

# 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](mailto: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):

<b>Name of your partnership*:</b>
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
<b>Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:</b>
<b>Geographic region which this award will represent*:</b>
Newry, Mourne and Down (Northern Ireland)
<b>Award you are applying for*:</b>
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:**

The Council gave approval to progress with the Sustainable Food Places (then Cities) Programme in 2020 for the entire District and this is included in the Corporate Plan.

**Population and Demographics:** The Council district has 67,735 households and a population of 181,660 represented by 41 elected members across 7 district electoral areas (DEA's). Employment rate is 74.8% and 11.1% of 16 – 64 year olds have no formal qualifications.

**Location and Geography:** The Council is situated in the southeastern part of Northern Ireland, bordering the Republic of Ireland to the south. It is characterised by its stunning natural beauty, including the Mourne Mountains, which are known for their scenic landscapes and hiking opportunities. The district's geography varies from picturesque coastal areas along the Irish Sea to rolling hills and mountains inland. The Council employs approximately 1000 staff.

**Economic and Social Challenges:** While the district boasts natural beauty and a rich cultural heritage, it also faces several economic and social challenges:

- **Economic Diversification:** Historically, the district had a strong reliance on industries such as agriculture and fishing. Economic diversification and the development of new industries have been ongoing challenges.
- **Unemployment:** Some areas within the district have experienced higher levels of unemployment, particularly in the more rural and remote communities. Efforts to create job opportunities have been essential.
- **Healthcare and Education:** Access to healthcare and educational facilities, especially in more remote areas, can be a challenge. Ensuring equitable access to quality services is a priority.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Improving infrastructure, including roads and public transportation, is crucial to support economic growth and connectivity within the district and beyond.
- **Tourism:** Leveraging the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the district to boost tourism has been a key economic strategy.
- **Community Development:** Enhancing community development and social cohesion, especially in areas with diverse populations, has been an ongoing effort.
- **Brexit Impact:** Given its proximity to the Republic of Ireland, the district has also had to grapple with the implications of Brexit on trade and cross-border relations.

**Sustainability:** The Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in October 2019, hosted a Climate Change Symposium 'Our Climate – Our Challenge' in March 2020 and Produced and launched a 10 year active travel Masterplan for the District in 2021

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

**ANSWER:**

The Council consider EDI as crucial for fostering fair, just, and inclusive communities. Key steps and strategies:

**Commitment to EDI:** a clear and public commitment evidenced through mission statements, policies, and public statements from local leaders.

**Inclusive Policies:** We review and revise existing policies and practices to ensure they are inclusive and address the needs of community members, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristics.

**Collect and Analyse Data:** We gather demographic data to understand the composition of community and identify disparities or underrepresented groups. This data can inform policies and programs to address inequities.

**Engage the Community:** Involving the community in decision-making processes. We hold public meetings, forums, and consultations to gather input on policies and programs that affect the community, especially marginalised groups.

**Diverse Workforce:** We promote diversity within the workforce, ensure that hiring practices are fair, and actively seek candidates from diverse backgrounds.

**Inclusive Language and Communication:** Using inclusive language in communications and documents. We make information accessible to individuals with disabilities, and offer translation services for non-English speakers.

**Equitable Resource Allocation:** We allocate resources, including funding, services, and infrastructure, in an equitable manner that addresses the needs of underserved communities.

**Monitor and Evaluate:** As a Council we monitor and evaluate the impact of EDI initiatives. Collect data to assess progress and make adjustments as needed.

**Legal Compliance:** We ensure that all policies and practices and funding calls comply with relevant anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws.

**Cultural Competency Training:** We provide training on cultural competency and sensitivity to help staff and elected members understand and respect diverse cultural perspectives.

By actively integrating these principles and strategies into practice, we are working towards building a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive community that benefits all residents.



## 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

In March 2020, the Council took an early step towards addressing climate change by organizing a Climate Change Symposium. This event served as a platform for discussions and awareness-building around the wider pressing issues within food sustainability .

Following this, in early 2021, the Council established the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Core Partnership Group with a specific objective: to develop a comprehensive framework for sustainable food practices within the district. By July 2021, the group had successfully commissioned a report that not only outlined their framework but also presented recommendations for action. These recommendations laid the foundation for the subsequent formation of community subgroups within the Council District.

The report emphasised the importance of collaboration and consultation in shaping sustainable food initiatives. To ensure inclusivity and gather diverse perspectives we engaged with individuals, community groups, businesses, and council services operating within Sustainable Food. The aim was to collaborate with ongoing projects, success stories, future plans, aspirations, and potential partnerships in the realm of sustainable food practices.

To structure this collaborative effort effectively, the focus groups were categorized into distinct segments:

1. NMDDC and strategic partner organisations/bodies.

2. Statutory bodies involved in sustainable food efforts.
3. Community organizations and networks actively contributing to sustainability.
4. Businesses dedicated to addressing poverty and diet-related health issues.
5. Growers associated with the Social Farms & Gardens Network.

The Core Group, instrumental in driving the sustainable food agenda forward, played a pivotal role by developing and agreeing upon the Terms of Reference for the Sub Group Partnerships. Initially, five Subgroups were established, each aligned with the six key themes of the SFP program. To streamline the process, two of these themes ('Sustainable Food Economy' and 'Catering and Procurement') were combined due to overlapping content. This combined Sub Group would address both themes comprehensively in its meetings and initiatives.

From October 2021, representative subgroups began their meetings, aiming to facilitate a strategic and collaborative approach to address the SFP program's key themes. The Terms of Reference for these subgroups included clear headings on Purpose, Composition, and Commitment. Building upon the priority recommendations from the July report, the subgroups embarked on their journey by identifying appropriate representation, recognizing needs, issues, and opportunities, proposing collaborative actions, suggesting new areas of work, and setting up mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress.

Each subgroup was designed to be composed of a maximum of 12 participants, all experts in their respective sustainable food themes. These key stakeholders would serve as conduits for communication, ensuring that sustainable food initiatives were effectively delivered across the district. Subgroup representatives are expected to commit to the Sustainable Food Places approach and the intended outcomes and purpose of their respective SFP subgroups.

This concerted effort demonstrated the Council's dedication to advancing sustainable food practices within the community. By establishing collaborative subgroups and engaging stakeholders, the Council aims to effect positive change, monitor progress, and ultimately achieve impactful outcomes in its pursuit of a sustainable food future for the district.

Consultation report attached in application email.

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

**Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Live Action Plan:** A forward-thinking SFP Live Action Plan has been crafted and is currently serving as a foundational reference point in our ongoing strategy documentation. This framework will aid our Performance Improvement Plan,

specifically aligning with Objective 4, where we commit to improving our personal sustainability efforts and mitigating our environmental impacts in the context of climate action and responsibilities.

- **Comprehensive Strategy Documentation:** The Live Action Plan will integrate into our broader strategy documentation, which includes essential components such as the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy. Within this strategic framework, our Sustainable Food policies will play a pivotal role, reinforcing our commitment to sustainable food practices. Additionally a Climate Change Adaptation Plan will be published in 2024 and a visionary Biodiversity Strategy spanning from 2023 to 2028. These documents collectively guide our actions and commitments.
- **Collaborative Partnerships for Delivery and Monitoring:** In our journey towards sustainable food practices, we recognize the immense value of collaboration. Several representative groups have enthusiastically partnered with us to assist in the delivery of actions. These include organisations such as Social Farms and Gardens, Safe Food, County Down Rural Community Network, and our own Council's Economic, Regeneration, and Tourism (ERT) department. Furthermore, we actively engage with the local health trust, (Southern Health Trust), as well as organisations like the Eden Project Communities and Libraries NI.
- **Diverse Stakeholder Involvement:** Our Live Action Plan thrives on the valuable insights and contributions from a diverse range of stakeholders, both internal and external. Internally, departments such as Environmental Health, Parks and Gardens, Waste Management, and Tourism inform and shape our plan. Externally, we draw expertise from organisations which span private and public sectors. Local businesses, social farms, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DEARA) are among the external contributors.
- **Comprehensive Timeframe and Intended Outcomes:** Our Live Action Plan is structured to address short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals, ensuring a holistic approach to sustainable food practices. It is not just a static document but a roadmap that evolves with our community's needs and aspirations. Some illustrative examples of the actions and tasks outlined in the plan include mapping existing growers, establishing a register of potential future growing sites, and facilitating a co-design process for collaborative and strategic community growing initiatives.

In summary, our Live Action Plan stands demonstrates our commitment to sustainable food practices, integrating into our broader strategic vision for a sustainable and resilient future. Through collaborative partnerships, stakeholder engagement, and a comprehensive approach to outcomes, we aim to effect meaningful change and leave a lasting positive impact on our community and the environment.

(Live Action Plan attached in application email)

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

A feasibility study is underway to consider the potential need for a demonstration social farm facility which could be managed by Council with a range of partners. The report is complete in draft form and has been presented to Councils Environment and

Sustainability Committee. Public consultation still needs to take place. On advice from the appointed consultant, the scope of social farm has been extended to be referred to in feasibility study as 'sustainable living and wellbeing centre' (reference to mini Eden type project).

Draft study is attached in application email.

## 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

#### Building Public Awareness:

Many stakeholders within our district are active in promoting good food education campaigns especially among vulnerable and harder to reach groups. The Council has seven DEA's and each have a full time coordinator working at grass roots level and they also act as a conduit for information gathering and promotion of services. We send newsletters and forward information within community and voluntary sector groups.

- **School Programs:** Two Officers implement programs in schools that incorporate teaching on the the importance of good food, nutrition, and minimising of waste. These programs can include school garden projects and trips ECO schools and Green Flag events to instill environmental consciousness in young minds. Other annual Council school initiatives such as the Youth Speak competition are given food based topics and our environmental art poster competition can further promote these messages among young audiences.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Council used Facebook and Twitter and regularly features community stories on the website homepage to highlight good practice in the district.

#### Fostering Active Food Citizenship:

- **Community Engagement:** This includes promotion of community garden events and volunteer opportunities. Council organised two Eat or Heat Events in local leisure centers and partnered with community groups in smaller towns which included vegetable giveaways and recipe ideas.
- **Consumer Education:** Our environmental health department provide resources to help individuals make informed food choices, understand food labels, and reduce food waste. Empower consumers and businesses to be conscious of their food purchasing decisions.
- **Food festivals:** Summer cookery demonstrations took place across the district with Paul Cunningham of BBC's Great British Menu, who champions a 20-mile menu, a notable initiative in promoting local and sustainable food choices.

#### Cultivating a Local Good Food Movement:

- **Local Food Networks:** We strengthen networks of local food producers, farmers, growers, and food artisans. These networks can facilitate the distribution of local



food products and promote collaboration. Council's support for the Eat or Heat Events and smaller town events showcases its commitment to fostering local food networks.

- **Food Hubs:** We support the development of local food hubs that aggregate and distribute local food products, making it easier for consumers to access fresh, locally sourced items.

By focusing on these key areas and incorporating impactful food projects, we inspire and engage the public about good food. This multifaceted approach creates a groundswell of support for sustainable, local food systems that benefit individuals, communities, and the environment. Building public awareness, fostering active food citizenship, and nurturing a local good food movement are pivotal steps towards achieving this goal while showcasing a commitment to concrete actions and community engagement.

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

Fostering food citizenship and nurturing a local good food movement has been a multifaceted effort requiring innovative initiatives and community engagement. Here are some examples of projects we ran over the past 2 years:

#### **1. You Can Grow Initiative:**

- The "You Can Grow" initiative involved distributing 500 free grow kits, some had potted herbs and other were seed only. Both contained peat free compost. It is a powerful example of fostering food citizenship. By providing individuals and families with the tools and resources to grow their own food, the initiative encouraged active participation in the local food system.
- Distributing these grow kits through local markets and libraries, including mobile library vans that reach rural areas, ensured accessibility for a wide range of community members. This approach promotes inclusivity and empowers residents, regardless of their geographical location, to become active contributors to the local food movement.
- "You Can Grow" not only promotes food citizenship but also strengthens the connection between individuals and their food sources. It encouraged people to take a hands-on approach to food production, fostering a deeper appreciation for locally grown and sustainable foods.

#### **Cookery Classes and Workshops:**

- Offering cookery classes, especially when they are free or low cost, is another impactful way to engage the community in food citizenship. The pilot classes were for a 2 hour duration and taught individuals how to prepare nutritious meals using locally grown ingredients, promoting a culture of local food consumption and introduction to new ingredients. Chefs also used 'best before' discounted produce and used economical appliances such as slow cookers and air fryers. Eight sessions have taken place in Mourne Cookery School in partnership with Kilkeel Development Association (KDA)
- "You Can Grow" workshops complement cookery classes by emphasising the importance of growing one's food. Participants learn not only how to cook but also

how to cultivate and harvest their produce, creating a holistic understanding of the food journey.

**Honey Production – Bee Hives at disused Council landfill site:**

The first honey produced in a former Council landfill site as part of an innovative sustainability project was sold to help local charities.

The first extraction from the disused Aughnagun Landfill Site in Mayobridge resulted in 72 jars, 20 of which was donated to local food banks, and the rest sold to raise money for charities chosen by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Cllr Michael Savage.

The Council, working in partnership with County Louth Beekeepers Association, placed four beehives on the old Aughnagun landfill site in Mayobridge since June 2022. The beekeepers were given permission to use the site as a new home for their native Irish black honeybees, which were once threatened with extinction. County Louth beekeepers, along with others, are working to increase the population of our native bee. This initiative was featured on BBC's The One Show and won an LGG award in June 2023. <https://www.newrymournedown.org/bees-at-aughnagun-project-wins-lgc-award>

**Eco Schools and Green Flag Initiatives:**

- Council partnership in eco schools and green flag programs demonstrates a commitment to environmental sustainability. These initiatives educate students and the broader community about the interconnection between a healthy environment and a robust local food system. They instill a sense of responsibility and citizenship in caring for the natural resources that support food production.

Incorporating these initiatives into our community engagement efforts not only fostered food citizenship but also strengthens the foundation of a local good food movement. By encouraging active participation in food production, preparation, and environmental stewardship, we empower individuals and communities to take ownership of their food choices and contribute to the sustainability of the local food ecosystem. These initiatives also promote a sense of pride and connection to the broader community, reinforcing the importance of local food in fostering a sustainable and resilient future.

**See latest schools newsletter attached to application email.**

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

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

#### **Action area A: Tackle food poverty**

Addressing food poverty and diet-related ill-health while increasing access to affordable healthy food has been a collective response involving a comprehensive approach from several partners to date. We are tackling these issues and promoting food security and well-being through a range of actions:

##### **1. Data-Informed Action:**

- The Council's Living Well Together community plan has provided valuable insights into the health status of citizens. While a majority of residents report no long-term health problems, a significant portion expresses concerns about their health. These statistics serve as a crucial starting point for targeted interventions.

##### **2. Food Poverty Initiatives:**

- Acknowledging the challenge of food poverty, community has responded with a range of initiatives, including five food bank services across the district. These volunteer-led efforts, often facilitated by local churches and community groups, bridge the gap for individuals and families facing food insecurity. The collaboration with local shops and suppliers ensures the distribution of donated and surplus food to those most in need.
- The introduction of a Social Supermarket scheme is a notable step. This scheme supports families with household incomes under £23,000 per year, providing essential food parcels and other vital supports. The holistic approach, recognises that access to healthy, affordable food is just one aspect of poverty alleviation. Council has supported the Social Supermarket through a 3 year grant received from Department for Communities (approximately 80K per year).

##### **3. Promotion of Local and Sustainable Food:**

- Developing strategies for regular community access to locally produced food is a proactive step toward improving food security. 'Social Farms and Gardens' partner with Council and host a monthly catch up to help coordinate activities and actions within the district and raise awareness of wider initiatives
- Their Northern Ireland 'Growing Resilience Project Officer' sits on our Good Food movement sub group
- A mapping exercise of social farms is underway and will be available online and in hard copy for the Autumn (Council will fund).

##### **4. Community Engagement and Education:**

- Council's partnership with Social Farms and Gardens demonstrates a commitment to coordinating efforts within the district and raising awareness of broader initiatives.
- Council operate weekend Artisan Markets which provide a platform for local artisan producers to showcase their products and contributes to economic opportunities within the community. Council now operate at least one market per week across the four main towns and provide a canvas gazebo space for up to 25

traders. Attendance has grown steadily to over 1,500 within a typical 4 hour trading period and there is a waiting list for trading space at some venues.

- The pilot of seven 'Edible Landscape' projects and two 'Community Orchard' schemes is an innovative approach to increasing food access. These initiatives not only provide fresh herbs, vegetables, and fruits to the community but also promote a sense of shared responsibility and community involvement in food production.

In summary, by providing essential food services, wraparound supports, promoting local and sustainable food sources, and engaging the community in various initiatives, the council is actively working to improve the overall well-being and food security of its residents. These efforts align with the broader goal of creating a resilient and equitable local food system.

## **Action Area B: Promote healthy eating**

Promoting healthy eating is a cornerstone of the Council's commitment to the well-being of its citizens. Initiatives include:

### **1. Community Funding for Growing and Education Projects:**

- The Council's annual community funding call is a testament to its dedication to promoting healthy eating. Offering grants of up to £1,500 per project for growing and education initiatives. There was almost 100% success rate for applicants in 2022 with seven projects funded and this increased to ten supported projects in 2023.
- The project titles, such as 'Grow for Health Community Garden' and 'Food Growing and Sharing,' reflect a focus on nurturing a culture of healthy food production and sharing within the community.

### **2. Partnership with Safefood and Cookery Book Distribution:**

- The Council's partnership with Safefood, including the distribution of over 300 cookery books titled "101 Square Meals," demonstrates a commitment to educating the community on healthy eating choices. This resource serves as a valuable guide for preparing nutritious and balanced meals.

### **3. Sustainability Tents at Council Festivals and Events:**

- Council festivals and events have taken an innovative approach by introducing sustainability tents. These tents not only showcase the Council's initiatives but also highlight sustainable businesses within the district. Giveaways at these events, such as food portion measures, food storage clips, and cookery books promoting healthy ingredients, reinforce the importance of portion control and proper food storage in maintaining a healthy diet.
- The Eats and Beats Festival, with its distribution of free herbs and vegetables and information on healthy food choices, aligns perfectly with the Council's goal of promoting healthy eating while encouraging sustainable living.

<https://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/blog/read/2023/08/giant-weekend-of-free-music-and-food-planned-for-newcastle-at-eats-and-beats-festival-b375>

### **4. Partnership with Future Learn for online Learning:**

- Council has used Department of Communities funding to offer 50+ free courses on topics such as gut health and making informed decisions about food, these courses empower individuals with knowledge and skills to make healthier food choices.

- **Fibre, Fermentation & the Gut with BBC Good Food**

Learn the importance of gut health and how to use more gut-friendly ingredients in your diet with tasty and nutritious recipes.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/fibre-fermentation-gut-health-sc>

- **Engaging with Controversies in the Food System**

Become more confident in making informed decisions about the food you eat by exploring different food controversies.

### 5. Annual Compost Giveaways:

- Council's commitment to healthy food production is evident in its annual free compost giveaways during Compost Awareness Week. By providing residents with compost, the Council supports sustainable gardening practices, which in turn can lead to the cultivation of healthier, homegrown produce.

### 6. Social Supermarket Wraparound Services:

- The Council's Social Supermarket partnership not only provides essential food parcels but also offers a menu of wraparound supports and programs for members. These services address individual needs and provide crucial support on topics such as debt advice, assessing better financial options, health and well-being, and healthy eating on a budget.
- The collaboration with around 40 external partners for wraparound support offers resources for healthy eating, benefits advice, debt counseling, budgeting, and employability skills, the Council aims to uplift individuals and families by promoting both physical and financial health.

In conclusion, the Council's approach to promoting healthy eating encompasses education, practical support, resources, and community engagement. These initiatives not only encourage healthier food choices but also empower residents to make informed decisions about their diets, reinforcing the Council's commitment to the well-being of its citizens.

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

In response to the cost of living crisis, Council organised two special events around the theme 'Keeping warm and well'. Transport was provided for those who needed it and free food was served along with a range of giveaway packs and information on support services. Partnership with local groups enabled us to participate in two further events in smaller towns within our district and there are two events planned again this Autumn, with more to follow in the new year.

Council event and community partner event:

[\(20+\) Clanrye Group - Keeping Well and Warm - Supporting your with the... | Facebook](#)

[\(20+\) Unit T - Huge thank you to everyone who attended the Heat & Eat... | Facebook](#)

#### **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**

Our Live Action Plan outlines specific targets and initiatives designed to drive the growth of a sustainable food economy in our district:

##### **1. Develop Strategy for Regular Community Access to Locally Produced Food:**

- We recognise the importance of ensuring that our community has consistent access to locally produced food. To this end, we are actively developing a strategy that will facilitate regular access to fresh and locally sourced ingredients. This strategy is geared towards promoting food security and supporting local food producers.

##### **2. Promote Local and Seasonal Produce Across Sectors:**

- Promoting local and seasonal produce is at the heart of our sustainable food economy efforts. We are committed to encouraging individuals and businesses across various sectors to prioritise local and seasonal ingredients. This not only supports our local farmers but also fosters a strong connection between the community and its food sources.
- Building links between food producers and the hospitality industry is also key. We are focusing on seasonal offerings to ensure that restaurants, cafes, and other food establishments incorporate locally sourced and seasonal ingredients into their menus.

##### **3. Provide Business Support for Small-Scale Sustainable Food Producers:**

- Small-scale sustainable food producers are vital to the diversity and resilience of our food economy. We are committed to providing them with the necessary business support to thrive. By offering resources, guidance, and networking opportunities, we aim to empower these producers to grow sustainably and contribute significantly to the local food landscape.

##### **4. Leveraging Our Unique Position:**

- Our Council District boasts the largest commercial fishing port in Northern Ireland. Kilkeel, plays a pivotal role in our sustainable food economy. The presence of the Mourne Seafood Cookery School at the harbour not only promotes culinary skills but also highlights the richness of local seafood. The project which is operated by our partner Kilkeel Development Association (KDA) educates and inspires individuals about the culinary potential of our local marine resources.
- The Anglo-Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO) in Kilkeel underscores our commitment to sustainable seafood sourcing. ANIFPO's mission aligns with our goals, emphasizing the supply of high-quality, sustainable seafood

while supporting the local fishing community. Our collaboration ensures that ethical and sustainable seafood practices are at the forefront of our efforts.

**5. Celebrity Chef Advisor:**

- Celebrity chef Paul Cunningham plays a crucial role in advising us on ethical and sustainable ingredient choices for all major Council events. His expertise ensures that our events align with our sustainability objectives and showcase the use of locally sourced and ethical ingredients. This not only enhances the quality of our events but also sets a positive example for the broader community.

In summary, our Council is taking proactive measures to create a thriving, diverse, and sustainable food economy. By nurturing local food producers, promoting seasonal ingredients, and leveraging our unique resources, we aim to enhance the well-being of our community while fostering economic prosperity and sustainability. Our commitment to ethical and sustainable food practices is reflected in our partnerships, strategies, and collaborations, all of which are aimed at creating a brighter and more sustainable future for our district.

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

Council have taken significant steps to facilitate food connections and our dedicated website has become a beacon for food enthusiasts and those seeking to experience the richness of our local fresh produce from both land and sea

**1. Visit Mourne Mountains Website:**

- Our Visit Mourne Mountains website serves as a valuable resource for residents and visitors alike. It places a strong emphasis on experiences, particularly in the realm of food. With a user-friendly interface, the website offers a comprehensive guide to a diverse range of healthy, independent local producers.

**2. Food Markets & Producers:**

- The Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion region boasts a vibrant community of skilled producers, artisans, bakers, brewers, and more. These expert makers infuse their creations with the flavors of locally sourced ingredients, delivering a sensory delight. Our weekly food markets provide an excellent opportunity to meet these masters in person and discover the captivating stories behind their foods.

**3. Breweries & Distilleries:**

- Visit Mourne is proud to be at the heart of independent brewing, and distillation in Northern Ireland. Whether you're a craft beer enthusiast or prefer Spirits, our local producers offer something to cater to every taste. Our website provides a gateway to explore these offerings and support local businesses.

**4. Afternoon Tea Tradition:**

- The enduring tradition of afternoon tea holds a special place in Northern Ireland, where tea is cherished. Many establishments in our region offer afternoon tea with style, complete with an array of sweet and savory treats. It's a delightful way to promote the local culinary culture.

**5. Fresh Seafood with the Catch to Cook Experience:**

- For those eager to explore the world of seafood, the Mourne Seafood Cookery School's Catch to Cook experience is a must. Led by top chefs, this experience

allows participants to learn the tricks of the trade while working with the finest locally caught and sourced ingredients. The school's mission is to provide a relaxed and supportive environment for culinary skill development under the guidance of renowned professionals.

#### **6. Award-Winning Traditional Food Tours:**

- The Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion, boasts an abundance of award-winning producers and restaurants. NI Food Tours, inspired by this rich talent, seeks to showcase the best our region has to offer. These tours provide an opportunity for culinary exploration, allowing participants to savor the excellence of our local food scene.

#### **7. Local Seafood and Cider:**

- The Deep into the Mournes Tour offers a luxurious taste of the region. Starting with a visit to Coney Island for fresh oysters, participants can enjoy the fruits of the sea paired with white wine or local porter. The tour then introduces guests to a local cider producer and chef, Andrew, offering a sampling of his award-winning brews paired with locally sourced recipes.

In summary, our efforts to promote healthy, sustainable, and independent food businesses through the Visit Mourne Mountains website and curated experiences reflect our commitment to showcasing the culinary richness of our region. By facilitating connections between consumers and local producers, artisans, and chefs, we aim to create a vibrant and thriving food ecosystem that celebrates the unique flavors and traditions of our community.

Sources: <https://www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/food-and-drink>

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

#### **Paul Cunningham's Culinary Transformation:**

The "Make it Local" campaign, championed by Great British Menu chef Paul Cunningham, represents a remarkable journey from passion to innovation, with the invaluable support of the Go For It programme in collaboration with Council. Paul has harnessed his passion for foraging and his commitment to sourcing the finest local produce to create a culinary experience like no other.

#### **Investment in Growth and Jobs:**

- The "Make it Local" artisans include culinary creatives and is also a testament to economic growth. The project receives partial funding from Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund, operating under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme.

#### **Community Engagement and Interest:**



- What makes the "Make it Local" campaign truly special is the immense interest it has generated within the community. The venture not only celebrates food but also the community that supports it.

Sources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3CJI81GK78>  
<https://www.newrymournedown.org/make-it-local>

## 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

Changing policy and practice is more difficult for local Councils in Northern Ireland as that remit sits with devolved government. However we have included targets within our action plan such as:

- **Raising Awareness of Sustainable Food Focus in Procurement:** One of our primary objectives is to raise awareness of the potential for including a sustainable food focus in procurement procedures and policies across all sectors. By doing so, we aim to inspire organizations, institutions, and businesses to prioritize sustainable and local food sourcing in their procurement practices.
- **Advocating for Budget Reviews:** We understand the significance of government budgets in shaping food procurement practices. We advocating for a comprehensive review of government budgets, seeking to reallocate resources and prioritize sustainable and local food options within government-funded programs and initiatives.
- Following the 2022 Day of Action at Westminster, we gained recognition from our local MP as their constituency is included within part of our Council boundary. This has led to a follow up meeting with the Ulster Farmers Union and a promise of increased dialogue when devolved government returns.

#### Renewed Commitment to Fairtrade Status:

- At our local government level, we have reaffirmed our commitment to achieving and maintaining Fairtrade District status. This status encompasses key areas, including Newry City and major towns like Ballynahinch, Downpatrick, Newcastle, Saintfield, and Warrenpoint. Our dedication to Fairtrade principles underscores our commitment to ethical and sustainable food sourcing.
- As part of this commitment, we actively encourage the public to purchase Fairtrade-certified products from local stores and supermarkets. We recognize that consumer demand plays a pivotal role in promoting ethical and sustainable food practices. We encourage individuals to advocate for Fairtrade products in their favourite stores and supermarkets, thereby promoting fair wages and sustainable practices for farmers and producers.

Our initiatives aim to drive positive change, support local farmers, and empower consumers to make conscious food choices that benefit both individuals and our wider food ecosystem.

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

### **Local-Level Initiatives:**

Recognising that influencing change at the devolved government level may take time, we are committed to making immediate efforts at a more localised level. For example, within the realm of local education authorities, we are actively exploring opportunities to implement sustainable food practices. A likely upcoming proposal, for "Bridging The Gap," aims to introduce local organic produce into school canteens. By collaborating with the Education Authority, we seek to create a pilot program that could potentially be operational by 2024. This initiative not only promotes healthier food choices for students but also supports local producers and growers and sustainable agriculture.

Within our Council District, The Ark Social Farm has emerged as a trailblazer in fostering collaborations within local supply chains. Their journey is a testament to the power of partnership and dedication to providing high-quality fresh produce to the community and beyond.

### **Becoming a One-Stop Shop:**

- What began as humble beginnings in a small shed has evolved into something truly remarkable. The Farm Shop at The Ark Social Farm has undergone a remarkable transformation, now serving as a one-stop shop for customers, including those in the commercial sector. This expansion showcases their commitment to meeting the demands of a broad customer base.

### **Year-Round Availability:**

- During the main growing season, The Ark Social Farm takes pride in offering its customers a harvest of organically grown vegetables and soft fruits. However, recognizing the importance of year-round availability, they have expanded their offerings. Now, they source additional local fresh produce, with a preference for items sourced in county. This dedication to sourcing locally not only supports the region's agricultural community but also ensures that customers have access to a wider selection of fresh, high-quality produce regardless of the season. This includes fresh fruit, free-range eggs, and an exceptional selection of 100% Grass-fed Dexter Beef and lamb, as well as free-range pork sourced from Castlescreen Farm.

### **Serving the Commercial Sector:**

- The Ark Social Farm's success extends to the commercial sector, as they have become a trusted supplier to a busy local hotel. This collaboration underscores their capacity to meet the demands of the hospitality industry while maintaining their commitment to quality and sustainability.

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

**Eco Schools and Green Flag.** Council education officers organise several recognition events per year where schools gather for competition and awards. These events are exemplary in catering food quality and waste standards as no disposables are allowed.

**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**

Our actions and targets reflect our dedication to creating a more environmentally conscious and resilient food system:

**1. Identify Unused Green Sites for Rewilding & Community Growing:**

- We are actively identifying currently unused green sites within the Council area. These spaces hold significant potential for rewilding initiatives and community-driven cultivation efforts, fostering biodiversity, promoting local food production, and creating vibrant green hubs for the community.

**2. Open Space Strategy:**

- Our Active and Healthy Communities leisure department has been consulting on an Open Space Strategy. This strategy aims to provide opportunities for the community and voluntary sectors to adopt and utilise Council land areas that are currently underutilised. We have identified 84 such areas and we aim to unlock their potential. This strategy aligns with our overarching goals of improving the health and well-being of everyone in the district and reducing health inequalities.
- Furthermore, our commitment to the Social Farms and Gardens Benchmark standard underscores our dedication to sustainable land use. By committing to providing 1/3 acre of council land per 1,000 households, we are striving to create green spaces that serve as thriving hubs for community engagement, agriculture, and environmental stewardship.
- To kickstart the process, we have launched six pilot projects across the district. These projects, primarily managed by Mens Shed organisations and similar community associations, serve as practical examples of how underutilised land can be transformed into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable spaces that benefit our communities and the environment.

**3. Social Farms and Gardens Initiatives:**

- Our partnership with Social Farms and Gardens has been instrumental in supporting over twenty community gardens within our district to access necessary support and help them flourish. With assistance from Council and the County Down Rural Community Network organisation, we have mapped all these organisations and are publishing a hard copy map for distribution at community events, including our weekly artisan markets, to promote a sustainable food culture.

- Council attend monthly catch up meetings to share information and good practice within the local social farm movement.

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

Council have developed a number of partners to help us reduce and recycle food waste.

- ARC21 stands as a pivotal partner in our sustainable waste management efforts. ARC21 is an umbrella waste management group in Northern Ireland, representing six councils. Established in 2003 ARC21 emerged through a collaborative process that aimed to enhance cooperation among its constituent councils.
- ARC21 plays a crucial role in guiding, supporting, and aiding its partner councils in fulfilling their statutory waste management obligations. Moreover, it serves as a driving force behind innovative waste management programs. This includes the development of essential infrastructure and strategies to promote a greater circularity of resources, aligning with our shared commitment to sustainable waste management.

#### **Developing an Awareness Raising Campaign on Food Waste:**

- Raising awareness about sustainable food consumption habits is a fundamental step in our efforts to combat food waste. We are actively in the process of crafting an awareness-raising campaign. This campaign is designed to emphasize the importance of food waste reduction, portion control, creative utilisation of leftovers, and other strategies to minimize food wastage. By empowering individuals and business to make informed and conscious choices, this campaign contributes to both environmental preservation and personal well-being.

[https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/household\\_recycling\\_guide\\_\(recycling\\_bible\)\\_v22\\_\(glass\\_in\).pdf](https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/household_recycling_guide_(recycling_bible)_v22_(glass_in).pdf)

#### **Exploring Hospitality & Retail Redistribution of Surplus Food (Guardians of Grub):**

- We are actively engaged in promoting the "Guardians of Grub" initiative, which focuses on the responsible management of surplus food in the hospitality and retail sectors. Through this initiative, we offer training opportunities to businesses within our Council area. Leveraging our environmental health department database, we provide a free e-learning course designed to equip businesses with cost-saving skills to minimize waste.
- Importantly, there are no limits to the number of businesses that can participate in this training program. Our primary targets are cafes, restaurants, hotels, and

B&Bs, recognizing the significant role these establishments play in the food industry and their potential to reduce food waste.

- Natural World Products are contracted by Council to process brown bin waste. As Northern Ireland's leading organics recycling firm Natural World Products (NWP) processes household food and garden waste from local authorities across Northern Ireland converting it into premium, organic, peat-free compost

Paul Cunningham opens first zero waste eatery opens in Dundrum (Co Down):

It is estimated in Northern Ireland that food waste accounts for up to 25% of the contents of non-recycling bins and Paul is hoping that his new takeaway business will help to eliminate this by using entire foods to ensure none is wasted.

"When people buy fish, for example, there is about 40% of it wasted," he explains.

"People waste the bones, the scales, the head, tail and skin, but when I get fish in, I want to ensure that very little is being put in the bin.

"I want to use all the product, for example, to make stock with the bones or create a tasty snack using fish skin, and I won't be buying anything out of season, everything — as much as humanly possible — is going to come straight from the source."

Paul said that reliable suppliers and farmers will be used to help make sure nothing is wasted and he can support as local as possible, sourcing all ingredients within 20 miles of Dundrum.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/news/great-british-menu-chef-paul-cunningham-opens-northern-irelands-first-zero-waste-eatery/41879068.html>

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

### **Climate related documents informing overall climate strategy currently being developed:**

Council has declared a climate emergency

<https://www.newrymournedown.org/climate-change>

Local Climate Adaptation Plan:

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, along with other local authorities, are working with [Climate NI](#) to develop a Local Climate Adaptation Plan

The Council is Lead Partner for the [CANN \(Collaborative Action for the Natura Network\)](#) Project a €9 million EU INTERREG VA funded project covering Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This programme is protecting and restoring our protected habitats including peatlands.

Peatlands are important sites for wildlife and rare species but are also recognised as important 'carbon sinks.'

Biodiversity strategy and action plan being developed at present.

Tree strategy - Contribute to 2030 13% NI target.

Significant coastline in NMDDC. Opportunities e.g. seagrass and dune restoration.

Geopark Management action plans being developed following successful designation

Geofood – links to food industry and tourism. 10 year masterplan for geopark

Community engagement on ecosystems/biodiversity.

Future projects being considered – funding applications areas like peatlands, wet/dry heathland

[https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/nmd\\_local\\_development\\_plan\\_2030\\_pop\\_medium\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/nmd_local_development_plan_2030_pop_medium_web_version.pdf)

Refill fountains:

Following a commitment in 2019 there have now been 7 stations installed:

<https://www.newrymournedown.org/newry-mourne-and-down-district-council-joins-the-refillution>

<https://www.newrymournedown.org/new-drinking-water-fountain-launched-at-cranfield-beach>

### FOR PANEL USE ONLY

<b>Comments from the panel on your application:</b>
<b>Outcome of application:</b>
<b>Recommendations for onward progress:</b>