives.

Positioning Project

Instigated in 2022, this project is led by Visit Belfast and their delivery partner McCadden Design. Further consultation has been facilitated with the Network members and other stakeholders. It is anticipated the project will be completed June 2024.

Ards and North Down Learning Journey

Taking place on 7 February, this informative study day enabled delegates to find out more about Taste Ards and North Down (AND) and its Food and Drink Destination Development plan 2023-2027. Attendees met the AND steering group and heard from council representatives about their food and drink strategy. The itinerary enabled all to share learnings with local food and drink tourism experience providers, chefs, producers and a range of sectoral stakeholders. The outcomes from the day included the identification of actions to be led by the Network and updating of delegates on the other workshops and forthcoming summit. Visits included:

- Carlos Caparelli from Caparelli Cooks
- Walled Garden at Helen's Bay
- Clandeboye Yoghurt
- Harbour and Co
- Visit Echlinville Estate
- Indie Fude / Iris McBride
- Chef Jim Mulholland at No.14 at the Georgian House

Belfast Food Connections Summit

The Belfast Food Connection Summit took place on 4 March 2024 in Waterman House. The summit attracted 130 delegates, including 20 high quality artisan NI agri-food producers.

This industry event aimed to bridge the gap between hospitality providers and food producers, fostering collaboration and innovation within the local food supply chain. Among those taking part were ShortCross Gin; Hinch Distillery; Belfast Coffee Company;

Blackfire Artisan Food; Papas Mineral Company; Irish Black Butter; The Daily Apron Bakery; Rock A Doodle Do, Belfast Hot Sauce and Jackson Roze.

By promoting knowledge, sectoral connection and collaborative approaches, the Summit supported the City's aim of being a sustainable tourism destination, supporting the circular economy, reducing food miles, and attracting increased visitor dwell time and spend.

Speaking at the event were Councillor Clíodhna Nic Bhranair, Chair of Belfast City Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee; DAERA Minister Andrew Muir; Paul Kane; Director of Belfast Whiskey Week and vice chair of the newly established Food and Drink Network; John McKenna, food writer with McKenna's Guides and Dr JP McMahon, chef, restaurateur, and author. MC was businessman and restaurant critic Joris Minne. An event synopsis is available [here](#) Belfast Food Connections Summit.

Sustainability Masterclass

This masterclass event took place on Monday 11th March, at The Academy Restaurant, Ulster University Belfast and was attended by SFP partners, including Food Ethics Council, Fish City and the SFP Coordinator.

Delegates were addressed by industry experts on current approaches to sustainability, including a presentation from Dr Susann Power of University of Ulster on how The Academy Restaurant became the first establishment within the UK and Republic of Ireland to obtain 'Green Key' accreditation for sustainability. This was followed by a tour of the kitchen at The Academy Restaurant and explore the various pieces of equipment the team at The Academy uses to enhance sustainability.

Andrew Dougan, Managing Director of Yellow Door Belfast and also partner with Hospitality Belfast presented on how he prepared for ISO certification at the International Convention Centre. Delegates tasted a sustainable menu from the kitchen, prepared by Michael Gillies - lecturer and course director for the BSc Culinary Arts Management at Ulster University, and his team at The Academy.

Legenderry Learning Journey

On the 25 March 30 delegates from the Belfast Food and Drink Network as well as other hospitality providers undertook a one-day study visit to discover the journey that the Legenderry Network and Acorn Food Network has taken over the last few years and its aspirations for the future. Delegates met several members of the Network on location on their farms and their businesses. Council officers presented their food and drink tourism strategic plan to the delegation, explaining its development and ambitions. The agenda also included informative and engaging visits to the following producers and providers:

- Dart Mountain Cheese

- Brookhall Estate x Lo & Slo BBQ
- Nine Hostages Coffee Company
- Tour of FoodOvation at North West Regional College
- Walled City Brewery.
- Dinner at The Ebrington Hotel

Cost of Living Crisis Workshop

This workshop took place on 25 April 2024 in Waterman House. It was Hosted by Martin Potts, Managing Director of Synergy Prochef, the workshop covered key topics that are at the forefront of the industry right now, Effective Menu Pricing, Menu Planning for Profit, Labour Cost Effectiveness, and more.

Martin has worked with major groups in the Republic of Ireland, such as Failte Ireland and Restaurant Association of Ireland and he shared his wealth of knowledge with you. The workshop was filled to capacity at 15 participants. [Include evaluation outcomes once available.

Action Area B: Promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses to consumers

[Yellow Door/ICC Waterfront first ISO 20121 Environmental Accreditation on the island of Ireland](#)

The Yellow Door has been involved in Sustainable Food Places in Belfast since 2015 and is a business that has been a pioneer in sustainability as a business. Represented on our community growing working group, they have recently achieved ISO accreditation, being the first in Ireland. The ICC is one of the Council's venues that the Yellow Door operate from, and has been recognised as the world's best conference and events destination at the annual CI&T awards for five out of the last six years. It is the city's major conference centre and strives to demonstrate high levels of sustainability practices to prospective visitors and citizens in the city. At two gatherings in March and April 2024 the Yellow Door spoke to farmers, policy makers, businesses and citizens about their journey toward sustainability and act as an advocate for other businesses to embark on their sustainability journey and learn from each other through the Food and Drink Tourism Network.

Global Destination Sustainability Index

Visit Belfast, one of the SFP Partners leads on the city's submission to the Global Destination Sustainability Index from 2020. As of 2023 it is currently ranked at 86% with 100% of the city's venues sustainability certified.

Green Tourism Awards

Green Tourism accredited businesses across the city are growing through the messaging that the partnership is putting out, and via its partners. Visit Belfast now host a list of Green Tourism Accredited businesses and offers support and financial assistance for businesses to become accredited. Their website lists a range of [Green Restaurants](#) to ensure people are making informed choices about where they eat in Belfast.

Fairtrade Partnership

Belfast was awarded [Fairtrade City status](#) in June 2005 and achieved its re-accreditation in January 2024 by the UK Fairtrade Foundation. It was also granted the same status by Fairtrade Ireland in March 2006, making it the only city in the UK and Ireland to receive this dual title, Belfast City Council holds an annual Fairtrade Fortnight. The Fairtrade Partnership is now a member of the SFP Partnership as the Council is moving toward SFP being the umbrella and framework under which all sustainable food activity and groups sit under.

Food NI produces attractive and informative guides that are updated yearly, and distributed to the general public at every opportunity highlighting local food and drink, and where to buy. [The Taste of Ulster Guide](#) lists local food and drink restaurants who are dedicated to using local and sustainable ingredients. These restaurants are independently inspected yearly and the Guide updated to reflect this.

[St George's Market](#) has been selected for numerous local and national titles and awards for its fresh, local produce and great atmosphere. It holds a weekly Friday Variety Market, the City Food and Craft Market on Saturdays and the Sunday Market. It also hosts a range of events throughout the year. It was named the UK's Best Large Indoor Market 2023 by the NABMA Great British Market Awards. It is home to over 250 local producers and hot food traders selling a range of locally produced healthy, organic, vegan, vegetarian and gluten free food.

Inns Cross Market is a monthly market promoting local, seasonal and artisan food producers situated on Saintfield Road. The market prides itself on being an authentic farmers' market supporting local primary and artisan producers.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Key Issue 5: Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains

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Action area A: Change policy and practice to put good food on people's plates

NI Food Strategy Framework Procurement

Since the majority of public procurement for food services sits within central government in Northern Ireland, the Belfast SFP has been working regionally with procurement managers across the Department for Justice, the Education Authority, DAERA, and the Health and Social Care Trusts to ensure alignment of objectives for procurement at a local and strategic level. The development of the strategy and action plan for the SFP has included regional and strategic priorities and objectives being aligned so that policy coherence across public sector purchasing.

Queen's University of Belfast is currently developing a sustainable procurement policy in addition to [existing commitments](#) to sustainable hospitality (which includes a commitment that "All the companies we use are based locally and on the island of Ireland").

Belfast City Council Climate Action Plan

Belfast City Council's draft CAP has embedded the Sustainable Food Programme into its climate programme to ensure that there is leadership from the Council in Sustainable Food. Whilst the CAP is not yet available, key actions include the convening of SFP, delivery of sustainable food policy for the Council, and implementing an internal coordination group so that citizens receive a coordinated and systems approach to food and climate work in the future.

Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy

In 2022 Belfast City Council published its [Social Procurement Policy](#), committing to ensure that the purchase of goods, services and works achieves value for money by making a positive difference to the people and communities in Belfast. As well as economic growth and job provision, the policy aims to:

- Raise the living standards and prosperity and enhance the wellbeing of local residents by promoting socially responsible criteria for our suppliers.
- Promote environmental sustainability by, for example, implementing environmental improvements (aligned to our draft Resilience Strategy),

supporting reductions in waste and carbon emissions, supporting energy efficiency, promoting and procuring the use of materials from renewable and sustainable sources within the council and our supply chain (leading to, for example, reductions in disposable and single-use plastic items).

- Support fair and ethical trading in the supply chain (such as compliance Human Rights legislation and Modern Slavery Act), whilst expecting our suppliers, service providers and contractors to demonstrate a similar commitment.

The Council also produced a [Social Value Toolkit](#) to help deliver its aims.

A more advanced and comprehensive sustainable procurement policy is being developed and the food partnership is engaging in this process by advising on best practice and how to ensure procurement of food is a priority. SFP will continue to engage to ensure that it fulfils the aspirations of the sustainable food vision for the city.

[Yallaa Cafe](#) is used regularly by the Partnership at SFP events. They are another great example of how Council's Social Value Procurement (supporting ethical food businesses) is showcasing sustainable and ethical food providers in the city by gaining government contracts. Yalla showcased its work and food at a Food Stories event in March working closely with 2RA.

Queen's University is also showing leadership in this area and has produced a [Supply Chain Code of Conduct](#) via its sustainability team, who sit on the Partnership.

[Dublin Belfast Connected Circular Economy](#)

Dublin and Belfast were awarded funding under the Shared Island Fund to undertake a Strategic Assessment Report/Strategic Outline Case (SAR/SOC) into the development of Connected Circular Economy hubs in Belfast and Dublin. SFP members and a range of food industry partners were invited to help shape the design of a food hub.

The project, Plate, will provide commercial kitchens and lab spaces for rent to start-ups and food businesses, to facilitate prototyping and new product development. Plate will also offer specialised incubator and demonstrator programmes, linking into the existing food and hospitality ecosystems in both cities. The report was launched at a collaborative event in SPADE in Dublin, with SFP partners embedded in the steering group to help develop the next stage of the project to bring it to feasibility.

[Changing the Menu for Good](#)

One of the SFP Partners, Visit Belfast, coordinate and promote the Changing the Menu for Good programme which aims to reduce food waste whilst support social supermarkets and food banks in the city. CTMFG secured a Global innovation Award for a pioneering social impact project to help tackle food poverty in Belfast through business events. Businesses that provide tourism related services have been offered support and

subsidised fees to become members of the Green Tourism Business Scheme whose key components include local and sustainable food sourcing as well as related waste management.

Action Area B: Improving connections and collaboration across the local supply chain

There are a range of initiatives and partners of SFP that are collaborating across the supply chain. These are

[SourceGrow](#) is a crop recommendation and market platform for Northern Ireland which captures demand from restaurants, diversifies produce options for growers and connects local producers to their customers. (Source Grow app was set up by QUB by their entrepreneur in residence).

Source Grow has been taken over by our Working Group lead on this issue, Sean McDermott, from Keen to be Green. The app seeks to link producers to citizens and businesses more closely and create a buying platform. In 2024 they have approached community groups to pilot a buyers hub for bulk buy veg through the platform. There is an emphasis on organic and small scale, and most producers using the platform are organic but not certified, allowing people to make informed choices. Focus in future will be on getting bigger farmers on board, to ensure they are learning about ways to become more sustainable and see if Source Grow can encourage change. It is hoped that a series of veg boxes from local community gardens can be circulated using the platform when it is up and running that will help reduce any surplus food being wasted across the city. Organisations already working in this space include Laurelbank Farm, Helen's Bay Organic, Streamvale Farm and others.

[Four Leaf Market Garden](#) are a small but intensive market garden on roughly 1/3 acre, focusing on leafy greens, herbs & tomatoes. They focus on soil care and try to go beyond organic standards by following a no dig growing method.

[Fresh Picks](#)- are a local Belfast/Crumlin based Veg growers who use organic, regenerative growing practices to bring the highest quality vegetables direct from the field to the customer, all while boosting bio-diversity and building healthy soil structure.

Carrick Greengrocers co-op and volunteering model which serves as a hub for small producers to bring produce in, distributes the risk to producers, users by using collective approach, smoothing out spikes of availability of produce.

Nationally, the [NI Food Strategy Framework Document](#) laid out a number of pilot project the Food Programme Board will roll out to feed into the strategy. One of these is a cross departmental task force to investigate the opportunity to increase the amount of food

sourced locally by government. The project will focus on supply to Northern Ireland schools, hospitals and prisons and seek to learn from the experiences of other regions, who are piloting novel dynamic procurement systems. The Project will seek to promote health, environmental, socio-economic objectives and will contribute to food supply resilience.

This aside, Northern Ireland's procurement policy and processes continue to be highly centralised. However SFP is working closely with the Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) to reduce the size of tenders to appeal to smaller suppliers. This has resulted in an increase of the number of businesses applying to provide produce for distinct Health Trust areas. Successes include fresh milk being supplied to five Health Trust's by two contractors rather than one and the 'Fresh Meat and Poultry' tender being divided into 16 separate product lots.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

Conferences

Our SFP Co-Chair, Beth Bell is chairing a panel at <https://fieldsgood.co.uk/> in September which features Sean from Keen to be Green and SourceGrow, who is the convening lead of our working group on this key issue. The partnership has been instrumental in cementing the relationships and trust that events like this need - to reach out beyond the usual stakeholders.

Funding food work in the city

SFP is also working with Council officers to scope opportunities for its suppliers to contribute to greening and food initiatives across the city via the Social Value Procurement Framework e.g. sponsor tree planting, community gardens, greening and rewilding projects etc.

Key Issue 6: Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food & farming and an end to food waste

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Action area A: Promote sustainable food production and consumption and resource efficiency

Impact of the Partnership at City Council level

The Partnership has been engaging with political representatives in the city to help build political capital and support for its mission. In November 2023 the SFP Coordinator and Co-Chair presented to the Climate and City Resilience Committee about Sustainable Food and why we need to take a whole systems approach to addressing challenges with the food system. As a result of this engagement, the Partnership has secured £30,000 towards the delivery of a Sustainable Food Strategy for the city. Stemming from this engagement, the Partners have been meeting with councillors and MLAs and directly from these engagements Belfast City Council has:

- In December 2023 adopted a [Right to Grow](#) on its land and calls on other public landowners in the city to do the same
- In early 2024 it agreed to adopt the benchmark standard minimum growing space per households in its community plan
- In March 2024 [endorsed the Plant Based Treaty](#) in response to the climate crisis and growing food security issues in the city. It is now calling on the NI Assembly to do the same.

Belfast Agenda

Under the Our Planet theme of the Belfast Agenda, strategic intent 5 specifically refers to the embedding sustainable food practices and partnership working in Belfast. This will be accomplished through the coordination of SFP, support of community based approaches to sustainable food, the development of a community growing forum, and the development of a city wide sustainable food strategy. The end goals of this strategy are the promotion of a diverse and connected circular food economy, the development of systemic responses to address the negative climate and nature impacts of the local food system (such as reducing meat and dairy consumption and tackling food waste), and the development of local policies and food access initiatives to ensure access to sustainable food for all.

UPSURGE

UPSURGE is a collaborative Horizon 2020 research project whereby BCC and QUB have secured funding to develop a demonstrator project in the city at a Council green space that is currently underused. An agroecology community garden is being developed to test different approaches to community food growing, engaging underrepresented groups in the design, development and use of the communal food growing spaces with a focus on nature based solutions. QUB is also running a soil testing programme to explore and share learning on best practices on soil remediation techniques to regenerate urban soils for food growing and carbon sequestration, and has integrated the project into its [Green Month of Community Action](#).

During the garden's codesigned process with local residents, stakeholders identified the importance of mixed use of the gardens for biodiversity, and as such is at the heart of the garden's ethos. This will include rewilded areas set aside for biodiversity, as well as nature friendly farming practises such the omission of pesticides.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-68640214>

Belfast Learning Festival 2024

In April 2024 the Sustainable Food Partners contributed to the theme of 'Our Planet' at the 2024 Belfast Learning Festival. [Various events held by a range of partners](#) included a Food Hackathon with students from our local Universities, Woodland Walks, Tree Nursery Open Days, Growing Project with FoodStock, and information workshops such as "Fight Climate Change from Your Kitchen" (focused on waste reduction and recycling non edible food) and Greening your Garden (exploring how we can make space for nature in our green spaces). [Food Partners engaged in a panel discussion at the launch](#) and to ensure the food system was part of the discussions throughout the week's events.

[Brink!](#)

Brink!, one of our partners have through the support of the SFP partners, setup a meanwhile growing space on a piece of Council land right in the city centre, and an area in need of regeneration. Since late 2022, Brink have been developing the space with our city's series of workshops and public events to bring a public conversation titled 'We Eat, We Heat, We Travel, We Waste' forward on living sustainably in the city. Throughout 2023, hundreds of citizens have been attending events run by Brink in partnership with the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action, Climate NI, NI Science Festival and others. Brink is also a partner on the Belfast SFP and hopes to develop a meanwhile cultural growing space in the city centre to accelerate public awareness and action around climate and food.

[The Belfast Urban Garden \(BuG\)](#) is a newly implemented space in Belfast city centre exploring food growing and sustainability. Alongside food production The BUG aims to enhance biodiversity, combat pollution and improve the city centre's overall appeal and liveability. The BUG's engagement programme targets a [diverse range of local residents](#) and acts an exemplar on how learning from green initiatives in the city can be communicated to the public

National Food, Farming and Environmental Policy

DAERA is leading on the development of a tailored Agricultural Policy Programme to deliver new approaches and support systems which better addresses the needs of Northern Ireland agriculture, the environment and rural communities. On the partnership they engage with the partners to understand how the national framework can be locally relevant, and support channelling resources for sustainable food effectively through their funding programmes. The SFP Coordinator also contributed to the call for evidence for

the NI Climate Adaptation Cycle 3 that is being led by DAERA, pointing out the role of SFPs in NI to contributing to greater food security.

DAERA is developing the Green Growth Strategy on behalf of the NI Executive and leading a programme of work to deliver the Executive commitments in that strategy which sets out a long-term vision for tackling the climate crisis in the right way. DAERA is coordinating the development of the first NI Climate Action Plan and associated Sectoral plans which sets out how NI will work towards reducing carbon emissions.

Nature Friendly Farming and Food Stories

The working group for this key issue is led by Cormac Dolan, who is the NI lead at the Nature Friendly Farming Network. The working group has met twice to date and is developing a Food Stories initiative to scheme showcasing sustainable farming practices, facilitating peer learning about where our food is sourced, and encourage people in Belfast to eat food produced locally, especially through regenerative farming.

Action Area B: Reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste

Food waste

Belfast City Council collects domestic waste in the city and is committed to reducing food waste and its associated carbon emissions through initiatives such as the [More Circularity Less Carbon](#) initiative.

Food waste is currently collected in food waste bins and with other organic waste and sent to a central composting facility run by Natural World Products on the outskirts of Belfast. Efforts are continuing through campaigns and outreach to encourage residents to recycle their food waste. The recycled food waste is subsequently used in community and public gardens across the city as organic peat free and nutrient rich compost.

Following six other ACR+ members, Belfast has now assessed the carbon footprint of its household waste which amounted to 360 000 tCO₂eq in 2020. To achieve the 25% reduction target of the ACR+ 'More Circularity Less Carbon' campaign, the city is committed to reducing this footprint by 90 000 tCO₂eq by 2025. The efforts are focusing on the most carbon-intensive fractions, such as food waste and increasing plastic recycling. This was shown by an analysis of the Carbon Footprint of Waste in Belfast, measured with the Carbon Metric International tool, developed by ACR+ member Zero Waste Scotland.

One of our partners, DAERA, works with key stakeholders to set out what policies need to be put in place to help everyone produce less waste and recycle the rest. Their environmental stats which are not available at the city level until summer 2024 highlight

the most common actions taken by households as reusing, recycling and disposing of waste products appropriately (91 per cent), reducing food waste (74 per cent) and reducing consumption of household utilities (65 per cent). The Council's Climate Team monitors these statistics for the Partnership on an ongoing basis.

Waste Composition Analysis of Organisations

Funding is being sought to carry out a waste composition analysis across the entire council to be able to measure, monitor and bring down food waste in the organisation and find out how much of it is being recycled versus how much is ending up in landfill. The project will make sure the Council is providing leadership in this space and create a model for other partners to follow in the future.

Cookery Demonstrations

The Council's waste education and outreach team have provided 27 Cookery Demonstrations to an audience of approx. 600 people. These show people how to make cheap and nutritious meals using leftovers and store cupboard ingredients. During the demonstrations information is also provided on recycling any packaging e.g. tins and using food waste collections.

Cookbooks

We have given away approx. 5000 copies of our current recipe book – The Thrifty Kitchen and have just launched a new cook book – Solo Cooking, aimed at those in a smaller household. Both of these books have advice on how to store foods to let them last longer, how to batch cook, savvy shopping, using up leftovers, cooking what you need and using your freezer. The idea being people can both save money on their food shop, avoid food waste and how to recycle the food waste you do have.

Food Waste Workshops

We have held 10 food waste workshops and presentations with an audience of 144 people in 2023/24 and continue to

Sustainability Area at the Spring and Autumn Fairs

The city's Autumn Fair in Sept 2023 saw 4,000 people through the doors of our Sustainable Marquee, all engaging with staff from the team. We provided spaghetti measures, recipe books and rice scoop measurers, some 300 people enjoyed food demonstrations throughout the weekend with tasting and free recipe books.

Engagement with local schools

All of our school and community sessions include an element of learning about food waste and recycling packaging, with a focus on how to avoid food waste and how to recycle what you do have.

Nursery and Foundation (Year 1 and 2): For year one and two we have Mr Rat's Recycling Story. This session uses pictures, props and a story to teach younger children about recycling.

Key stage 1 (Year 3 and 4) programme includes outdoor environmental games (summer term) - using games and activities to learn about litter, recycling and nature (30 minutes); The story of paper - a general recycling talk with a specific focus on paper (30 minutes); Dig for Victory - compares recycling and food waste issues today with those during World War II (30-45 minutes, and can include a planting activity).

Key stage 2 (Year 5 -7) programme includes: Environmental trail (summer term) – outdoor session with pupils, in groups, working their way through 14 rhyming clues and working out the answers as they go, followed by environmental games (45 minutes); Paper making workshop - turn your classroom into a paper recycling factory (60 minutes); Reduce, Reuse, Recycle quiz - interactive recycling quiz (45 minutes); Composting and Minibeasts – talk and quiz with a focus on how nature recycles waste

We can also adapt programmes based on a school's requirements, for example to focus on a particular material or waste related topic or can develop a new programme if it fits within litter/waste/recycling.

Where appropriate, we include information on how recycling and waste links to climate change e.g. less energy required to produce recycled products, using recycled paper requires fewer trees to be cut down, food waste and emissions.

Cater 4 Later Restaurant Boxes

Our Cater 4 Later offering is aimed at food business within the city. This scheme provides compostable food containers to allow customers to take home any leftovers.

Free Compost for Schools and Community Groups

We have provided free compost to schools and community groups to encourage growing their own produce as well as promoting the fact that the compost is made locally from the food and garden waste collected from households. In 2022-23 we provided 153 tonnes of compost to 85 groups and organisations and in 2023-24 we provided 47 tonnes to 22 groups and organisations. In addition, during Compost Week in May, 2400 smaller bags of compost are provided free of charge to the public via our household recycling centres, again to promote the benefits of recycling organic waste at home.

National Campaign Advisory Panel

The National Campaign Advisory Panel (NCAP) is made up of local council officers (including BCC), WRAP and DAERA. The Council's waste team support the design and promotion of national campaigns around waste and recycling to residents within each council area such as in Sept 2023 - National Recycle Week - Outdoor, online and social media advertising, encouraging (among other messages) the correct recycling of food packaging. Also in March 2024 - Food Waste Action Week. The entire campaign is around sustainable food practises. This year social media promotion focused on 'Choose what you'll use' and encouraged choosing loose fruit and veg to reduce both food waste and food packaging.

C: Other information: Other activities and context (Please see Section 2 above for guidance) (Mandatory word limit: 250).

NI Food and Farming Conference

SFP Coordinator sat on an advisory group for a National Food and Farming Conference run by NIEL and PCAN in April 2024. Several partners contributed thought leadership pieces at the event and contributed to an open debate on challenges facing NI food system.

Oxford Real Farming Conference

The partnership convened a collective of growers, activists and agroecological food businesses to consider NI representation at Oxford Real Farming Conference, resulting in two submissions being made. A key part of the challenge of working in Belfast and NI is lack of investment, knowledge and consideration for the complexities of the context in NI, so the partnership is really proud to have convened this collective and taken action.