

Report from Scottish Borders Food Networking event

Galashiels 1 May 2012



**community
food and health**
(scotland)



food & health
alliance



About CFHS



CFHS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity, ability and confidence to access a healthy and acceptable diet for themselves, their families and their communities. We do this by supporting work with and within low-income communities that addresses health inequalities and barriers to healthy and affordable food.

Barriers being addressed by community-based initiatives are:

Availability- increasing access to fruit and vegetables of an acceptable quality and cost

Affordability – tackling not only the cost of shopping but also getting to the shops

Skills – improving confidence and skills in cooking and shopping

Culture – overcoming ingrained habits

CFHS values the experience, understanding and skills of community-based food activity and their unique contribution to developing and delivering policy and practice at all levels.

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About the Food and Health Alliance

**food & health
alliance**

The FHA is a Scottish network that engages a variety of different sectors and professions. We help to inform, connect and aid policy development and implementation in food and health.

What does the FHA do?

- Connects people to information by delivering up-to-date on food and health news, including what's happening in all sectors.
- Connects people with each other across all food and health areas in Scotland. By bringing people together, we help to share information and experiences, help make links and provide a chance to network across different sectors.
- Connects people to policy by increasing the awareness and understanding of food and health policies. Our aim is to raise the profile of food and health and provide opportunities to influence policies.

The FHA is located within NHS Health Scotland, Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HE.

You can contact us by emailing: nhs.healthscotland-fha@nhs.net or phoning 0131 313 7500.

Thanks

Refreshments for the day and lunch were provided by the Production Unit based at Langlee Community Centre. The Unit provides individual learning experiences for young people 16-19 who are moving towards independent living and/or experiencing difficulties accessing and maintaining further education, training and employment opportunities. This opportunity was a great experience for the young people who prepared and served a delicious lunch, and deserved all the excellent comments they received. Their feedback reported that it was a great experience in terms of enhancing their confidence and motivation. Breadshare supplied bread for the lunch.

We would like to thank our partners NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council for supporting us with this event. Also, we are extremely grateful to Jo Hight, Borders Healthy Living Network; Gary White, Tweedgreen and Pete Ritchie representing Breadshare and Nourish, who shared their learning and experiences about food activities in the Borders.

BACKGROUND

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS and the Food and Health Alliance (FHA) within NHS Health Scotland have been piloting regional networking events to improve links with food activity across the food chain.

This event took place on 1 May in Galashiels in collaboration with NHS Scottish Borders and Scottish Borders Council.



Aim

A food networking event for those with a role within the whole food chain focusing on promoting and discussing challenges and solutions to local food access and availability in the Scottish Borders.

Objectives

- 1) To build local awareness of the range and nature of local food activity and local assets.
- 2) To develop links and showcase practice between food and health activity and the support available.
- 3) To recognise that Health Improvement, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability are interconnected.
- 4) To increase awareness of the support that is available locally and nationally including CFHS and the FHA.

Summary of key discussion themes

35 participants from across the food sector in the Scottish Borders attended the event. An overview of organisations represented is in Appendix 4.

Key themes reflected in discussions included:

- Access to local food: cost/where to buy/supply chain.
- Growing food.
- Role of local communities.
- Education, children and young people.
- Procurement and the public sector.
- Workforce.
- Networking, communication and health (info exchange).

Welcome

Eric Baijal, Joint Director of Public Health, NHS Borders and Scottish Borders Council.

“Working in partnership guided by what our local community needs is the most effective way of getting results when we are tackling complex issues.

“This partnership event reflects the collaboration required if we are seeking to improve access to healthy food in the Borders and to counteract the negative messages about food and health. Undoubtedly we face major challenges around local food access and affordability due to impact of welfare reforms, the local economy, employment and health. The scope of what could be done is huge and there is much going on already that is very positive. Some examples of interest are the community supported agriculture model and the excellent work of the Borders Healthy Living Network activity that supports local food access in disadvantaged areas of Scottish Borders. The outcomes from this event will be useful in helping to shape plans for future such work.”

Speakers

(All presentations can be found [here](#))

Community – led food production - Jo Highet, Health Improvement Specialist, Borders Healthy Living Network (HLN).

HLN offers a community development approach to health improvement with the main aims of reducing health inequalities and improving capacity for health in Langlee (Galashiels), Eyemouth, Walkerburn, Bannerfield (Selkirk) and Burnfoot (Hawick).

Jo Highet stressed the importance of engaging with communities to identify community activities that are needed. The approach they use delivers a ‘bottom up approach with support from the top down’. The network use participatory appraisal¹ approaches in identifying programmes that meet need, engage participants voluntarily and encourage local involvement and address barriers.

Community – led food production focuses on three key themes: access, environmental and health benefits in two areas Walkerburn and Bannerfield (Selkirk).

Walkerburn

In Walkerburn the network and the criminal justice service work in partnership and are assisted by community health volunteers and community learning and development. A steering group guides the work of the Allotment Project and Community Garden. Food that has been grown has been distributed to families within Walkerburn.

¹ Participatory Appraisal approaches and methods use visual or active techniques to engage with people, find out their opinions, involve them in decision making and take action that respond to local needs.

Bannerfield (Selkirk)

Community participants were interested in growing food as a way of saving money on their food budgets and were particularly keen on gardening sessions for both adults and children. By getting practical support they were able to start growing food for themselves. Links were made to a local allotment scheme and activities are going well.

Future steps include:

- Continue to work in partnership with Third sector and develop/main new partnerships.
- Build on success and identify other opportunities and other areas.
- Continue to consult with communities.
- Maintain focus on reducing poverty.

Tweedgreen Food Challenge – Gary White

Tweedgreen is a voluntary community based organisation of local people working towards a self-sustaining Tweeddale and is based in Peebles.

The Food Challenge supported local communities to source local ingredients and grow food for local consumption with the aim of reducing food waste and addressing waste within the 'supply chain' – 'supermarket to bin'.

Gary explained that the programme focused on supporting behaviour change around food. Addressing the challenges of engaging the community in a meaningful way required accessible messages for all.

Participants took part in a six-week programme which involved:

- Using a food challenge pack to support their involvement.
 - The pack contained a guidebook and a food bag to weigh food waste in order to monitor CO2 reduction.
- Practical cooking classes supported learning about food planning, shopping to minimise food waste and cooking larger quantities to freeze and eat another time.
- Advice on how to minimise energy consumption e.g. putting lids on pots when cooking to reduce cooking times.

Impact

The programme was successful as small groups learned and worked together. The project has received positive feedback from participants and funders however, tracking and counting carbon reduction was a challenge. Engagement has been strong with sustainable messages disseminated in relation to a complex issue. Participants have reported that they are making use of new skills to reduce their food waste.

Breadshare Community Bakery – represented by Pete Ritchie, Nourish/Whitmuir Organics

Breadshare Community Bakery is a community interest company (CIC) set up by local people who wanted to make real bread available through a viable, sustainable, not-for-profit bakery business in the Scottish Borders.

Pete explained their vision is 'good bread available for all' and all the money raised to get the bakery started was raised from local community members. The bakery focuses on making sourdough and slow fermented bread.

Breadshare would like to source local grain for milling and baking. Finding sources of local grain is challenging as although grains are grown in Scotland most are harvested and used for animal feed rather than milled and used as flour. They would also like to develop opportunities to possibly grow and distribute local flour to local retailers like farm shops and farmers markets.



There is potential for the model to be replicated in other areas as well as provide educational opportunities to others.

Balancing all sides – health, economy and the environment: Pete Ritchie, Nourish/Whitmuir Organics

Pete was asked to kick-start a discussion looking at rebalancing and reconnecting food's relationship with health, the economy and the environment and what this might look like and involve.

Health

- Health issues related to food and diet well known – 28% adults in Scotland classed as obese.
- 39% total energy intake from fat.
- Not enough breads, cereals and fish eaten.

Economy

- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) makes farming viable however the dividend from produce is falling and continues to fall.
- 1300 + farms in Scottish Borders.

- Dominance of supermarket retailers is a challenge to the sustainability of local retailers and short supply chains.
- Food specialisation is an option but lots of issues in terms of scale and making it viable.

Environment

- The harmful impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from food production (25-30%) and the need to reduce carbon are well documented.
- Scotland does not have greenhouse gas produced by food waste reduction target. Why not?
- Land usage contributing to loss of bio-diversity and grasslands.

What would better look like 20 – 30 years from now?

- More ecological approaches to agriculture: orchards, farms, market gardens.
- Connections between farms and communities providing added value to both.
- Thriving market towns – local food retailers and short supply chains.
- Less processed food in diet.
- More natural diets for - grass rather than grains for feed.

Challenges

- Lots of intention to buy local food but difficult to do it. Nourish network established to look at: what we eat, how we farm, local food economies, government policy and local policy.
- Single Outcome Agreements need to have local food included.

Where to start?

- Deep change needed and cross sectoral lead required (Scottish Borders) to develop sustainable food plan.
- Build a movement across all life stages.
- In Borders, large unmanageable farms broken up to include more diversity: market gardens, orchards, community gardens.
- Support for local shops and to be more sustainable – ([Community Retailing Network](#) and [Plunkett Foundation](#) are a good source of information).
- Public food should be local food as much as possible – 90% target (Denmark has 75%).
- Support community actions.

Themes and key points from discussions

Participants discussed and shared issues and ideas relating to what they heard from speakers and how in their view using local experience, local food activity could be developed. Key themes came up in discussions which were echoed and added to throughout the day. A summary of these themes and actions follows:



Access to local food: availability/cost/where to buy/supply chain

Different debates about local food were put forward from participants viewpoints for example: local food availability in communities, towns and cities is influenced by choices on offer, cost and accessibility to local shops and supermarkets. There are many more issues as well as various counter arguments in support of local shops and supermarkets. An earlier discussion debated how local food could be more affordable to low-income communities.

- **Consumer behaviour**

Some independent stores sell local produce but their locations and availability may not be widely known. Many consumers tend to use supermarkets for their main shop and use local shops less.

- **How to reach consumers and motivate**

Map what is available and accessible locally to build pride and awareness in local food. Motivate by promoting the value to local economy i.e. local spend on local food in local shops stays in local economy.

- **Micro economies**

Small businesses and social enterprises working together.

- **Working with supermarkets**

Encourage supermarkets to supply local/ seasonal food: label and promote availability of affordable local produce ie Lidl. Trial 'local food aisles'.

- **Farmers Markets**

When are they on and are they accessible to all communities?

Growing food

- **Grow your own**

There are many initiatives that are supporting local communities to produce their own food. Participants heard about growing activities supported by the Borders Healthy Living Network, Tweedgreen and in the marketplace from Trellis and their networks.

- **Wider benefits of growing food:**
 - Developing skills for employability through learning and development.
 - Impact on individuals and communities through confidence building and developing ownership of community assets.
 - Distributing produce to families who may benefit from access to fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Issues around health and safety issues and growing food were explored through a range of materials available in the marketplace to support concerns.

Role of local communities

- **How do we reach everyone in the community especially those below the radar?**
The work of HLN and other initiatives are addressing access to food with and within local communities. HLN works in five disadvantaged areas in the Scottish Borders – there is lots of local activity but is it all connected?
- **Volunteers are important** – recruiting and engaging volunteers as well as building their capacity to work in local communities. Some examples of volunteers contribution to food activity highlighted in morning showcasing and recognised as a valuable asset for this agenda. ([The Vital Ingredient](#) - A new publication from CFHS highlights the contribution of volunteering in community food and health work.)
- **Barriers to healthier foods**
Cost of food / local food has an influence on food budgets and food choices. Could access to food co-ops in all areas help tackle accessibility in local areas if it was addressed with a strategic approach?
- More places or venues for communities to access 'drop in' cooking classes.

Food education, children and young people

People have become disconnected from the land and where food comes from. Educating people about food was seen as an opportunity to rebuild connections with food and developing skills and confidence.

- Intergenerational influence was recognised as a positive and powerful model to encourage children and young people to try new things and learn old skills in a new way.
- Encourage/develop work in schools around food. However, participants recognised this raised challenges in relation to capacity, resources and constraints.
- Schools were seen as natural environments where food tastes could be developed and to learn new skills for example, schools hosting farmers markets. There are some examples of schools where this has been developed - Balfron Primary School Farmers Market <http://www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk/news/> .
- Home economics classes.

Procurement and the public sector

- **Could the public sector do more to procure local food?**
Participants shared experiences and debated if challenges they had encountered could be addressed creatively and if more local leadership could help to make changes.
- Community planning – develop links to key people to raise issue.
- Overall food needs to be debated in the public sector arena - food as part of the agenda rather than a consequence.

Workforce

- Develop intelligence about the sector and opportunities for sector based training.
- Volunteers have a key role in all aspects of the workforce. Commitment to building their capacity and identifying where their skills could be best applied needs to be developed. Volunteer Centre Borders are a rich resource for delivering on this and other opportunities.

Networking, communication and health (info exchange)

The food networking event provided an opportunity for people to come together that might not have networked otherwise. Participants voiced that opportunities to hear and find out about what is going on in the Scottish Borders were needed to improve links and develop ways of working together. Opportunities needed to be developed without roles or boundaries getting in the way of making practical connections.

- **Communication strategy**
Build on links being made at networking event, explore communication and make use of participants' assets. Everyone was very keen to continue contact, be informed about local activity and make more strategic links and partnerships.
- An exercise to map localities and who is doing work around food would be welcome. A commitment to a paragraph from each group about what they are doing around food updated and circulated every six months would help with that.
- **Potential for a local network in the Scottish Borders?**
One purpose could be reducing perceptions of organisations working in isolation. A network could draw others in (www.forthenvironmentlink.org/) an example with overarching remit across food, the environment, growing etc).
- A network would bring wider benefits such as shared experiences and ability to apply and access shared funding.
- Important to make use of social media and technology that support more effective networking and sharing of practice.

Future steps

A number of themes and ideas emerged from the event that will help shape local work to promote local food access and availability. There are opportunities afforded by the connections between national and local activities and programmes that can be continued beyond this event, with potential mutual gains.

Discussions reinforced the cross cutting importance of local food from the perspective of health, economic benefit and environmental impacts.

There is a need to ensure that these interconnections are clearly identified to avoid duplication and achieve greatest possible impact. There is great potential to innovate and develop approaches that will help achieve change in local food access and availability and that will assure the benefits desired for the people of the Borders.

At present, Public Health on behalf of the local authority and the NHS is leading on work.

Areas for action

Participants were keen that the event led to follow up actions in the areas outlined below:

Networking and communication

The report from the event and the sharing of contact details among participants are initial steps towards building a network in Borders among those interested in local food access and availability. Participants who attended on 1 May and others interested will be invited to a follow up networking and planning meeting to identify how they would like to be involved and to consider what the main focus should be.

Local food

There are various opportunities to promote access to and the availability of local food that are already being developed and some of these were featured at the event.

- Raise awareness of the importance of local food access and availability for improved quality of life for people in the Borders.
- Increase the profile of work that is happening already to facilitate this.
- Seek opportunities to develop this further and ultimately build support for a more joined-up sustainable approach to local food sourcing in Scottish Borders.

Procurement

Public sector organisations have an important role through their procurement policies to lead by example in encouraging local food sourcing. Sustainability and community benefit clauses are useful 'hooks' that can be used, matched with the recently affirmed commitment from the local authority to strengthening the use of



local suppliers. Borders can learn from experience in other areas of the UK on this.

Developing knowledge and skills in the workforce

While there are a range of opportunities available to develop knowledge and skills for the workforce and for volunteers and community members, we lack an overview in Scottish Borders of what is needed, what is available and where gaps are. It would require an extensive mapping exercise to seek to draw that information together. However it should be possible, if some clarity emerges from the actions above; to identify what knowledge and skill development is required and encourage stronger partnership working to address this.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Expectations

- Networking – meeting people especially from similar fields and develop links
- Explore, strengthen and develop access to local food in communities taking into account environment, affordability and resources.
- Understand and learn about what is happening in the Scottish Borders and how it can be supported
- Make links between agriculture, food and the whole food chain.
- Find out about opportunities which might be of benefit – volunteering; work experience; partnership working and collaboration
- Think about possible structure for sustainable and local food – exploring issues. Organisations attended and who had marketplace
- Explore procurement within catering and local contracts

Appendix 2 – Evaluations summary

- 65% participants completed evaluation (23)
- Most agreed that the event had achieved its objectives and was a valuable use of their time.
- Hearing about food activity in the Scottish Borders was useful and participants reported that the discussion groups were the most useful parts of the event.
- The programme was very full and although most participants thought there was sufficient time for each section, more time would have been useful:
 - More time to network in the opening session with more formal introductions.
 - More time allocated to discussion groups to allow more depth and moving ideas forward.
 - Format (roundtables) and time allocated for lunch was very effective.
- Some participants would have liked more discussion around workforce issues and skills around food, and input from more retailers and food producers attending.
- Clearer definition of next steps (at time of event).
- The opportunity to network with others was very important and participants are keen for this to continue.

Appendix 3 – Organisations that attended

[Breadshare](#)

[Clooties](#)

[Community Food & Health \(Scotland\)](#)

[Eco Schools Scotland](#)

[Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens/Trellis](#)

Heriot-Watt University

[Job Centre Plus](#)

Kelso Family Centre

[New Horizons Borders](#)

[NHS Borders/Borders Healthy Living Network](#)

[NHS Health Scotland \(FHA\)](#)

[Scottish Borders Council](#) (Catering)

[Scottish Borders Council](#) (Community Services)

[Scottish Borders Council](#) (Environmental)

[Scottish Borders Council](#) (Environmental Health)

[Scottish Borders Council](#) (Social Work)

[Scottish Borders Zero Waste](#)

[Scottish Government](#)

[Teviotdale Leisure Centre](#)

[The Bridge](#)

Peebles CAN/[Tweedgreen](#)

[Tweed Valley Organics](#)

[Volunteer Centre Borders](#)

[WRVS](#)

[Whitmuir Organics/Nourish](#)

[Daily Essentials Direct](#)