

SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2023

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.docx](#)
- SFP Awards: Activity and Impact: [SFP Awards - Activity and Impact.docx](#)

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= compulsory):

Name of your partnership*:
Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Lynne Goodacre. Email:info@bwdfoodalliance.org.uk. Tel: 07435454252
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
North West
Award you are applying for*: Bronze

Please provide us with background information about your place*: 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:

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC), a Unitary Authority since 1998 has a population of 154,800, comprises the towns of Blackburn and Darwen (BwD) and four villages. Almost 40% of surrounding land is designated Green Belt. The Borough has two sites of special scientific interest, biological heritage sites, district wildlife sites and four nature reserves.

The population is ethnically diverse with 36% of residents identifying as Asian, Asian British and 2% as 'mixed' or 'multiple'. Seventy-one percent of the working age population are economically active. The largest sectors of employment are health and social care, wholesale, retail trade and manufacturing. Twenty-three percent fewer people work in professional occupations compared with the rest of the country resulting in lower than average earnings across the Borough.

Our Challenges. BwD is the fourteenth most deprived local authority in England. Twenty-seven percent of children live in absolute low income families and 34% in relative low income families. We have the second highest proportion of underweight children in reception in the north west however by year 6, the Borough has an above-average proportion of children with excess weight and actual obesity. Life expectancy is lower by approximately three years when compared across England and the difference between the most and least deprived areas in the Borough is for males 12 years and females 8 years.

The impact of the cost of living crisis hits harder for some of our local communities, where incomes are historically low and housing stock is older and difficult to heat. The proportion of the adult population meeting the recommended five a day on a usual day is significantly worse than the English average. During the pandemic we had the third highest infection rate in England and the highest death rate in the north west.

Whilst the above pose significant challenges in relation to our food agendas we also have many opportunities. BwD is a 'young' Borough with 28% of the population being under twenty with the potential to change diet related behaviour and increase food related skills. Our ethnically diverse population provides a rich and varied food culture with a huge potential to bring communities together around food. BwD has secured significant funding to redevelop both town centres and the potential, within these redevelopments, for food to contribute to the economic sustainability of our town centres is acknowledged.

How have you considered equity, diversity and inclusion in the structure and work of your partnership *? Advisory word limit: 300 words

ANSWER:

Our membership is diverse and our programmes of work are aimed at celebrating the diversity of the food culture within the Borough and reflected in our strap line, *“Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance where eating, cooking, growing and accessing good food is open to all”*.

We worked with our membership to develop our published guiding principles which state that we will:

- Celebrate & respect diversity within our community
- Oppose any form of discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or religion
- Foster long-term partnerships & build trust through collaboration
- Work in ways which ensure that all sectors of our community have an opportunity to get involved in our work
- Act respectfully & recognise & respect the diversity of views around food
- Move from individual to collective action
- Always be open to learning
- Foster innovation & creativity

These principles inform our work and are underpinned by our equity, equality and diversity policy. Fundamental to our way of working is our focus on fostering long-term partnerships & building trust through collaboration. Our established links and membership of the local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) network of over two hundred organisations ensures that we work in ways in which all sectors of our community have an opportunity to inform and participate in our work. Our focus on collaborative working brings diverse groups together and supports us in moving from individual to collective action.

Our close links with BwDBC and PH specifically ensures that we have access to accurate data about the changing demographics within the Borough and the needs and priorities of specific sectors within our communities and wards. This enables us to continually review our work to ensure we are responsive to all sectors of our community and this is monitored by PH through our service level agreement.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

Please read SFP Awards: Guidance for applicants: [SFP Awards - Guidance for applicants.docx](#) 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.

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

Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance (BwDFA) has been meeting as a cross sector strategic partnership since 2018 initially under the auspices of the Public Health (PH) within BwDBC. Funding through PH led to employment of a part-time co-ordinator in April 2022 with the remit of establishing the Food Alliance (FA) as a self-governing organisation. In December 2022 we obtained status as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Over this time our membership has grown to include representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations, community groups, our business community, food producers and individuals.

The expertise of our [Trustees](#) ensures not only strong governance of the FA but, through their extensive networks, links our work at a strategic level with health and social care, schools and the business community.

Our [steering group](#) comprises representatives from our local Hospital Trust, Blackburn College, CVS, PH, local food producers, youth organisations, BwDBC Climate Officer and our creative community. Our working groups comprise representatives from key community groups, many of whom have lived experience of food issues. Our membership is open to all. This organisational structure ensures that our work is connected at strategic and community levels.

Strong links with BwDBC facilitates a whole systems approach to the food agenda. We are key members of the Eat Well Move More Strategy Group (EWMMSG) and the Child Poverty Strategy Group. A core objective of the Eat Well Move More Strategy is *“to provide a healthy, vibrant, equitable and more sustainable food environment for all.”*

The FA is the delivery group for this objective which commits the Council to: *working with our local food partners via our Food Alliance to create a local food environment that ensures access to nutritious and affordable options for every resident. We will use the*

national Sustainable Food Places Network and their framework to inform our work whilst we take into account our local context, food culture, and the needs and priorities of our communities.

The EWMMSG links our work directly with the cross sector [Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy](#) which acknowledges our role in providing “a healthier and more sustainable food environment, including access to healthier and more affordable foods.” (pg12). Through these links we will ensure that we develop links with wider Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board strategies and policies as these develop.

A key objective of our work is to span departmental and organisational boundaries promoting a joined up approach to the food agenda which links health and wellbeing, economic growth and sustainability/climate. We therefore work with BwDBC Environment and Operations Department, responsible for waste, parks and green spaces, and Growth and Development, encompassing climate action, economic development and town centres.

Whilst working strategically it is essential that policy is informed by the needs and priorities of our community. Our work is built therefore upon strong local partnerships, positive working relationships and sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise. Central to the success of this approach is the ability to build relationships and collaborations whilst respecting the independence and governance structures residing in individual organisations.

Our work programmes are based on building a good food movement from the ground up connecting communities with each other and with our leaders, holding them to account. Since 2022 we have established two major workstreams, the [Food Equality Network](#) and, in collaboration with Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT), the [Growing Network](#).

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

Our first action plan was written in 2022 in consultation with our funders, trustees and membership through a range of consultation activities including our work at a strategic level, our working groups, steering group, and Let’s Talk Food Campaign. The [action plan](#) was reviewed and refreshed in April & May 2023 to inform our activities for the current year.

Our action plan is built around our key charitable objects which are:

The promotion, preservation and protection of good health and the environment for the public benefit in Blackburn with Darwen and the surrounding area by increasing public understanding, involvement and knowledge of the way in which food is produced, distributed, consumed and disposed of and the effects this can have on human health and wellbeing and the health of the environment on which humans depend.

It is mapped also onto our external funding commitments and the Sustainable Food Places Key Issues. Each element of the workplan has a timeline attached to it to enable us to monitor progress throughout the year.

Our funding from BwDBC is based on a service specification which outlines in detail the work we are required to deliver in areas such as priority workstreams, engagement and co-production, organisational management, training and competencies and governance. We have quarterly meetings with PH to monitor our activity and report on key performance indicators.

In 2022 we obtained a twelve month Good Food Movement Grant from Sustainable Food Places and are required to provide progress reports and a final report through the course of this funding which runs from April 2023-March 2024.

We have worked with our broad membership base to develop our [food charter](#), guiding principles and the [commitments](#) members are asked to make when joining the FA. These are now incorporated into our [website](#) which was launched in 2022. Alongside information about the range of work undertaken by the FA and our members the website also comprises a blog published on a weekly basis.



We worked with a local artist to redesign our logo which is used across all social media channels, publicity and marketing material.

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

[The Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan](#) provides the planning policy framework to support growth within the Borough and helps to target investment. It contains a range of policies to help secure sustainable growth, protecting the Borough and its environment for future generations and helping to address the climate emergency. Development of the plan is a lengthy process and, having passed through many layers of scrutiny and public consultation, is now in its final stage of scrutiny with the expectation of it being adopted in January 2024. Given the importance of this plan in setting out a policy framework which impacts on different aspects of the food agenda, where relevant, reference is made to it in our application. Our links at a strategic level helps to ensure that the work of the FA is aligned with the Local Plan and, where appropriate, we can use the plan to support the development of our work.

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

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

Our history of high levels of deprivation, food poverty and diet related ill health has shaped significantly the food narrative and continues to do so in the current cost of living crisis. Alongside these challenges, however, there is much work focused on a more positive, celebratory food narrative central to the development of a good food movement. As a relatively young food alliance we aim to build upon what exists already, increase the profile of this work and drive forward an exciting and forward-thinking good food movement.

The FA promotes a wide range of food, health and sustainability issues through our website and social media channels [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). More specific information is disseminated via our work programmes, bi-annual membership meetings and conference.

Over the last twelve months a number of festivals have brought people from the Borough together. These include the [Hala Food Festival](#) attended by over 4,000 people and an Edi celebration both organised by Blackburn Rovers Community Trust and the [Darwen Food and Drink Festival](#). The two day [National Festival of Making](#), which attracted its largest ever attendance provided the FA with the opportunity to [engage visitors with our work](#) and, through our information stand, promote key food agendas

Smaller festivals have included events organised by groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers, e.g. an International Food Party where women from 12 nationalities cooked food for 120 people and an International Food Festival as part of refugee week, organised along similar lines.

Our [Let's Talk Food Campaign](#) aims to increase our understanding of what 'good food' means to our community, inform our action plan and develop the FA network. To date over 200 people have participated from a wide cross section of the community. This work has fuelled many ongoing conversations about food, informed the resources produced by the Wellbeing Team and been presented to representatives from public health from across the region.

In 2022 the FA held our first [conference](#) with high profile national keynote speakers presenting on topics relevant to our major work streams. Alongside formal presentations workshops were run by the Soil Association and FA. Sponsorship enabled heavily subsidised places for local community groups to be provided. The conference was a major focal point for people from different settings, working on different aspects of the food agenda to come together.

Blackburn College has an intake of approximately 120 students per annum starting catering programmes. To ensure that these programmes are accessible to all they have developed an Halal teaching kitchen to widen access to its catering courses for both staff and students and to increase students understanding of catering for people requiring Halal food. Monthly visits are arranged for students to local producers to connect them with how the food they prepare is produced. The FA is working with the college currently to plan a range of activities on campus during Action on Food Waste week in 2024 and involving students in the Let's Talk Food campaign.

BwD [Adult learning](#) provide a rolling programme of courses throughout the year which are free to attend including level one and two accredited food safety, food growing outdoors, cooking for wellness, and courses designed specifically for people with learning disabilities such as healthier baking and food from around the world.

[Roof Top Bees](#) run an apiary in the grounds of Cherry Tree Library. The club provides free access to bee handling and basic beekeeper training and run regular 'meet the bee' sessions to non-members. They have also created an accessible bee viewing area for people with limited mobility.

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

A major asset for engaging people with food growing and sustainability issues is the [Greenhouse Project](#) run by Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT). LWT took over the management of the derelict BwDBC commercial greenhouses. This [video](#) documents the development of the project which supports people from all sectors of the community in developing food growing skills and living more in harmony with the natural world.

Alongside teaching food growing skills, the project demonstrates practical solutions to address environmental issues such as composting, solar energy and water capture systems. They run twice weekly drop in sessions for up to 25 volunteers which, in the summer extend into the evening enabling families and those in work to attend. They run monthly children's gardening sessions and regular public talks on environmental/ecological issues. They also undertake site visits for numerous community groups wanting to set up their own community garden and they operate a repurposing/recycling hub. To date in 2023 they have upgraded and redistributed 30 bikes. The project is constantly evolving and in 2023 the FA provided funding towards the development of an outdoor kitchen area.

Through the provision of a grant the FA, in 2022, funded LWT to set up the Growing Network which sends out regular emails and updates on news and funding opportunities to 20 community gardening projects. The groups support each other's events to promote their work and engage the wider community in food growing initiatives.

A number of community assets have been made available by BwDBC to community groups including community garden sites in [Corporation Park](#) and [Whitehall Park](#). Both have a regular volunteer base. Whitehall Park has a community hub enabling volunteers to eat together, a community orchard and a Little Potting Group for children. A community orchard has also been planted in Roe Lee Park. [The Canal Side Activity and Environment Centre run](#) offers a range of activities predominantly for young people across the Borough.

Funded through the governments Shared Prosperity Fund [Super Slow Way](#) have augmented the development of green spaces along Blackburn stretches of the Liverpool to Leeds canal providing the opportunity for residents to engage in a [range of activities](#) including [food growing](#), foraging and cooking and eating together.

In 2021 & 2022 the FA managed a grant scheme funded by BwDBC to support the development of community growing spaces. Grants of up to £500 were awarded to a number of organisations including local schools, 2 hostels for young homeless people and several community groups. Those receiving funding were linked with the Growing Network to provide access to free materials such as compost and the expertise of the Greenhouse Project.

Blackburn Edibles with over 240 members work to improve neglected areas with guerrilla gardening, share their knowledge and expertise, swop seeds and seedling, and mentor new gardeners.

Blackburn Improvement District (BID) with a membership of businesses, organisation and charities in Blackburn town centre is committed to creating a sustainable, cleaner and more attractive town centre environment. Over the last year a number of perennial fruit and herb planters have been funded by BID and planted and maintained by community groups.

Looking to the future a key policy commitment set out within the BwDBC Local Plan states in its Health and Wellbeing Policy that, *“new developments should consider how their proposals can improve the local food environment for both consumption and production of healthier food options, for example through incorporating on-site community food growing spaces, ensuring landscaping is flexible so that spaces may be adapted for growing opportunities and increasing access to healthy food convenience stores.”*

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

The Food Alliance is currently working with Soil Association Food For Life Team to develop and pilot in 2023/24 a place based My Food Community Leadership Programme. Through this programme a cohort of Good Food Champions will participate in training which will:

- Inspire, enable and raise the profile of local solutions which connect people through good food
- Connect community food organisers through the training programme
- Social good food activities receive the investment and support needed to flourish
- Trial a place-based self-moderating digital network of good food activities
- Support peer mentoring between good food champions

This programme will support the development of a connected community of Food Champions who will not only have the opportunity, through the programme, to develop and implement 2 or 3 small food related projects, but also provide a strong foundation from which to continue the development of a local good food movement.

BwDBC is currently submitting a funding application which, if successful, will fund the development of a community orchard close to the Greenhouse Project and establish a grant fund to which community organisations can apply to plant fruit trees in local community settings. Central to these small grants will be training on planting and caring for the trees.

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

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

The high incidence of deprivation in BwD has led to significant activity around tackling food poverty across all sectors. Since 2021 approximately 30% of the Household Support Fund (HSF) has been allocated to providing food support.

The FA leads the [Food Equality Network \(FEN\)](#), a multi-agency partnership meeting on a bi-monthly basis. Current membership comprises eighteen organisations including our Trussell Trust Foodbank (to which 160 organisations refer), six community centre based food clubs, several food larders and food clubs, organisations supporting asylum seekers, refugees and people in recovery or homeless and representatives from PH. The development of this partnership has led to greater cooperation, communication, sharing of surplus food and expertise across the network.

In 2021 the FA undertook a scoping exercise of food support across the Borough identifying the heavy reliance on funding via HSF and an emphasis on providing free food raising

concerns about the sustainability of this approach. The FA has since worked with PH to develop a **BwD Food Club**, operated by [Community & Business Partners](#), based on levying a small charge for a heavily subsidised food parcel.

The FEN is working to increase uptake of **Healthy Start vouchers** standing currently at 67% of those eligible to claim. FEN members created publicity material designed to meet local information needs and some members are running sessions to support people through the online application process.

A key aspect of the [Holiday Activity Fund](#) running across the Borough is providing healthy meals over the school holidays and promoting knowledge of health and nutrition. All parents are provided with a nutritional awareness and advice pack. All meals comply with the government school food standards. Over summer holidays 2023 Children's Centres and Family Hubs also provided 50p one pot meals that were available for anyone in the community to purchase.

In 2022 6,628 pupils in the Borough were eligible for free school meals (FSM). A significant number of families do not qualify for FSM but cannot afford to pay for meals. In April 2023 a £700,000 **grant scheme** was established by PH to enable schools to increase their food offer to the most vulnerable pupils and families. Funding was allocated based on the proportion of pupils living in the 25% most deprived postcodes and the size of school.

Sixty-four schools received funding to support a range of initiatives including providing more fresh fruit, supporting breakfast and afterschool clubs, providing food hampers and setting up food larders. Funding has been extended to April 2024.

An inter-agency group, including the FA, is currently developing a **Child Poverty Action Strategy**. Work has been undertaken by [Health Watch](#) to understand the needs of children and their parents to inform the strategy. The BwD Youth Forum is a key partner and representatives have met to raise this issue with Kate Hollern, MP for Blackburn.

Across the borough a wide range of organisations provide free or heavily subsidised meals on an ongoing basis including children's centres and family hubs, community centres, drop in groups for asylum seekers and refugees and adults and young people who are homeless. [Blackburn and Darwen Youth Zone](#) provides an average of 1,000 free hot meals each week. Grab bags are available for those needing extra food support. Food hampers are provided at Christmas to families identified as being in need of support and free lunches are provided at all family days.

In November 2022 a week long interagency **Cost of Living Roadshow** took place across the libraries and community centres. The Food Alliance and Foodbank attended these sessions to provide information and signpost people to relevant agencies.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

The current annual report from public health sets out the significant challenges the Borough faces in addressing diet related ill-health. The PH website [BeWellBwD](#) adopts a life course approach to Start Well, Live Well and Age Well and is a central point of information for a wide range of services and resources to support health and wellbeing.

BwD is a **Breastfeeding Friendly Borough** and our maternity/health visiting/children centres have achieved UNICEF GOLD Baby Friendly Accreditation. [This video](#) demonstrates the collaboration that led to this award.

[The Henry programme](#), runs across all of our children's centres and family hubs and provides information and support to parents on issues such as breastfeeding, healthy nutrition, oral health and promoting an active lifestyle

Fifty-one per cent of our children aged five have at least one tooth missing or filled due to tooth decay. [Give Up Loving Pop](#) programme is focused on reducing intake of sugary drinks. Using the traction of Blackburn Rovers Football club it is delivered to schools across BwD by their community trust sports coaches. Kind To Teeth parent champions are also being trained to increase awareness of the impact of high sugar drinks on teeth and promote good oral health. They also promote healthy eating through their [Fit Fans](#) programme.

BwDBC's [Wellbeing Service](#), promotes healthy eating on an individual and group basis and via a range of online resources. Their programmes are open to all on a self-referral basis. They also provide programmes designed specifically for adults with learning disabilities and autism and partner with Business Health Matters to train staff to become workplace Health Champions undertaking work based health checks.

Many groups across BwD are undertaking work to promote healthy eating and [The Billy Project](#), a women only gym delivering gym sessions for disadvantaged and vulnerable women, is one example. They operate a community fridge within the gym which is open to the wider community, have developed a Calorie Champion programme for young girls to help them understand more about food and nutrition. Via their social media they promote recipes made from food available from the community fridge.

From September 2023 BwD will be taking part in the [PASTA programme](#) bringing together children between 5 and 8 with their parents and siblings to learn to cook affordable, healthy meals together and spend quality time together.

In 2022 a wide range of stakeholders worked with BwD AgeUK, and Food Active to produce the **Supporting Good Nutrition, Hydration and Physical Movement in Care Settings** tool kit. It is designed to provide practical support and ideas for residential care home staff or those working in domiciliary and day care settings. This information is now shared with all integrated care, dementia and day care services.

Home from Hospital. Ensuring people have access to food at discharge from hospital and beyond. Representatives from BwD AgeUK took part in a Sustain project to capture current practice in supporting people on discharge from hospital. Alongside the work of AgeUK East Lancashire NHS Hospital Trust also ensures that on discharge where necessary food parcels are provided so that a person has enough nutritious food when they arrive home.

BwD PH participated in a number of face to face sessions and webinars with Sustain to explore how to address junk food advertising. This led to work with young people to document the range of advertising and fast food outlets they encountered on their journey to school. The outcome of this work is a series of [lesson plans](#) developed by Food Active to explore the issues of junk food advertising, and reducing sugar in their diet

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

Set up in 2013 by the North West Directors of Public Health, the 'North West Obesity Task Force' was officially launched as [Food Active](#) in 2014 and are commissioned by local authority public health teams, NHS organisations, and Public Health England teams at both regional and national level. They specialise in public health nutrition, local and national policy, research, strategic partnerships and planning for health and community interventions. BwDBC commission Food Active to provide strategic support and consultation on a range of food and nutrition related pieces of work including the Recipe 4 Health programme, Catering and Procurement guidance and School Food Improvement initiatives. Food Active are members of the Food Alliance.

Many community organisation like [Healthy Living](#) undertake a broad spectrum of food related work founded on close working relationships with the communities with whom they work. In setting up a Food Club in Higher Croft Healthy Living undertook extensive development work to empower local residents to determine how they wanted the club to run and to support them in developing their skills to take over the running of the larder.

Close links with these community based organisations ensures that the FA is connected with and responsive to the needs of our community.

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

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

BwD was a partner in the [Pennine Lancashire Healthier Place, Healthier Future Programme's Childhood Obesity Trailblazer](#). Commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care this programme ran until 2022 to promote innovative action to address childhood obesity. The rationale for inclusion here is that key aspects of the programme focused on systems leadership, planning to improve the ratio of healthy to less healthy food outlets and business engagement to influence the provision of healthy affordable food.

A series of eLearning materials were developed to empower elected members to consider and advocate for health and wellbeing across their ward, district and portfolio. The leader of BwDBC and elected member and chair of the food alliance presented at a conference which was organised as a collaboration between Food Active and Sustain. This led to the development of a [tool kit for planners](#), developers and communities to support the creation the implementation of health promoting planning policies and it also led to the development of the Recipe 4 Health award.

The **Recipe4Health** Award is a Lancashire Trading Standards scheme which recognises food businesses that promote healthy eating, environmental and social responsibility. BwD environmental health officers promote this award to businesses across the Borough. Businesses are award bronze, silver or gold, and award holders within BwD can be located via an [online interactive map](#). In 2023 BwDBC ran a campaign via its social media channels to promote the independent food businesses who have achieved the award and they are working currently to increase the number of businesses registering for the award for inclusion on the map.

The commitment to promoting the development of health promoting environments and small businesses is reinforced by the inclusion of the following in the new local plan in several place:

Health and wellbeing: Developments should consider how their proposals can improve the local food environment for both consumption and production of healthier food options, for example through incorporating on-site community food growing spaces, ensuring

landscaping is flexible so that spaces may be adapted for growing opportunities and increasing access to healthy food convenience stores.

Healthy food environments: Proposals for new development that will help contribute to a more sustainable, local food network (in terms of food production, distribution, procurement and waste management) will be strongly supported in principle.

Supporting small local retail: The Council is supportive of the concept of creating 20 minute neighbourhoods. The identification of a network of Local Centres within the centre hierarchy helps to support this concept.

All significant new developments will be subject also to a health impact assessment

BwDBC signed the [Healthy Weight Declaration](#) a strategic, system-wide commitment made to reduce unhealthy weight. It adopts a whole systems approach to promoting good health and well-being. This declaration is currently in the process of being refreshed and updated.

Whilst the focus of the declaration is on promoting healthy weight the rationale for including it in this section is that it focuses on the implementation of policies and practices at an institutional rather than an individual level. The methodology comprises compiling evidence in a range of areas including who the authority is addressing commercial determinant of healthy weight, health promoting environments and organisational change

Darwen Town Centre Regeneration. The £100 million [Darwen Town Deal](#) investment programme has paved the way for significant redevelopment of key assets within the town including the redevelopment of town centre and the Victorian Market Hall. The management board and BwDBC are currently preparing plans with a view to work starting in 2024. The approach underpinning this phase of development in working towards creating a 'modern market' within the town centre focused on food to support the towns independent retailers and provide investment opportunities for new businesses.

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

See also Recipe 4 Health in previous section.

In 2022 the FA was awarded a **Good Food Movement grant** from Sustainable Food Places to:

- increase interest in and knowledge and skills about local sustainable food production and the local food culture
- develop understanding of our peri-urban agricultural context

- promote greater connections and interactions between producers and small food businesses and our community

We are currently in the process of mapping local sustainable producers and independent food business within a twenty mile radius of the Borough. The information gathered is being collated to inform a directory which will be published by March 2024 on our website.

Alongside this we are running a campaign, [Putting a Face to Our Food](#) which profiles local producers and businesses to inform blogs which are published on our website and promoted via our [social media channels](#).

The emphasis on buying local is also embedded in our **Community Cook-up** programme which takes place on a monthly basis. Working with a range of organisations which include those supporting young homeless people, a women's refuge, a local school, The Youth Zone, and the Foodbank we are challenging them to prepare a meal for their volunteers or clients with an emphasis on locally produced seasonal food.

All of the produce is purchased from local producers and independent businesses. [Outputs](#) from each cook-up are written up and published on the FA website and social media channels emphasising and promoting the local businesses from whom the food has been purchased.

The pandemic impacted significantly on small, independent food businesses and to **support local market traders** through this challenging time PH provided £450,000 of Free School food vouchers to families eligible for free school meals. The vouchers enabled them to purchase food directly from their local market over holiday periods. All traders taking part in the scheme reported seeing new customers many of whom returned to the markets once the scheme ended.

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

In 2022 Blackburn Rovers Football Club with a stadium capacity of 31,000 has significant influence in the Borough. entered into partnership with [Change Please](#) coffee to serve their coffee across all their hospitality, conferencing and events and to supporters on match days. Change Please donate 100% of their profits into supporting homeless people and in BwD this will be through the work of Benefit Mankind.

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

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

BwDBC Procurement Strategy 2022-25: Three of the five key priorities set out in the Council's procurement strategy are to: support the local economy, respond to climate change and deliver social value. In supporting the local economy it commits to taking a local first approach, offer training to local providers to help them bid for contracts both within the Council and those of other public sector organisations and increase how much is spent locally via an annual KPI report.

This commitment is reflected also in the Council's Local Plan (pg 56) which states: *The Council strongly supports the principles of local food growing, distribution and procurement initiatives. Such enterprises strongly reflect all three tiers of sustainable communities (economic, social and environmental) and the Council will encourage and support proposals wherever possible.*

In 2022 PH worked with BwDBC commercial services around the contract to supply vending machines in leisure centres. The tender was awarded based on the company's ability to provide healthy options, removing products high in fat and sugar and ensuring water was displayed at eye-level. Similar requirements were written into the invitation to quote for the provision of catering services in one of the most heavily used parks in Blackburn, which stated that the successful contract must source and promote local produce wherever possible, deliver Healthy Recipes, including Recipe For Health Award, comply with BwDFA pledge, and promote the venue as a breast feeding friendly place.

The Department of Education guidance included locally in the commissioning process for all organisations delivering the **Holiday Action Fund** states: *We strongly encourage thought around how sustainable development can be reflected in the ethos, day-to-day operations and throughout the delivery of any HAF programme. Some practices to consider are where possible using locally sourced food and ingredients, making use of food surplus organisations.*

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust employs 8,000 staff and treats over 700,000 patients a year with 1041 inpatient beds. Therefore the practices it adopts around food procurement and healthy sustainable food policies have a significant impact on the environment, local population and local economy. In its **Green Plan 2022-25** the Trust is clear in its commitment to promoting healthier foods, reducing emission, sourcing local and regional food (pg76), reducing supply chain emissions (pg69) and protecting biodiversity and green spaces across its estates (pg60). Clear actions around food and nutrition are set

out (pg77) to drive forward its Green Plan in all aspects of the Trusts catering functions from providing food for staff and in-patients to refreshments for visitors.

Blackburn Rovers Football Club's home is Ewood Park, a 31,000 seater stadium with extensive meeting and conference facilities. In 2022 it was awarded a **Gold level Green Tourism Award**. This is an international hallmark for good environmental practice in relation to areas such as ethical buying, minimising food miles, staying local and seasonal, efficient and eco-friendly waste disposal, reducing energy and saving water.

All of the catering throughout Ewood Park is provided by Sodexo whose commitment to promoting sustainable eating is outlined in their [corporate social responsibility statement](#). The club published a clear statement of intent to support local producers and suppliers: *A new food offer with a strong focus on working with local artisan producers and suppliers along with a new hospitality offer are currently being finalised and will be in place prior to the start of the 2019-20 season.* This commitment is still in place.

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

Access to large scale procurement markets. Local Authorities in the north west currently spend between £6bn and £6.5bn per annum on goods and services. To make it easier for businesses to identify potential opportunities to grow and to support the local economy BwDBC advertises opportunities to tender for contracts on [The Chest](#). The initial tender for developing the work of the FA and the more recent tender to establish and run the new BwD Food Club were all advertised on the Chest.

Developing a food procurement group. A key aim of our current Good Food Movement grant is to lay the foundations for a local food procurement group. The first phase of this work is underway currently in developing a network of local food producers and aiming to bring them together at the start of 2024.

Alongside this Food Active are working with PH to support school catering managers in ensuring that, as a minimum, all schools are reaching the government standard for school food.

As these two networks are developing simultaneously we hope to be able to bring them together in 2024, along with catering managers from other organisations.

Many of our local community organisations who provide food support, whilst not having a specified procurement strategy, purchase their produce from small independent retailers. A prime example of this is our Trussell Trust Foodbank. Over the last 12 months they have provided 8,353 food parcels across the Borough and all of these contain fresh potatoes, onions and carrots, milk and eggs all of which are purchased from small independent

producers and a greengrocer. This is a significant order for these small independent businesses. This practice is replicated across the community based food support network where local relationships have been established but not formalised into a strategy or policy.

As the FA has developed over the last 18 months a lot of groundwork has been undertaken which connects us to new elements of the local supply chain. Many of the people we are connecting with in organisations such as Blackburn College, Blackburn Rovers Football Club and the local producers themselves are linking us in with their own networks. Our aim is to deepen these relationships to build a more collaborative partnership.

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

In recent years responsibility for the procurement of food in many areas of local authority activity has shifted away from local authority control. Organisations such as schools therefore negotiate their own catering suppliers. This is challenging territory to work in given the relationships and trust that already exist between catering managers and their suppliers. However in preparing this application we have had a number of significant conversations with organisations and by asking the question about where food is procured from have opened up conversations about how more support can be given to our small independent producers and organisations.

Given the high incidence of deprivation and diet related ill-health in all ages in our Borough the FA is navigating also the challenge of working across the system to ensure that everyone has access to healthy food within the constraints of the rising costs of food for both individuals and organisations. At times this leads inevitably to compromises in supporting the local food chain when price comparison forms part of the decision making process.

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

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

BwDBC declared a **Climate Emergency** in 2019 and in 2020 published its first climate emergency action plan in which it sets the goal of being net carbon neutral by 2030. Delivering on the climate action plan is one of the four key pillars of the new corporate plan 2023-2027. The [current action plan](#) identifies BwDFA as a partner organisation in its delivery.

Through consultation with residents, the Council taking a lead on the climate emergency was identified as a priority. In 2022 the Council commissioned a **People's Jury on Climate**

Change. The FA was a member of the oversight panel formed to agree the recruitment methodology, oversee the process and identify commentators who gave evidence to the jury. Through a robust recruitment process thirty-two participants were chosen to reflect the diversity of the local population. The jury received presentations from 19 ‘commentators’ who they questioned and over 30 hours of working together [identified 15 recommendations](#) ranked in order of importance.

The top recommendation was the need to improve communication and education at all levels around topics including food choices, food waste recycling and repair cafes. Improving green spaces and taking more action to reduce food waste were placed equal 3rd. The final report was presented by jury members at a public event and progress on the recommendations is being monitored by jury members on a six monthly basis. To further communicate and build upon the work of the Jury, members developed an interactive exhibition at the 2023 [National Festival of Making](#) information from which is in the process of being turned into a piece of wall art.

Young Peoples Take Over Challenge: Every year the BwD Youth Forum, comprising elected representatives from youth organisations across the Borough, organise a Take Over Challenge which brings together children to think about ways of addressing key agendas in the Borough. In 2023 the FA ran a joint workshop with Blackburn Foodbank on the topic of food poverty and food waste. Over 70 young people from secondary schools across the Borough took part in the challenge to consider the range of factors which contribute to people experiencing food poverty and the ways in which reducing household food waste can save money and have a positive environmental impact.

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

In 2021 BwDBC conducted a waste compositional analysis which identified that 43.8% of waste in the general waste bin was food waste of which 22% was actually edible. To understand why this was happening the Council conducted a household survey in 2022 and over 3,000 residents responded. Information from the survey was used to inform online resources produced by the Council and the content of information on waste reduction which went out in the 2023 waste collection calendar to every household in the Borough.

In 2023 the Food Alliance, members of the Council’s environment team and staff from the Foodbank held events during food waste action week in [Blackburn town centre](#) and Blackburn and Darwen indoor markets to highlight the issue of food waste and promote ways in which people could be reducing their waste. The Council has produced a range of

[online resources](#) relating to reducing, redirecting and recycling and their environment officer runs ongoing sessions in schools for year 4 and 5 across the Borough.

[The Making Rooms](#), is a place where creativity, technology and advanced manufacturing come together in a community facility open to all. A project facilitated by the Making Rooms is **Ecolab Blackburn** which is a research and training hub for anyone interested in sustainability technology and urban agriculture. The EcoLab is one of four new sustainability micro-labs being setup in the Borough to help individuals and organisations experiment with green technologies. Some of the ideas EcoLab Blackburn are exploring include; creating bio-materials from organic waste, hydroponics, material recycling, bio 3D-printing and urban growing

Blackburn Rovers Football Club uses a lean path waste watch system to measure all food waste from both customers and kitchen food preparation to calculate the environmental and commercial impact. They also have a zero to landfill policy and during 2022 saved 81.8 tonnes of carbon emissions by diverting all waste from landfill. On match days any food surplus from their retail outlets is donated to homeless charities and those in need within the community.

Reference has been previously to the work being undertaken by East Lancs NHS Hospital Trust to reduce food waste as part of its [Green Plan 2022-25](#).

[Community & Business Partners CIC](#) (CBPs) is an ethical, award winning, not-for-profit organisation based in Blackburn. Through its Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Social Governance a percentage of members fees is invested directly into the community through various community engagement activities including the BwD Food Club. They work also with food manufacturers and distribution centres, to intercept any unwanted or surplus food. They also bulk purchase high quality, nutritious food from wholesalers and where possible, share surplus with partners across the Food Equality Network.

The majority of members in the Food Equality Network collect surplus food from local supermarkets and food outlets and several are members of Fareshare making weekly trips to our regional hub.

In 2023 a cross sector recycling network met to develop a mechanism to recycle or redirect items collected via the household waste collection service for the Council. Avenues were found for a range of items including gardening implements and tools to go to the Greenhouse project. Waste wood is also repurposed there to make into planters that are then shared with community gardening projects and local groups.

[Keep Blackburn Tidy](#) Has just under 3,000 members who litter pick across the Borough. As part of this activity they are involved in much recycling of items abandoned in streets and alleyways and in working with residents to 'green' their shared spaces often repurposing items that would otherwise be thrown away.

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

BwDFA Action Plan for 23/24, our charter and charitable objectives were submitted by the Council's Lead Climate Officer as part of the Councils evidence to the Corporate Disclosure Project, a global disclosure system, to manage environmental impact which enables organisations to disclose and track their progress across a wide range of environmental issues.

FOR PANEL USE ONLY

Comments from the panel on your application:

Outcome of application:

Recommendations for onward progress: