

SFP Bronze and Silver Awards Application Form 2024

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



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

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

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

SECTION 1: Information about your partnership and your place

Please complete the following (*= mandatory):

Name of your partnership*:
Torfaen Food Partnership
Name and contact details of person/people leading on this application*:
Sam Evans Food Resilience Programme Manager (07511 168038/ Samuel.Evans@torfaen.gov.uk Sam Kemp Food Partnership Officer (0774 392 1225/ sam.kemp@torfaen.gov.uk)
Geographic region which this award will represent*:
Torfaen County Borough
Award you are applying for*:
Silver Award

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

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

ANSWER:

Torfaen County Borough is located in the south-east of Wales and borders the city of Newport to the south, the county of Monmouthshire to the east and the county boroughs of Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent to the west and north-west. Torfaen has an area of 126km² and is the 3rd smallest borough in Wales. It has a population of around 93,000 of which less than 4% are non-white. There are three main settlements running from the south to the north. Much of the southern parts of the county borough are now urbanised around the Cwmbran New Town conurbation which has the largest population of around 49,000. Cwmbran Shopping Centre is the main retail area of Torfaen and attracts 15 million customers a year from the wider area of Gwent and the M4 corridor. The former industrial town of Pontypool with its traditional indoor and outdoor market is the next largest settlement located in the heart of the borough with a population of around 37,000 people. The World Heritage Site town of Blaenavon has a population of around 6,000 people and is situated at the furthest north point within the borough. Blaenavon is famous for the Big Pit coal mining museum and Europe's best preserved 18th century ironworks. In Torfaen 61.1% of the population are of working age which is equivalent to the average for Wales (61.3%). ONS 2018

population estimates 74.4% of working age population are economically active (Wales 76.5%), of which 70.7% are in employment (Wales 73.2%) and 5% are unemployed (Wales 4.2%). ONS Annual Population Survey July 2018 – June 2019. In the 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 'Lower Super Output Area' (LSOA) index lists 60 (of 1,909 in Wales) LSOAs within Torfaen, all of which currently nest within Torfaen's 24 Electoral Divisions or Wards.

In WIMD 2019, the following Torfaen LSOAs are in the most deprived 10 per cent in Wales:

- Trevethin 1
- Upper Cwmbran 1
- Pontnewydd 1

Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions show 3,846 Torfaen children aged under 16 were living in relative poverty in the year to March 2023. It meant 22.5% of children in the area were in a family whose income was below 60% of average household income before housing costs.

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

ANSWER:

The Torfaen Food Partnership is a broad, cross-sector food partnership and is hosted in the Food Resilience at Team at Torfaen Council, and works towards the ambitions set out in the [Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan \(currently 2024-28\)](#)

Torfaen also produce an [Annual Equality Report](#).

The vision of the Partnership's Charter is:

"To develop a sustainable and fair food system that provides affordable and heathy food for all".

The Partnership Officer is trained in Participation & inclusion, is a strength-based change practitioner and Mentor and has completed the My Food Community Food Leadership course.

These values are also imbedded into the Partnership which recognises the values of true meaningful participation and seeks to reflect, reach, and include the wide range of diversity in the borough.

This is evident in the increased number of applications and diversification of groups & cultures represented in grant applications and brought into the partnership this year.

As a partnership we meet in accessible venues & have supported via grants increasing accessibility in some of our community gardens and kitchens.

We are also supporting the creation of food business job role for an employee with neurodiversity via the Business Development Grant

We have open Social Media accounts and report regularly on the actions of the whole partnership.

Torfaen is taking part the Sustainable Food Places Network analysis Tool Pilot Project. This will help us identify our reach and any gaps where people in the borough are not represented.

SECTION 2: Local food activity and impact

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

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

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

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

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

Key Issue 1 Mandatory Criteria Checklist

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

- Bronze applications require a one year action plan
- Silver applications require a three year action plan

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

- Yes

2. How are you evidencing this action plan?

- Attachment as a Word, PFF, Excel document? Yes
- If a link place here as well under Key Issue 1
- Action Plan link: [CRF](#) (year 1) and [SPF](#) workplans (year 2-3)

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

- Yes
- If less than 6 months to run what is happening after the action plan expires?
(100 words)

As highlighted in 1 b we are currently developing a Food Strategy for Torfaen which is backed by council members and within the council delivery plan.

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

Partnership Delivery

Torfaen Food Partnership is hosted by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC), within the Food Resilience Team (Fig 1). The team has expanded to four team members in 2023 and the programme has secured £1,153,929 worth of funding via the Welsh Government and the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund.

The team sits in the Economy and Environment Directorate which strengthens our ability to support good food work throughout Torfaen, be that community food work or food business development.

Meet Our Team

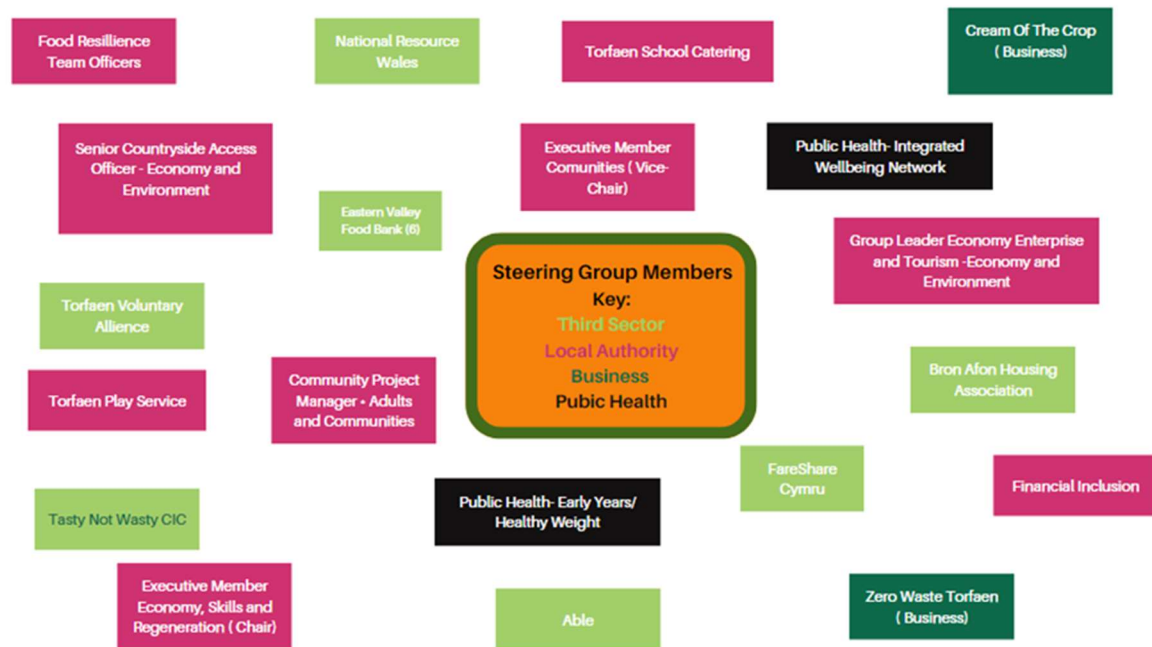
			
Sam Evans	Sam Kemp	Lisa Baulch	Rachel Sheppard
Food Resilience Programme Manager/ Rheolwr Rhaglen Gwydnwch Bwyd	Food Partnership Officer/ Swyddog Partneriaeth Bwyd	Food Development Officer/ Swyddog Datblygu Bwyd	Grants and Monitoring Officer/ Swyddog Grantiau a Monitro

The Food Resilience Teamwork work via the Partnership to co-design, achieve & strengthen our shared aims.

Partnership Steering Group

The Partnership Steering is made up of 20 members across 11 organisations (Fig 2). The group is currently chaired by the Executive member for Communities and the executive member for Economy Skills and Regeneration.

The steering group meets quarterly and set the direction of the work of the partnership. The notable work taking place in Torfaen has gained the attention of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, who is attending next meeting.



The partnership Steering group is governed by the agreed Terms of Reference (ToRs)

Partnership networks:

Feeding into the Steering Group are three wider networks coordinated by the Food Partnership Officer.

- The Good Food Network- Which has a membership of 40 Community food groups. Who meet quarterly to network and discuss opportunities to work together or solve shared problems. The Partnerships coordinator arranges suggested speakers or topics for these meetings.
- Food Producers & Business Network This network has a membership of 42 food businesses from Torfaen. The network events give businesses an opportunity to network and has led to sales between members. This network also provides an opportunity for members to share concerns and the business development officer signpost or help to solve these.

- **School Grow & Share Food Network- Continuously developing- currently meets as Big Bocs Bwyd schools and Community Support clusters around the Schools. 13 Schools Members**
- **TCBC Internal Officers Group is under development scheduled to begin in September.**

The partnership networks are active & vibrant, working cross sector -with businesses working with community groups. The partnership network meetings are held in partnership venues, members set the agenda and identify their strengths and barriers. The whole Partnership networks have met at the Food Summit Community meal and workshops.

- [Meeting schedule](#)

Regional & wider work

- **We work with our Food Partnership partners across the Gwent Region- Identifying regional strengths and needs, avoiding duplication & sharing good practice. This group has worked on Healthy Start uptake as a region.**

From July TCBC shares a CEO with Blaenau Gwent CBC and so are meeting more regularly with BG Partnership to ensure any opportunities for joint working are Explored. Previously we have run a [Gwent pilot](#) which resulted in initial community and business grants in Torfaen & a pilot for a community cafe/cook space in a Torfaen Market which strengthened future Partnership activity.

- **We recently hosted a meeting with Food Sense Wales & Dr David Lloyd-Thomas Head of the Food Policy & Strategy Unit Food Division – Welsh Government & will host the Food Sense Wales Food in Communities Conference in October.**

Examples of the partnership working

- **A food pantry is working with a Housing Association to deliver cookery sessions & food.**
- **We have Schools coming together under joint grant applications and a cross-network call for support with joint purchasing which has resulted in the team undertaking a feasibility study considering developing a distribution centre.**

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

Foundation based on research.

The Food Partnership (est. 2022) & Food Resilience Team(est. 2023) are the result of 15 years of Rural Development work.

The current work plans are guided by several commissioned research studies:

- [Green Agriculture Study \(Dec,2022\)](#)
- [Torfaen's Food Mapping Study \(2022\)](#),
- [Land based producers \(2018\)](#) and updated [Land Based Study \(2022\)](#)
- [CRF Programme report \(LEADER\)](#)

Food Charter, strategy & action plan

The extensive research has resulted in a [Torfaen Food Charter](#), which has been adopted by the Steering Group. As well as informing the current 3-year work plan for The Food Resilience Team and Partnership. This three-year work plan has been split over two projects [CRF](#) and [SPF](#). The commitments under the current programme of work will result in a comprehensive Food Strategy which will be present before TCBC for adoption containing yearly action plan. The strategy is currently being developed.

- Torfaen has completed a further study with borough wide consultation, which has also informed future practice:

Growing Connections report

- The steering group has worked extensively with the recommendations of these reports, and they have been discussed via Partnership networks identifying which outcomes are achievable and by whom, which outcomes require joined up Partnership work and which outcome require a regional or national change.

Food Strategy

We will be attending events throughout the Summer where we will consult further with the Torfaen public to build the strategy. We will be covering the three main Torfaen towns by attending:

- Pontypool Party in the Park

- Great Big Green Week at the Congress Theatre with Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen Local Nature Partnership
- Blaenavon Heritage Day

Strategic fit

The work of the partnership is continuously recognised throughout strategies and action plans in Torfaen. For example, the work of the partnership has deliverable actions which [TCBC's County Plan](#) and has action points within the [Councils Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan](#). Evidence of the councils understanding of the importance of the food partnership is highlight by the recent changes to [Executive Member portfolios](#) which now sees the Food Resilience Team a standalone component of the new Waste and Sustainability portfolio for the first time.

The Food Resilience team has also engaged with elected members via a [scrutiny committee](#) in May 2023 and via a [full members seminar](#) in May 2024 highlighting to members the work of the partnership.

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

Example of other networks attended by Partnership Officer ensuring food provision & Food systems are considered & embedded wherever possible:

Intergrated Wellbeing Network- Health lead place based multi-agency meetings by Ward ensuring each ward is aware of food-based provision, support for any further development, working together and can consult on Food Partnership direction

Community Resilience & Capacity builders Council team working at grass roots level, feed any new food groups into the partnerships, identify local needs & share our support links & ethos.

Torfaen Business Direct- One point of contact for new start-up and existing businesses to access all council services. We are the food arm of this service.

Torfaen Big Bocs Bwyd Supporting three BBB Schools with grants, linking into the School Food grow & share network

Programme Manager & Partnership Officer are members of Rebel Torfaen- Council Officer group tackling Council wide problems, inspired by Matthew Syed's Rebel Ideas.

Gwent Public Service Board: Partnership works to ensure food is a spotlight issue

Public Health Board- Healthy Weight working group- See resulting pilot (see 3B).

Health & wellbeing Primary School Network. Food Partnership agenda item

Torfaen Climate Ambassadors Played active part in the Food Summit. Currently planning to jointly host a Soil film & Q&A session.

New Social Enterprise Support Officer - will be linked into partnership activities

Key Issue 2: Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement *NB at Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.*

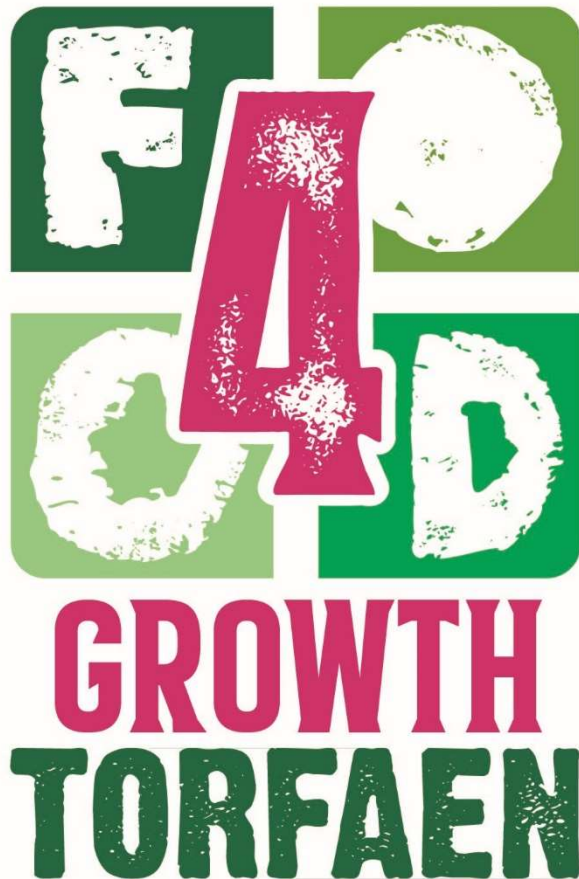
Action area A: Inspire and engage the public about good food

Branding

The partnership has developed a logo with the Council Communications Team, and this informs our branding identity.



DYFU
TORFAEN



[Torfaen Food Summit 2024](#)

In February 2024 Torfaen's Food Partnership held its first Food Summit, a great example of Partnership working in action and attracting over 200 attendees. The Summit included seven workshop sessions, inspiring a dialogue around food and food inclusion between the public, our local farmers, food businesses, community food groups, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales Sustainable Development Advisor, accessibility, School catering and School growers & young people's projects.

[Link to programme](#)

In addition to the workshops there was an "Incredible Edible" session delivered and facilitated by Pam Warhurst and a session on running food pantries with two of our pantries as speakers.

All attendees were fed a community meal, by Tasty Not Wasty, (Torfaen Food Waste reduction CIC) as well as being able to sample some of the Healthy "Cooking on a Budget"

options delivered through Community Health & Wellbeing teams who ran cooking demos throughout the day.

The Expo area provided opportunity to raise awareness and engagement through a range of services and organisations engaged in food provision, food health, food waste, regenerative garden & kitchen activities & wider environmental issues. Support services offered their services via the lens of food. E.g, the library created a display of their cooking and growing books & will work with us in a seed library. All attendees were able to take home tomato and edible flower packs to grow at home.

What we achieved at the Summit, was the solidifying and growth of a diverse and knowledgeable food community & business support network. Relationships were strengthened with colleagues across the borough who turned up to show their support to each other and to the wider community and the aims of the Food Partnership & this was then visible to the public, resulting in the beginnings of a one system approach.

Representation from partners and organisations included those from health, employability, education, training, housing, environment, communities, and financial inclusion. Proving that food and all it encompasses brings us together to work to reach various shared goals.

Food Summit Impact

As a direct result of engagement through the Food Summit the following has been achieved:

- Young people have been inspired to actively explore placing their growing product in a Food Partnership business.
- A pilot project between Big Bocs Bwyd Schools and Public Health exploring the impact of BBB on consumption and provision of healthy food in a local radius.
- Increased grant uptake with both Community & Business grants, triple on previous years borough wide, fivefold in Blaenavon, the host town of the Summit.
- Environmental groups visited a local farm to discuss land management & usage.
- Raised the profile and increased the membership of the Food Partnership.
- [Local businesses](#) sourcing meat & produce from local farmers, actively promoting “farm to fork”
- 2 local businesses working with Mental Health Wales, accessing free staff training, expanding to support local mental health community activity and support groups.

- Regular meetings with TCBC communications team to schedule regular press releases, increased social media presence and following.
- Inspired by the “Incredible Edible project” Cllr Stuart Ashley, Sustainability Champion, has recently started growing on a piece of unused Community Council land.

Support of local farmers

- Support & promotion of farm-based community & learning events.
- Promotion of Farm Gate and Market Garden produce.
- Creation & promotion of Community food delivery boxes.

Food Summit 2025

Strong support has already been seen for this event. With offer of support and to host the event by Community Councils. The Food Resilience Team has already received a high number of enquiries from new organisations wishing to participate in this event next year.

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

- Establish a network for community food initiatives and leaders that provides on-line and face to face opportunities to share inspiration, ideas, and resources and to work together on a range of food initiatives (mandatory at Silver).
- Support communities to access and take control of land, infrastructure and other community assets that can be used for food social enterprises and community food projects, for example by mapping available assets or offering special lease options.
- Support local community food initiatives through a small grants programme and access to tools and resources, as well as through advice and training on project planning, raising money and working with volunteers.

Food Citizenship

The partnership's aims and goals are clearly defined in its Food Charter which member organisation sign up to and is as key part of the grant application form.

Torfaen's Good Food Movement Accesses Partnership support via meetings, online sessions e.g. Sustainable Food Place's Bulk Purchasing webinar & regular news emails & Social [Media](#):

We organise working groups for a specific need. E.g. we are currently arranging a meeting in Blaenavon for both Community and Business grant recipients to consider a Shop Blaenavon initiative that highlights tourism, business & community support, and to combine efforts re waste food & Christmas emergency food provision.

Part of the network also use a WhatsApp group. (See 5b)

The Partnership Officer has met every Good Food Network member and has visited every project at least twice as of May this year and as of July this year will have visited the site of every new member. This relationship is pivotal; sharing an overview of activity in the borough adding value through identifying opportunities to work together and with other suitable services and being able to the develop together the ideas of every aspect of the partnership across all the network & with the public.

Torfaen Voluntary Alliance, Steering Group members, ensure the network is supported with advice regarding governance, funding & volunteers.

The partnership has fifteen food banks: [Torfaen Foodbanks - \(tvawales.org.uk\)](http://tvawales.org.uk)

- Six are co-ordinated via Eastern Valley Foodbank who provided 5266 emergency food packs last year [Eastern Valley Foodbank | Helping Local People in Crisis](#)
- CoStar provides 75 meals a week & 100 food bags a week [CoStar Cwmbran |](#)

The partnership has three pantries:

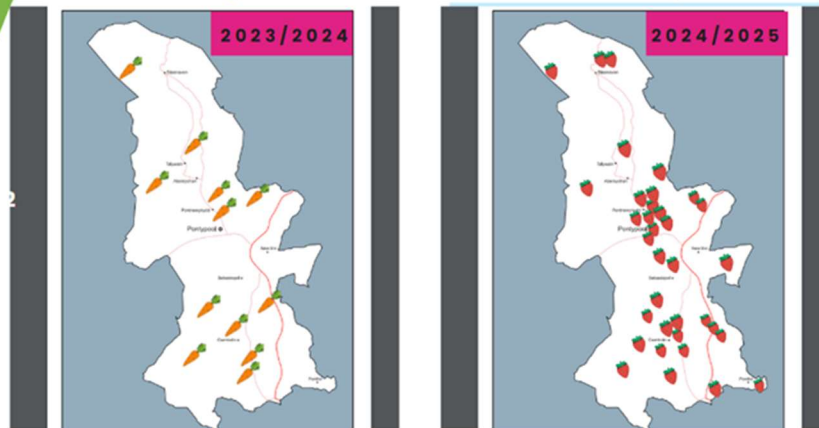
- Two have community grants. They are interested in joint purchasing which along with other network feedback has led us to exploring a food distribution network see section 5.
- All our pantries offer volunteer placements, [student placements](#), and work trials.

School Cook, Grow, Share

- We are currently supporting three Primary Schools via grants to relaunch their Big Bocs Bywd offer with community meals and cooking sessions. Meal packs are also planned to be taken home to cook. As well as increased growing sites enabling them to engage wider family members & the community.
- They are establishing links with Zero Waste Torfaen to have refill shops onsite.
- An additional five Primaries who do not have a big Bocs Bwyd project are also being supported via grants to create community food access, growing and cooking, one of these being in the medium of Welsh.
- Two Schools with grants support Gypsy Traveller young people through a cultural cooking project where the young people will grow cook and share a Gypsy Traveller traditional cookbook.
- One School in receipt of a community grant to grow and cook supports displaced families and has identified the need regarding culturally different foods. They have been linked to [Back to Our Roots: Growing and Sharing Without Borders – Food Adventure](#)

Community Food Support Grant

Community Food Grant Scheme Award Spread



Through a variety of different funding the Food Resilience Team on behalf of the Food Partnership have been able to provide Community Food Grants for several years. The table below show the development of the community grant programme over the last 3 years.

- 2022/2023 £40,349.70 5 recipients
- 2023/2024 £115,371.88 12 recipients
- 2024/2025 £279,049 35 recipients

In 2023/24 the Partnership:

- supported 3 cookery classes regenerating 2 kitchens.
- supported the development of 7 community growing spaces, all food was available to the community and 2 spaces also provided food for onsite cooking sessions.
- provided horticultural support.
- supported 2 food banks to develop Food Pantries

In 2024/5 the Partnership:

- Supports 18 cookery classes and 23 growing sites (four take home growing kits).

- We have provided 10 fridges/freezers and 2 dehydrators.

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

“The partnership with the food network has resulted in the Forgeside community garden expanding even further and allowing more local residents to grow their own food. The majority of which are new growers so are learning from the more experienced members and thus building friendships and community.

Food network has helped make new contacts and give us guidance to help with our future plans, so we can't say thank you enough to them. We look forward to future expansion with their help”. Forgeside RFC Community Garden, as featured on:

[Alan Titchmarsh's Gardening Club - Series 1 - Episode 7 - ITVX](#)

“I have been on the Partnership since the beginning, I have seen how the work has raised the profile and highlighted the value of locally produced/ and sourced food/ reduced food waste, created volunteering opportunities / tackled poverty/raised awareness around nutrition / introduced skills / and improved wellbeing for those for those involved.

Having been involved for a number of years it has been great to see many community organisations embrace this project and see them grow and evolve each year utilising the funding in imaginative ways to support and meet the needs of their communities.

The work delivers at grass roots a number of the key objectives set out in the Wellbeing strategy.” Helen Jenkins, Community Projects Manager, Building Resilient Communities, TCBC

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

Action area A: Tackle food poverty

Good Food Network

- The Partnership Officer & Good Food Network monitor and share Food poverty activity in the borough, signpost to additional resources, works to minimise duplication, and add value via the Community Food Grant Scheme.
- The Partnership supports groups to run multi agency drop-in sessions alongside their food offers.
- Two community provisions have trained counsellors as part of their team (one of these started with a Food Partnership grant as a pilot)
- We are working with colleagues across the borough who have mapped community assets to ensure support is offered to food provisions to combat the causes and impact of food poverty.
- Many of our Schools attend wellbeing meetings based on their cluster area to and are starting to share resources to mitigate food poverty & its causes and impacts.

The Torfaen Food Ladder

- Food Access is spread across the borough with a range of projects covering organisations that; grow food, share food waste, share FareShare, run food banks, cookery sessions, membership pantries, offer frozen waste food, scratch cooked ready meals and low-priced weekly community meals and talking dinner tables.
- The most Northerly point in the Borough, is now well covered with food provision after the Food Summit attracted community & food business grant recipients.
- Tasty Not Wasty coordinate Xmas food support, providing meals and events throughout the holiday period with support from other Good Food Network members.

School meals

Free Breakfast Club Scheme

We have 24 breakfast clubs in primary schools in Torfaen with more than 1,000 children staying for a free breakfast every school day.

Torfaen to make payments after free school meals axed

[Universal free school](#) meals adopted in Wales, by the Welsh Government has had positive impact on children in Torfaen.

Play Service Food Related Provision

Food and Fun Camps, Summer 2023

- Partnership involved in F&F staff training day, sharing the Charter and informing where to access emergency food provision. Every child had a healthy breakfast and lunch over the 19 days- more than 28,000 meals in total. All children were provided with a family food box & recipe (in association with a Torfaen Pantry). [Play Service gives hundreds of food boxes | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)
- For 2024 Play, the Food Partnership & Food & Fun Primaries are looking to integrate food growing activities into Food & Fun provision to further develop young people's understanding of food & to support the Primary Schools that have food growing sites during their closed period (5 F&F primaries have received our grant for grow, cook, share projects).

Food & Fun School	Number of attendees registered	Number of Children with Disabilities or Support required	Total Number of Children In Care
13 Schools			
TOTAL REGISTERED	2007	120	78

Torfaen Play open access sessions 23/4 (funded through Holiday Playworks).

- All sites provided healthy snacks (fruit, water, etc)

8 School sites	Number of attendees registered	Number of Children With Disabilities or Support required	Total Number of Children In Care
TOTAL REGISTERED	1061	22	27

- Play have consulted with the Partnership on food related questions to be included in the Happy Healthy Place to Play Torfaen consultation (currently being drafted).

[Bron Afon Supporting Working families project](#)

- “In June this year, we began our planning for a new scheme for our Working Family Community. We linked up with ‘Hope for the Community’ party, alongside our volunteers to talk about how we could tweak this idea for working families. We wanted to create something that everyone within Torfaen can access if they are a working family. As a result of “we are looking at linking up with [existing pantries] to offer vouchers in place of the meal bags to encourage families to shop there, as well as linking up with TastyNotWasty voucher scheme”

Torfaen Council is [a real living wage employer](#) and under wellbeing objective three of the County Plan has committed to tackling inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives.

Action Area B: Promote healthy eating

Youth Provision

- [Torfaen Youth](#) have a food activity in every weekly provision enabling young people to learn about , cook and eat food. Young people can access two food growing sites. The Youth Service run young parents, care experience 16+ and social inclusion programmes promote health eating and healthy lifestyles. The Youth Service also support Young Carer sessions. The Partnership is beginning to consult with the newly established [Torfaen Youth Forum](#) around food and what it means to them.
- This year we have supported Cwmbran Centre For Young people [Facebook](#) via a grant to expand its food support to deliver food processing and preserving skills

form butter churning to pickling, and dehydrating. They will also visit local producers and use their products in budget cooking sessions. The food produced will be shared with the young people and the wider community in their pay as you feel cafe.

School Fruit Tuck Shop and Salad Bars

- For some time now Fruit Tuck Shops and [Salad Bars](#) have been in operation in many primary schools, helping make the healthy option the easy option for our pupils. Some parents also use their School Big Bocs Bwyd to top up their healthy snacks.

Public Health Statistics

The child [obesity rate](#) is 15.3% in Torfaen). When last surveyed in 2022 only [20.64%](#) of Torfaen adults ate 5 portions of fruit and veg .

Community grants

- Griffithstown Community Group will be offering scratch cooked baby food courses as part of their community food grant
- Bleanavon Youth strategy will also be offering their young people healthier food in their Youth sessions .

Real bread-

- [Cooles bake](#) are firm supporters of '[Real Bread Campaign](#)' who are trying to tackle the promotion of real bread, calling for improved loaf labelling and marketing laws in the UK – so customers know that Sourdough means genuine Sourdough.

For Dads By Dads

[Dad's the way to do it! | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

- Pioneering 10 week programme of peer support for new Dads

- Partnership became aware they had lost their nutritional element for the next course round and were able to introduce them to The Fedline Project who we have supported via a community grant to offer community cookery classes.

Regional work

- As a result of our work with Regional Public Health Systems Action Planning Workshops & our School Network. Public Health Wales are establishing a project within Torfaen to study the impact of BBB Schools on the wider food offer in places that pupils may engage including local shops and sports centres.
- The Food Partnership is part of the Integrated Wellbeing Networks attending ward meetings in Torfaen supporting professionals to be able to increase the healthy food on offer in the wards.
- The Partnership is also part of the health & wellbeing Primary School Network, and we support a nursery with a growing project via a grant.
- We support our pantries to promote Healthy Start and The Torfaen Family Information Service now promote as the request of the Partnership.

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

- The Good Food Network also aims to support the health and wellbeing of its own community food support Practitioners to protect the services they offer. We will be offering Forest Bathing activities for Community Food Support practitioners delivered by a partnership member.
- We promote [Melo - Mental Health & Wellbeing Resources, Courses & Support](#) which can also be used if a member of the public needs' emergency mental health help in a food provision, reducing the pressure on volunteers.
- We regularly discuss the emotional and professional support needs of volunteers at network meetings.
- TVA has created a [referral folder](#) for community support groups and their wellbeing Officer sits on the Partnership steering group, so we will develop this support further

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

NB at Silver we require evidence that your food partnership has catalysed, influenced or delivered activity. That the food partnership has created additionality. At Silver simply

mapping activity is not sufficient. The 'value added' of the partnership must be demonstrated.

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

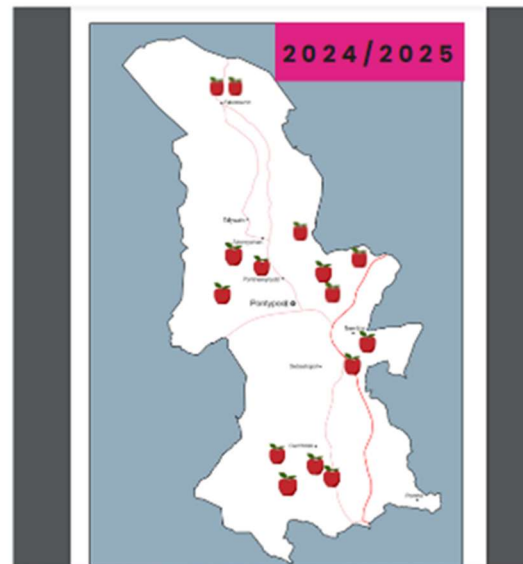
Strategic commitments

[Torfaen County Plan 23/24](#): Wellbeing Objective 6: "We will make Torfaen a great place to do business by working with local employers, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities.

Food Business Development Grant

£67,498 was awarded to 5 businesses in 23/24 increased to £238,991 supporting 14 local businesses, including 6 local farmers, through our recent Food Development grant scheme [24/25](#), aimed at supporting local food businesses that have innovative ideas for adding value to their produce, diversifying their current operations, and creating new, sustainable food networks and supply chains whilst demonstrating a commitment to the Food Charter principles, Our Health, Our Jobs, Our Education, Our Community, Our Future.

Business Grant Scheme 24/25 Award Spread



Food Business Network

Supported by the Food Development Officer, membership has increased to 37 local producers, processors and distributors actively hosting and contributing toward quarterly peer to peer network forum meetings aimed at connecting our food businesses, build new relationships, share best practices and support and foster new opportunities with a shared commitment to provide safe and nutritious food to the community through sustainable practices.

Torfaen Business Direct: Providing one point of contact for new start-up and existing businesses to access council services, from planning and environmental health queries as well as business development support & growth, general queries, and funding opportunities. Working in partnership across the borough to deliver:

- **Sustainable Food Business Support Clinics:** Developed and delivered in partnership with Torfaen Food Resilience team, Business Wales and Development Bank of Wales, providing tailored 1:1 support to new and existing sustainable food businesses requiring advice and financial support and guidance. New initiative launched May 2024, attended by 5 new local food businesses.
- **Business Support Network Meetings:** Co-ordinated through Torfaen Business Direct, held quarterly and attended by 38 representatives including local authority, public, private and third sector organisations aimed at sharing news, updates, and referral paths. Working collaboratively to contribute towards newsletter and social media campaigns and business support opportunities.

Torfaen Employability Team: Providing an integral link in the development of our food businesses, delivering bespoke, 1:1 training in food manufacturing, development, distribution, hospitality & catering. Playing a vital role in providing a platform to advertise local employment, training and development opportunities that have arisen through the growth and development of the businesses that are receiving support as well as the opportunity to expand and enhance current skills set, qualifications and training for existing businesses. Supporting 4 local businesses (new grant recipients) through Supported Employment 6-month placements.

Cywain: Offering high quality support to food and drink businesses from start up to micro, and SME's. Businesses referred to online Community Network and provided with registration link to access tools, mentors and resources. Cywain aims to maintain and strengthen Wales's reputation for producing high quality food and drink. Has provided

support to signposted local food businesses as well as attending the Food Business network.

Torfaen Council is aiming to become a MARMOT council and the Food Partnership are activity involved in developing and monitoring some of the reporting metrics. For example, one of the draft metrics the partnership has been asked to work on is Local, healthy food chains reduce the carbon footprint of food production.

Through workplan one mapping of [Torfaen's food businesses](#) has also been conducted.

Working with colleagues across the Foundational Economy team within TCBC the food partnership is engaged in a number of projects looking at the food offer across the town centres of Torfaen and within Pontypool Market. As highlighted through the [placemaking plans](#).

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

Torfaen press launch: Monthly meetings with Torfaen Communications team to plan and co-ordinate Food Business press release. 15 new businesses to be showcased through planned press launch, highlighting support received through Food development grant and Food Partnership network, planned developments and raising awareness of actions and commitment to "Good Food Charter" principles. (Refer to previous link – case studies)

Marketing & Events: Compilation of individual business case studies summarising background, Food development grant aims and contribution towards health, education, jobs, community & future created. Case studies to be showcased at local community & partnership events via "Story boards" and with colleagues working across other boroughs showcasing best practise and identifying areas of working collaboratively.

Social media "Spotlight" campaigns: Utilising the Food4Growth Social media avenues to run weekly campaigns shining the "spotlight" on different local food providers and businesses, promoting & raising awareness of local food producers including links to individual fb/Instagram pages.

Business information sharing: Weekly communication and information sharing to 37 local food producers/distributors via e-mail distribution sharing news, updates, external support and funding/grant opportunities. Additional dedicated Business page to be

introduced to Food4Growth social media pages acting as a platform to share information with each other and encourage new membership and participation.

- [Torfaen & Gwent Small Business Markets](#): Experienced, independent event's organiser providing Artisan Food & Craft and Farmers Markets in Cwmbran, Pontypool & Blaenavon curating vibrant marketplaces showcasing the unique charm and diverse offerings of Torfaen and Gwent's small businesses. Established links with Torfaen Small Business Markets – attendance at regular Farmer and Artisan markets across the borough –promoting local produce and increasing accessibility to the community.
- [Youth led cafe](#) (Inspire 2 Achieve) links established to explore sourcing and using locally produced food.

Through the [CRF](#) funded project a pilot food pantry was established within Pontypool market to show case the model to the public.

The mapping study has highlighted the range of producers and food businesses that operate within Torfaen. The next step for the food partnership is to digitise this information to develop an open access map for people to use.

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

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

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

School Catering Management and Dietician

- Very active award-winning steering group members. Torfaen are one of the few school Catering Teams in Wales to benefit from having a qualified Dietitian in the team)
- Consulted with pupils to maximise the healthy options eaten in School adjusting the food on offer accordingly. "We care about our children's health and wellbeing.

As such, we have created a range of school meals compliant with nutritional standards and including a variety of red meat and poultry dishes, omega-3 rich oily fish, rice and pasta [fruit & vegetables]. All food and drink in our primary schools is analysed by our teams' dietitian to comply with the [Healthy Eating in Schools \(Nutritional Standards and Regulations\) \(Wales\) Regulations](#). We have, of course, reduced the fat, sugar and salt content in our recipes, whilst increasing fibre. In addition, we use cooking methods like steaming and oven baking to ensure nutrients are retained, and texture and taste enhanced."

All frozen fish is MSC certified.



**Spring/
Summer
Menu
2024**

This menu is compliant with the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations 2013

**Why not try our
Pasta Bar?**

Choose either Pasta and tomato sauce
Cook's choice meat pasta of the day
Or plain pasta
Accompanied with Garlic bread or wrap
Grated cheese and mixed salad
Also available from the pasta bar will be jacket potato, cheese and beans.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Pork Sausage or Quorn Sausage (Ve) served with Mashed Potato, Baked Beans, Bread and Spread Apple and Cinnamon Crumble with Custard	Homemade Beef Spaghetti Bolognese or Quorn Bolognese (V) served with Assorted Vegetables and Garlic Bread Chocolate Brownie and a Milk Drink	Chicken Breast Fillet or Quorn Fillet (Ve) served with Stung, Seasonal Vegetables, Dry Roast, Boiled Potatoes and Gravy Arctic Roll and Fruit Cocktail	Salmon Fish fingers or Vegetable Nuggets (Ve) served with Potato Wedges and Baked Beans Jam and Coconut Sponge with Custard	Ham and Pineapple Pizza or Cheese and Tomato Pizza (V) served with Chips and a Side Salad Ice-Cream and Mandarins
Week 2	BBQ Chicken or BBQ Quorn Fillet (Ve) Served with Diced potatoes and Sweetcorn Pear and Chocolate Cake with Chocolate Sauce	Beef Meatballs or Plant Based Balls (Ve) Served with Mashed Potato Seasonal Vegetables and Gravy Fruit Jelly and Cream	Turkey or Quorn Fillet (Ve) Served with Stung, Seasonal Vegetables, Dry Roast, Boiled Potatoes and Gravy Welsh Cake and a Milk Drink	Cheese and Tomato Pizza or Vegetable Nuggets (Ve) Served with Potato Wedges Side Salad or Peas Sticky Toes Sponge and Custard	Jumbo Fish Finger Sub or Vegetable Sausage Sub (Ve) served with Chips and a Side Salad Raspberry Flavour Ice Cream and Fruit
Week 3	Salmon Fish Fingers or Cheese and Tomato Pizza (V) Served with Herby Diced Potatoes, Beans or peas Strawberry Whirl with Fruit Cocktail	Beef Lasagne or Cheese and Potato Pie (V) Served with Seasonal Vegetables and Garlic Bread Arctic Roll and Peaches	Pork Sausage or Quorn Sausage (Ve) Served with Yorkshire Pudding, Seasonal Vegetables, Dry Roast, Boiled potatoes and Gravy Fruit Jelly and a Milk Drink	Chicken curry or Vegetarian Curry (V) Served with Savoury Rice, Naan Bread & Veg Chocolate and Coconut Flapjack (Ve)	Chicken Burger in a Bun or Southern Quorn in a Bun (V) served with Chips and Salad Ice-Cream and Mandarins

(V) Vegetarian. All accompaniments to main choices above are suitable for Vegetarians. Jelly and Tiramisu are not suitable for vegetarians. Fruit and yogurt are always available.
(Ve) Vegan. All accompaniments to main choices above are suitable for vegans with the exception of Yorkshire Pudding. Fruit is available daily as a dessert option, and a flapjack where it appears above. A fully vegan menu is available on request.

Menus may vary in faith schools, please check with your individual school for details

April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024
M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F
8 9 10 11 12 15 16 17 18 19 22 23 24 25 26 29 30 1 2 3	6 7 8 9 10 13 14 15 16 17 20 21 22 23 24	3 4 5 6 7 10 11 12 13 14 17 18 19 20 21 24 25 26 27 28	1 2 3 4 5 8 9 10 11 12 15 16 17 18 19

Every effort is made to provide the correct balance of choices to our customers but we cannot guarantee that all choices will be available right to the end of service.

Catering for Medical Diets/ Food Allergies

For special diets requests please e-mail: specialdietrequest@torfaen.gov.uk

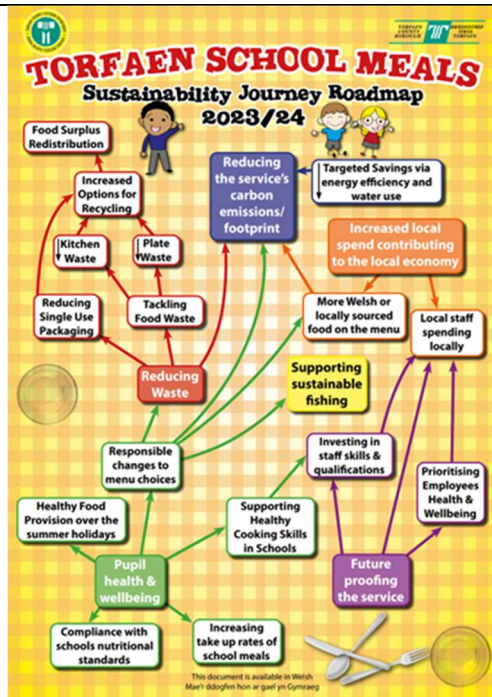
Nesta

- Teamed up last year with Torfaen council to pilot various initiatives targeting parents and pupils.

- The goal, to boost the uptake of free school meals and steering more Welsh children towards a nutritionally balanced midday meal containing less fat, salt and sugar than typical packed lunches.
- The resulting report is due to be released and we will share the learning, including at a Food Partnership Community Practice Session.

School Catering Awards:

- Welsh Government Recognition of Excellence Award 2023 – Successful roll out of primary free school meals for all in Torfaen
- Winners – LACA Wales Innovation Award 2023 – Waste Warriors Plate Waste Competition, now in its second year (2024) (Primary Pupils reduced their plate waste by 20%. Cookery session prizes. Looking to expand this to Secondary Schools, Sept 2024)
- Shortlisted – Waste2Zero Awards 2023 – Recognised for our environmental impact in tackling plate waste in our dining halls. [Waste Warriors competition winners | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)
- UK Winners – LACA Nan Berger Memorial Award 2023 – Sustainable School Meals Roadmap
- Comprehensive plan here:[Sustainability Journey Roadmap \(torfaen.gov.uk\)](#)
- UK Winners – Public Sector Catering Innovation Award 2022 – Catering for pupils with a diagnosis of Autism



Theme Days

- Secondary Catering Teams lead the way in their much anticipated "Theme Days", helping to make school food fun and educational, whilst elevating the profile of the school catering service to the hub of the school. Teaching staff love theme days as much as the pupils as they creatively link food into wider curriculum and current events, whilst, of course, encouraging pupils to try a variety of different foods

Torfaen Civic Centre Cafe

- Developed by Inspire 2 Achieve who support pupils attain a destination.
- Staffed by Torfaen pupils
- Pupils have their own food growing spaces, winning awards for their vegetables [Young gardening enthusiasts reap rewards | Torfaen County Borough Council](#), achieve hospitality qualifications, and run a hot and cold food offer with the aim of developing in a catering business.
- The Partnership has worked with them along the way introducing them to local food producers and discussing the future possibility of a local food box pick up point at the cafe.

Business Grants

- Through the Food Business Development grant the partnership has funded some “fast food” businesses to pilot using local produce, adding healthy alternatives to their menu or exploring reformulation fo existing menu items. These businesses include Front Row Food, The Foodie Shack & Box’d Pizza.

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

We have held three Farmer & Food Business Network meetings:

- *Farming Connect* presented at the first meeting outlining available support, farmers discussed their concerns re the [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#), needs in relation to access to dispatch facilities, and the resources they currently had as a network to manage some of this need and needs regarding staffing a local food offer & other distribution needs:
 - Business links were established which has resulted in one farmer including other local farm produce in his local food box delivery business. We were able to link attendees to UDDER a service offering free websites to Torfaen Businesses.
 - 3 local farmers who were in attendance are now receiving additional support to access information and grant opportunities through Farming Connect.
- *Summit Business Network Workshop*: The second network meeting took place at the Summit enabling cross sector engagement. Our producers were able to show their produce and discuss key shared issues in an open invitation workshop, which saw members of the public and other sectors engage in the dialogue & raising awareness.
- *“Meet & Greet” Network forum*: The third network meeting attended by 9 new businesses, introduced our current grant recipients to the Partnership and to each other. All were invited to share their intended plans on utilising recently awarded grant funding, identify areas of working together and challenges/successes to date with one food producer stating that as a result of last year’s grant funding of a

farm shop, they are now able to sustain themselves from their farm gate trade alone, giving them the capacity to rescale their animal farming and consider ending their supermarket contract.

Additional support and access to Business Pathfinders, Torfaen Business Direct and Torfaen Works resulted in referrals for 1:1 specialist support, training and supported employment placements.

Networking results:

- A grant funded deli business “Kestrels” stocking Welsh food items have considered selling Network produce in a local produce fridge & hold a food skill workshop such as bread making in partnership with “The Cookes Bake”.
- A grant funded business “Box’d” have agreed to mentor and provide space within their business premises to “spotlight and host” new start up “pop up” businesses, eager to work with the Welsh Gurka Kitchen.
- Planned open events for our partnership members to access our food producer sites to further develop joint working relationships, which will expand into public visits.
- Agreed and planned a Social Media promotion loop of Torfaen Food Partnership businesses, spotlighting businesses on a weekly basis, sharing content and using shared hashtags and tagging each other.
- *Future Business Network Meetings:* A timetable of future Business network meetings has been agreed, to be hosted by Businesses across the borough on a rotational basis. Suggestions for content include “tasting sessions”, “wellbeing”, “refer a (business) friend” “success and challenges” as well as opportunities to invite other valuable sources of support from external partners & projects.

Distribution Network/ Local food infrastructure

From recommendations in a number of commissioned reports and through barriers identified by both community food groups and food businesses across the chain. The food resilience team have started to develop a distribution and food business incubation project with [feasibility work](#) currently taking place with £100,000 of Shared Prosperity Funding.

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

Public sector procurement for the local authority is carried out on a regional scale with Caerphilly CBC being the responsible authority for food procurement. Which means the influence that Torfaen Food Partnership can have on this is minimal at present.

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

Torfaen Climate & Nature emergency action plan

- Has a food section [Climate change and nature emergency | Torfaen County Borough Council](#) which commits the council to supporting and developing the Torfaen Food Partnership.

Landbased reports

Several of the commissioned studies focus their recommendation on climate change and we as a partnership are developing those deliverable by us into the Food Strategy.

- Green Agriculture Study (Dec,2022),
- Torfaen's Food Mapping Study (2022),
- Land based producers (2018)
- updated Land Based Study (2022)

Wales Climate week

- [Tasty Not Wasty CIC](#) presented at the Reducing Food Waste to Support the Environment Session, discussing Fareshare and the value of the Food Partnership & Good Food Network.

Farming Connect/Lantra Horticulture Cluster

- Partnership Officer and Food Development Officer are members of the horticulture cluster and attend events promoting this to our farming network via emails & Social Media
- Farming Connect has attended Torfaen Farming Network event

Increased Market Gardening:

- Two Torfaen Farmers have developed market gardens as a result of Partnership grant funding, both have farm gate shops to sell the produce locally.

Planning

- Torfaen Planners have consulted with Food Resilience team, as part of the Internal Officers Network re Green Field Extension, “We want to do more than allotments to increase health, placemaking & community pride”.

Green Meadow Farm

- Due to re-open to public in 2025
- Recently appointed a new Manager who has met with Partnership as part of internal Officer group to discuss working together re selling local food and creating a food education experience.

Food Businesses & Grants

- Ty Poeth Hydroponics: Successfully trialling a polytunnel housing hydroponic strawberries, supported through food development grant funding. This innovative approach, housed within a repurposed lamb shed, has demonstrated a willingness to explore new methods of cultivation. With unpredictable weather posing a significant challenge to traditional outdoor farming practices the polytunnel infrastructure helps to mitigate risk by providing a controlled environment for

cultivation. This not only safeguards crop yield but also ensures a consistent supply of fresh produce to meet market demand.

- [Torfaen Council's Community Meals](#) team are serving up more than 1150 meals a week, compared to an average of 860 in 2018/19. The service uses 5 electric vehicles.

Campaigns:

- We share Sustainable Food Places, Sustain & Soil Association resources and learning knowledge gained at conferences and meetings with our networks and via our social media, including for example Peas Please campaign.

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

Torfaen [Recycling and Waste Strategy 2018 - 2025 \(torfaen.gov.uk\)](#) commits the council to ambitious recycling targets including food waste.

- In response to the [Well Being and Future Generation Act \(Wales\) 2015](#) Torfaen has published its [Well Being Plan for Torfaen 2018-2023](#), which also provides context for this waste strategy, with its vision for “Torfaen to be a great place to live, work and visit. A place where the environment is protected and enhanced, every child has the best start in life and people have opportunities to work, learn and live healthier and prosperous lives”.
- Torfaen Council consults with the public on waste via its [Get Involved Torfaen](#) portal & has a “Raise the Rate” drive for recycling regularly promoting methods of food waste & packaging waste reduction on Facebook.

[Climate Ambassadors Network | Torfaen County Borough Council](#)

- Consulting with the council, resulting in residents being offered free compost as part of a trial by Torfaen Council to reuse green waste collected from local homes.

Torfaen Stretchy Plastic recycling

- As of June 23, Torfaen Council collects and recycles stretchy plastic e.g. bread bags using a Torfaen company to create a construction industry material. [Stretchy Plastic Film ENGLISH \(youtube.com\)](#)

Trash Times

- The Council is relaunching its School recycling magazine
- Fareshare frozen food Pilot
- One of our three food pantries is taking part and stocks their ready meals.

Community excess food movement

- The majority of our community food providers are linked in a whatsapp group and move excess food between themselves, we also have a 6 food bank distribution centre in the borough. We are working towards a solution for allotment waste to be distributed.
- The Council Biodiversity team offer [community Orchard training](#) to process a fruit harvest.
- We promote Tasty Not Wasty CIC who collect, redistribute, share, cook and freeze waste food. In our current rounds of grants TNW will add a food dehydrator and create a voucher system to enable support services across the borough to refer people for frozen meals. This model will then be considered for other needs (e.g. recycled furniture).
- Tasty not Wasty via Hubbub run sessions to cook pumpkin innards at Halloween. One of our community growers also collect pumpkins and Christmas trees which they then compost they also give away their apple harvest to be eaten.
- We are supporting a Cafe at Llantarnam Grange with a Community Food Grant. This will focus on how they process their food waste and will be a useful pilot for our community & business partners.

Local Businesses safeguarding “Our Future” by pledging to reduce, redirect, and recycle food, packaging, and related waste:

- [Monachty Farm](#): Dairy & Market Garden) Farm using returnable glass bottles for milk and preserves at their farm gate shop
- [Coffi Kitoko](#): Awarded the Green Growth Pledge from Business Wales – all packaging cups, lids, straws produced by B-Corp company “decent packaging”
- *Waddle Woods*: Producers of duck eggs, reducing energy using solar supply, local spring water and reusing waste (manure) as fertiliser.
- *The Cookes Bake*: Bakes to order via local shops. Surplus stock from weekly orders/events donated to local food banks or donated to Zero Waste Torfaen under “Pay what you feel” scheme with all proceeds donated to local charities.
- [Zero Waste Torfaen – Eco friendly food and household refills](#): Providing sustainable shopping and food sourcing using local, plastic free, circular system to avoid waste and miles. Reduce, reuse, refill.
- *The Foodie Shack* [Facebook](#) / *Front Row Food* [Facebook](#) / [Box'd Bar & Pizza](#)
Reducing food waste using “Too good to go” apps and donations to local charities & community groups, using recyclable boxes for take-out food options.
- [Box'd Bar & Pizza \(boxdbarpizza.co.uk\)](#): Food trials, thinking creatively and innovatively, working closely with local farmers to reduce waste and explore how menus can incorporate by products that are currently disposed of eg bone marrow and fats.

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