



Participation in Policy and Planning
2017

Community Food Hubs: Helping Make Edinburgh a Sustainable Food City



PARTICIPATION IN POLICY AND PLANNING 2017

Community Food Hubs: Helping make Edinburgh a Sustainable Food City

PROJECT CLIENTS: The City of Edinburgh Council, Adaptation Scotland, and Nourish Scotland

OVERVIEW

Context

Project Aims:

1. To explore stakeholders' perspectives on the opportunities for developing a Community Food Hub (CFH) in North Edinburgh
2. To develop evidence-based recommendations for how the project clients could develop community food hubs that serve the needs of all stakeholders

Methods

- We interviewed 55 stakeholders
- We conducted a thematic analysis of the data to identify the issues that were most significant for stakeholders, particularly with regard to what a CFH could be, and what barriers may arise

Findings

From the analysis of the interviews, the following key themes and ideas were identified:

1. Building Communities:
 - This was stakeholders' most important issue, with 48 out of 55 discussing it
 - A CFH could contribute to reducing isolation by bringing people together
 - A main aim of a CFH should be to provide dignified access to food and promote equality
2. Education:
 - Using a CFH to provide education could lead to behavioural changes in the community by teaching new skills, rebuilding connections with food origins and organising activities that build social bonds
 - Education should be prioritised for people lacking access to healthy food, skills, or social networks
3. Behavioural Change:
 - Changes in habits, culture and behaviours around food in North Edinburgh were considered an important step in making Edinburgh a Sustainable Food City
4. Sustainability and Climate Change:
 - A greater connection between local producers and consumers will improve the sustainability of the CFH by reducing Edinburgh's food related carbon footprint and supporting local farmers
5. Networks:
 - The importance of networks was widely discussed. Connecting existing initiatives was important to 34 out of 55 stakeholders
6. Space:
 - 32 out of 55 stakeholders conceptualised a CFH as having a physical space

Recommendations

Approach

- Designers of CFHs should engage with local residents to establish a baseline understanding of their needs and concerns
- We recommend that CFH designers foster social inclusion by making the services not restricted to food issues alone and viable to a wide range of audiences

Next Steps

Network:

- It is suggested to connect and strengthen existing food initiatives, rather than directing resources at new projects at the expense of existing initiatives

Making Sustainable Food Accessible:

- We recommend that steps are taken to make local, sustainable food more accessible for people in North Edinburgh. This could be done in the following ways:
 - Developing affordable mobile food markets that serve multiple communities
 - Introducing an Outreach Bus to link food initiatives with people who are not mobile or who have limited access to existing projects
 - Creating an alternative payment system for people on low income, or in need of emergency food provision
 - Develop a strategy for large-scale sustainable procurement for all existing food initiatives in North Edinburgh

Conclusion

- Stakeholders provided a wealth of valuable insights on important aspects of the Sustainable Food City Plan, including issues in health and wellbeing, land use, environment, buying food, economy, and cultural change
- With our recommendations we hope that the food system in North Edinburgh can be improved and increase ways to share and celebrate food

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the participants in this research for kindly giving up their time to share their knowledge and expertise with us.

With special thanks to the Pilton Community Health Project for allowing access to their dataset of initiatives in Edinburgh used in our stakeholder map.

We would also like to give a big thank you to Emily Creamer for her support and guidance, and sharing her expertise which informed the theoretical underpinnings for this research.

1. Introduction

This report summarises the findings of a study conducted by students on the Participation in Policy & Planning MSc module at the University of Edinburgh. The research topic was to explore the potential for developing a Community Food Hub (CFH) in North Edinburgh by interviewing a range of stakeholders such as decision-makers, service-providers, academics and members of the public. The project clients – Adaptation Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council, and Nourish Scotland – represent a diversity of interests, from developing a climate resilient food system to ensuring safe, dignified access to food.

As Edinburgh is working towards becoming a *Sustainable Food City*, we hope these findings will inform future work in developing an inclusive and environmentally-friendly agenda for the city to pursue, and set an example for other municipalities across the world. Part of the *Sustainable Food Cities Plan*, the *Edible Edinburgh* initiative, calls for action on health and wellbeing, land use, environment, buying food, economy, and cultural change. These themes were an important baseline for our research.

This project comes at an interesting time for the Scottish Government's policy objectives. At the national level, Scotland aspires to become a 'Good Food Nation' by 2025. In doing so, the Scottish Government hopes to enhance the pride, pleasure and benefit associated with the food it produces and consumes. In support of this bid, the Scottish Government has pledged £1 million annually to a Fair Food Fund. This fund seeks to benefit a current total of 36 local-level community projects which offer dignified access to food. Furthermore, the fund looks to facilitate a transition away from a reliance on emergency food-aid provision, such as food banks. Support for community efforts like these are also part of a wider challenge for policymakers. For example, appropriate solutions must be researched and implemented to address the double burden of hunger alongside high levels of obesity in Scotland. It is likely that community food projects will have an important role to play in developing such solutions.

2. About this research

Adaptation Scotland, City of Edinburgh Council, and Nourish Scotland commissioned research into CFHs in North Edinburgh. Adaptation Scotland and City of Edinburgh Council are currently involved with Edinburgh Adapts, a project to bring about action on the challenges of climate change with a number of organisations within the city. Nourish Scotland are a campaigning NGO focusing on food justice within Edinburgh. The three clients came together and produced two aims as research focuses:

1. To explore stakeholders' perspectives on the opportunities for developing a CFH in North Edinburgh.
2. To develop evidence-based recommendations for how the project clients could develop CFHs that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

3. Methodology

Stakeholders were identified and grouped according to themes. These were formulated based on clients' priorities and our own desk-based research on the current state of the local food system in North Edinburgh.

The interview questions consisted of three sections. The first used standardised, introductory questions, with the intent of gaining similar results across all stakeholder groups. The second section consisted of binary survey questions in order to generate statistical data. The final section asked theme-specific questions designed to elucidate data relevant to specific themes, such as education, behavioural change, and sustainability. After interviews were completed, data were analysed by searching for common threads and underlying themes related to our project's aims. Our interviews were semi-structured in order to collect comparable and detailed results within the time constraints of the project.

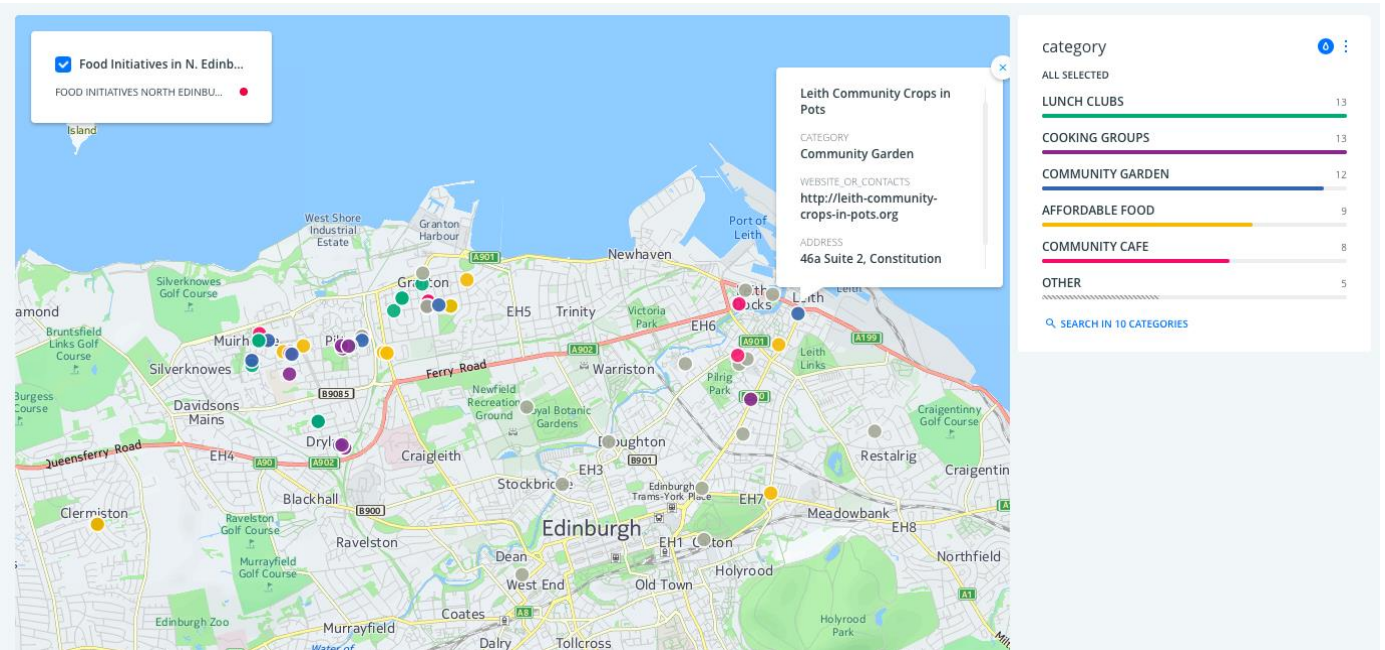


Fig 1: This map is a compilation of the stakeholders interviewed for this project and PCHP’s data (<http://bit.ly/2nYc1c7>).

3.1 Mapping some current initiatives

72 stakeholders were mapped using CartoDB to create a visual representation of the existing food initiatives in North Edinburgh (Figure 1). The Pilton Community Health Project (PCHP) ‘Food for Thought’ map was used as a baseline and additional data added. This map shows only a selection of current initiatives and the stakeholders interviewed. For future use, the interactive map can be updated. The initiatives were categorised and colour-coded to illustrate the wide variety of initiatives.

Initiatives have been mapped for future reference, which will allow clients to update and compare

placement of existing initiatives to aid any potential development of CFH networks.

4. Findings

Many stakeholders were unsure of the conceptualisation of a CFH. Despite many interviewees questioning the CFH’s core purpose, the general consensus appears to be that a CFH should primarily address community needs. Given each community’s uniqueness, this makes it difficult to generalise any one purpose for a CFH. The designers of CFHs should prioritise specific community challenges in North Edinburgh. If this is overlooked, a CFH may fail in achieving any real change.



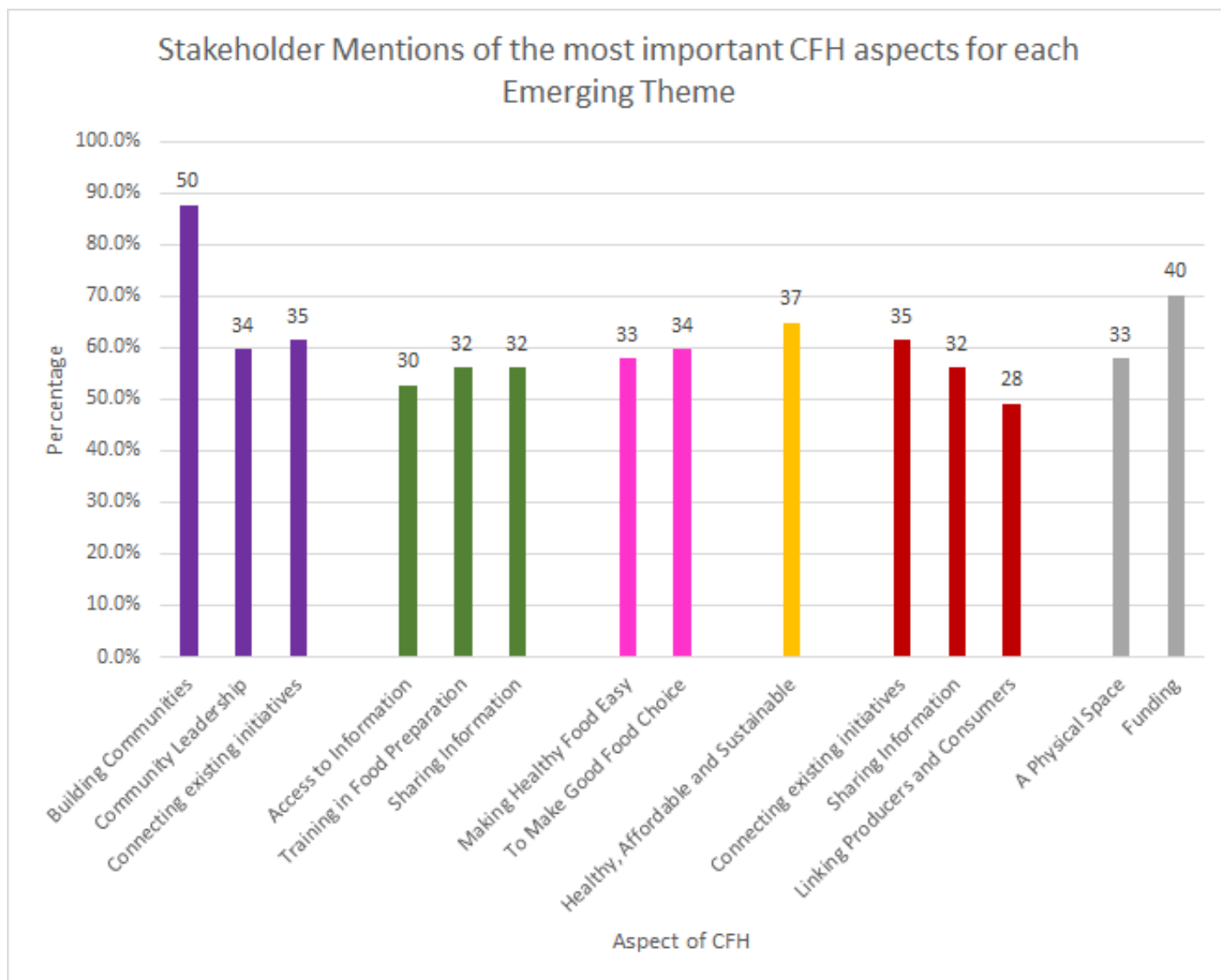


Fig 2: Themes identified by stakeholders

The important aspects identified by stakeholders for CFHs are shown in Figure 2. Emerging themes were identified as those mentioned most by stakeholders. Purple = communities; green = education; pink = behavioural/cultural change; yellow = sustainability; red = networks; and grey = space

4.1. Building communities

“Humans have one thing in common: the need for food. Given this common bare necessity, food is an opportunity, and ought to be used, to build communities.”

-Olga Bloemen, Nourish Scotland

The role CFHs can play in building communities was raised by 50 out of 55 stakeholders. CFHs were considered by stakeholders to have the potential to address many problems from economic,

environmental, health and social spheres. However, in order for a CFH to be a real solution resulting in positive change, it was suggested a CFH must address issues such as social isolation, public perception of food, community ownership, and dignified access.

4.1.1 Reduce isolation by bringing people together

CFHs were considered a way of fostering a sense of community by providing a space where community members can congregate to produce, eat and talk about food. In this regard, stakeholders suggested CFHs should be inviting and accessible places for all people within a community in order to attract a varied demographic. A CFH's role in providing opportunities for social interaction could ultimately foster unity while contributing to community members' health and social wellbeing. For instance, a CFH could reduce isolation, identified by stakeholders as a common

community problem, especially for more vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and the homeless.

“People who have been living next to each other for years only realise they are neighbours after meeting at the community garden.”

-Evie Murray, Leith Community Crops In Pots

It was found that community building and resilience were viewed as potential benefits deriving from a CFH, while also acting as drivers to securing the sustainability of the project.

4.1.2 Dignified access

A CFH should tackle food insecurity and inequalities focused on the right to access to good quality food (produced in a clean and fair way) which not only takes nutritional matters into consideration but is also appetising, enjoyable and affordable. Doing so, a CFH should become an integrated and accessible organisation for all of the community, where everyone experiences empathy, respect and dignity. Special attention was given to how adequately food issues are communicated to vulnerable people to avoid stigmatisation, while at the same time supporting people by restoring autonomy through self-supporting skills and knowledge (e.g. cooking classes).

Targeting needs in a differentiated manner was considered a notable issue of dignity and equity, especially with regard to users' preferences, dietary needs, and the opportunity to share and learn new skills (e.g. growing, cooking, choosing).

4.2. Education

Education was identified as a central concern for a CFH because it eases access to healthy and environmentally friendly food. With practice, knowledge may lead to behavioural change, and poor eating habits in Scotland was presented a significant problem a CFH could address.

Although it was suggested all those with lack of knowledge should be included in training, some groups were identified as a priority. Those in poverty, the homeless, and people who live in isolation were considered to experience the most barriers to access to healthy food, and present a pressing and urgent need. On the other hand,

children and young people were identified as useful targets for a CFH as their eating habits are less entrenched than older members of the public, they make change more quickly, and so sustainable habits are likely to have deeper effects. It was suggested parents should also be included in training courses because of their central role in food decisions at home.

“You need to get the community...to take ownership of the project...I don't think that people don't want things to be done to them, you'll want to allow people to do things for themselves.” -Melanie Main, Scottish Greens

Stakeholders noted from experience that people generally have fun learning about food issues, so incorporating education into a CFH provides an opportunity to include a diverse range of participants. However, there is evidence to suggest long-term behavioural change is difficult to achieve through education alone. Desire to make change was identified as crucial to actually causing change. As one stakeholder stated: “If you don't have somebody willing to change, then you can't force them.” Regulations can influence habits, but most stakeholders suggested effective education can at least address misperceptions (e.g. that healthy food is always more expensive and that cooking is complex). A lack of teaching spaces, funds and volunteers were highlighted by many interviewees, which also affect the activities of organisations with an educational approach.

A CFH was generally thought to provide a mechanism for educating for sustainable food systems. This was suggested to be an important issue to address because of a lack of awareness of current unsustainable practices within food systems, or even what “sustainable food” is.

4.3 Behavioural/Cultural change

4.3.1 Limits and regulation of supermarkets

34 out of 55 stakeholders highlighted the importance of making good food choices as an essential component of a successful CFH. To enable consumers to achieve this, it was noted that limits and regulations should be placed on supermarket advertising and placement of unhealthy food. It was suggested a regulation on supermarkets would enable local producers to

compete commercially and provide a diverse range of healthy foods at an accessible price. Supermarket regulation was supported by 23 out of 55 stakeholders.

4.3.2 Changing consumer habits

Stakeholders suggested that changing consumer habits was an important goal of a CFH through: making healthy food easy and accessible (34 out of 55 stakeholders) and providing more information with regards to healthy eating (31 out of 55 stakeholders). Suggestions raised were: Government subsidisation of healthy food; the need to understand current consumer food habits; changing infrastructure so that access to healthy food is also convenient; increased provision of information around food, with an emphasis on practical action and developing skills. Difficulties of changing consumer food preferences was highlighted by 20 out of 55 stakeholders.

“The healthy option should be the easy option.”

-Leonie Alexander, Edinburgh Living Landscape

4.3.3 Connection to food

Another idea suggested by stakeholders was to reconnect people with food. This could be done through education, but it was also suggested that fostering an emotional connection with food was an important aim of a CFH (20 out of 55 stakeholders). Connections were also made between this suggestion and the need for a CFH to reconnect consumers and producers (29 out of 55 stakeholders). There was a hope that rekindling an emotional connection to food will go a way to reducing food waste (suggested by 24 out of 55 stakeholders)

4.4 Sustainability and climate change

Sustainability was generally viewed as an important component of a CFH, yet the interpretation of sustainability was varied. 23 out of 55 stakeholders said that food waste should be tackled through the CFH. The same amount said that the CFH should make attempts to shorten the supply chain by creating direct links between producers and consumers. One participant (the Shrub coop) viewed the CFH as a mechanism to assist with large scale sustainable food procurement, which would help to shorten supply

chains and increase access to sustainable food on a large scale. If it is going to be truly sustainable, it must have longevity.

4.4.1 Sustainable Food

Sustainable food was viewed as food with a low carbon footprint, a low ecological footprint, local, seasonal, and produced in a way which supports farmers. 20 stakeholders said that CFH food should be produced sustainably. Keep Scotland Beautiful suggested that the CFH could also reconnect people with the sea and fishing, such as inventive ways to eat seaweed and shellfish.

The importance of growing your own food was varied. The general consensus was that it may not substantially contribute to sustainable production, but it is important for fostering individual and community environmental values.

4.4.2 The Effect of Climate Change on the Food System

Sensitivity to the effects of climate change on the food system appeared heightened due to the Spain salad shortages occurring at the time of the interviews. While some stakeholders were confident this was due to climate change, others were unsure. This may be attributed to the lack of sensitivity to climate change impacts created by supermarkets, and the complexity of the issue, as two stakeholders suggested. Stakeholders who worked directly with the land generally displayed the deepest concerns and understanding of the effects of climate change on the food system. One stakeholder noted climate change was an opportunity to foster more sustainable consumption behaviours. However, some stakeholders viewed climate change as a future, and not immediate, threat or concern to the food system in North Edinburgh.

4.4.3 Climate Change and the CFH

The main role a CFH was viewed to have regarding climate change was providing an education platform. One stakeholder stated the importance of learning about carbon farming and soil fertility in educating for a climate-resilient food network. Another stakeholder suggested CFH users could learn how to use food as a method to cope with crop failures. Group climate education was also thought to strengthen community cohesion in this context,

which may facilitate social learning and increase capacity to respond to crises.

4.5 Networks

Out of the 55 interviews conducted, one of the most discussed factors of a CFH was the importance of a functioning network. Connecting existing initiatives was important to 34 of 55 stakeholders, sharing information to 31, linking producers and consumers to 27, and pooling resources to 2.

4.5.1 *Connecting existing initiatives*

Overall it was agreed that there are currently numerous food initiatives running in North Edinburgh, and several of the stakeholders advocated that there is “no need to reinvent the wheel”. These existing initiatives cover many of the other aspects of a CFH and it was widely accepted that a coherent network is needed to connect, give weight to, increase the longevity of, maximise outreach of, and highlight gaps in existing projects. A network would also build on knowledge and avoid running new initiatives at the expense of pre-existing projects. Creating a bridge between top-down and bottom-up approaches would allow grassroots initiatives to benefit more from policy connections while allowing local and national government initiatives to work alongside community projects that are trusted and operational.

4.5.2 *Networks vs Physical Space*

Several stakeholders suggested that a strong network is more important than having a single physical space to bring together a CFH. A member of PCHP said “we need that good connection...we need someone who will tell us ‘you know there are lots of carrots there and they are going to be ready then’, or ‘the potatoes will be ready in 3 weeks’ time’ ...and all that has to work really well for it to happen and for us to eat locally grown food.” At the same time, some stakeholders suggested that physical space should be an aspect of the network to make connections more tangible, welcoming and accessible.

4.5.3 *Collaboration and Communication*

Various informed stakeholders have suggested ideas for how to incorporate a functioning network aspect to the CFH initiative. Mentioned most often is coherent and open communication between initiatives, mapping initiatives, viewing individual

initiatives as part of a whole, collaboration outside of the third sector, shared management of resources and getting people to come together physically.

Communication between initiatives can follow the actions of organisations such as Community Food and Health Scotland, Scottish Community Alliance or PCHP, which use online resources (such as the Food for Thought Forum) and funding, to aid in information transfer between other community organisation and initiatives. PCHP also provides a physical space for activities. By being part of these umbrella organisations, individual food initiatives are given a voice in decision making and have access to connections and information that they would struggle to achieve on their own. Being part of a bigger network allows a torch to be shone on community food initiatives that work.

4.5.4 *Mapping Producers*

Mapping producers was suggested by stakeholders. Although the details of how to conduct mapping or what it should include were not discussed, the intention is to visualise where there are gaps and aid in connecting current food initiatives by contributing to online communication resources or setting up a more direct supply chain for producers and consumers.

4.5.5 *Online and Offline Recruitment*

A lot of networking for individual food initiatives is currently done through recruiting at food sharing events, university and community events, word of mouth, websites and visiting schools. Advertising through leaflets and on the side of vans are often more effective than online resources which aren't as easily accessible for a large proportion of the target audience.

4.6 Space

The idea that CFHs need a physical space was a concern for 33 out of 55 stakeholders interviewed. Although not all respondents saw the CFH as having a physical location, many shared the sense that the space the CFH occupied was key as a gathering point around which community could form and as something which firmly rooted the CFH within its local community.

4.6.1 *The benefits of physical infrastructure*

Many stakeholders claimed that space was needed to provide food-related activities, services and goods to people who need them, and talked of the need for better physical infrastructure necessary to carry out this work.

“The most important thing in this room is the table. We have a dishwasher now, so we can spend less time in that and more time around the table enjoying food together.”

-Sue O’Neill-Berest, Cyrenians

The importance of physical infrastructure permeated discussion of many of the activities that a CFH might be involved in and there was a general sense that this was at a premium. Preparing food for shared meals, cooking classes and education work are activities for which stakeholders suggested space, especially a large kitchen (mentioned by 22 stakeholders), was needed.

4.6.2 *Space for storing and growing food*

Large freezers were mentioned by several respondents along with storage more generally as helpful for reducing waste and to absorb surpluses that come with bumper harvests or large donations of food. 21 of 55 stakeholders spoke about using physical space for community growing and all the benefits which it can bring.

4.6.3 *Space for markets*

Relating to infrastructure, 17 of 55 stakeholders said a CFH should have a farmer's market, covered market, or shop selling local, healthy food at affordable prices, especially in places accessible to the more deprived parts of Edinburgh. The idea that a CFH could be moveable, or a popup, was raised by 8 of 55 stakeholders, providing one or a number of the services mentioned above as a way of making them more accessible without having to have expensive projects in spaces all over the city.

4.6.4 *Sharing Space*

The compromises with sharing space was also an issue to some stakeholders - a stakeholder whose community gardening organisation had to share space in a community centre joked that:

“We can use the community centre, but only on a Tuesday evening between 6 and 8 and we have

to leave it really clean and even then they’re usually a bit grumpy”

When talking about space and infrastructure, stakeholders were not necessarily calling for a new project with new premises, but their comments usually seemed to relate to their hopes for their own projects. Lack of space was a factor which limited what they could achieve in their existing work.

5. Barriers to Implementation

5.1 Access

Ease of access to food was highlighted as a critical problem to be addressed in the design of a CFH. The challenge of accessibility was mentioned by 33 of 55 stakeholders. The main problems related to this barrier were mobility, affordability, and availability.

5.1.1 *Mobility*

A recurrent concern among stakeholders was the ability of users to travel to the CFH, should it occupy a physical space, with potential barriers being time, cost, or physical inability. Substantial distance between locations offering affordable, nutritious food coupled with cost of transportation makes it particularly difficult for people with limited mobility to access healthy options.

Stakeholders concerned with mobility frequently suggested that a CFH occupying a physical space might prevent those without a car, with children in pushchairs, who are themselves disabled, or who are house-ridden would not be able to access the service. These groups are frequently some of the most vulnerable, and therefore also would benefit the most from access to a CFH.

Mobility concerns are compounded when also factoring in the time required to travel distances to a physical CFH. Should a CFH occupy a single location, some users may have to travel long distances to obtain access. Greater travel times place a disproportionate burden on the vulnerable populations that are the targeted users of the service. However, this problem could be solved by providing transportation access which may include ensured bus routes within the vicinity or chartering buses to those with limited mobility.

5.1.2 Availability

Another common concern focused on the comparative ease of access to ubiquitous chain supermarkets, which has led to decreased demand for sustainable food outlets or farmers' markets offering healthier options.

As fruit and vegetables are cheaper if purchased in bulk, the option of buying only what is needed is not readily available. One stakeholder noted that "nowadays, we are trapped in the [supermarket] food system," suggesting that consumer preferences should be linked directly with the farmers providing food products, cutting out the commercial middle-man. This direct-to-consumer model might allow for healthier options such as produce being more easily available in the form and quantities consumers want.

An additional concern related to availability is the dwindling space accessible to grow local and sustainable food. Many stakeholders highlighted the increase in development projects as a barrier for maintaining arable land for agriculture. Avenues to address the lack of available land may include tapping into schools and other public facilities that may be able to provide space for local food initiatives such as a CFH.

5.1.3 Affordability

In terms of access, the cost of nutritious, sustainable, and local food was one of the most common barriers mentioned by stakeholders. For vulnerable communities, the high cost of these options is absolutely prohibitive. While healthier food options such as fresh produce are more affordable and available in bulk, it also has a shorter shelf-life and therefore is not always the most cost-effective choice.

5.2 Funds

Funding was the second most discussed barrier to a CFH and was raised by 35 out of 55 stakeholders.

5.2.1 Individual funding

A CFH must take into account that its targeted users are often members of vulnerable populations, and therefore individual funding will likely prove problematic. Users may lack the necessary funds to purchase healthier food options for themselves or their families. As users of a CFH might not be able

contribute significantly through purchasing products or services, this may perhaps impact the sustainability of the initiative.

5.2.2 Organisational Funding

Funding was mentioned as a limiting factor for organisational functioning by 40 out of 55 stakeholders. Specifically, there are many organisations already working in a community food context that are struggling with financing their operations. When organisations are unable to secure funding, they are forced to put projects on hold and are unable to continue their services.

In light of this reality, many stakeholders were concerned that the introduction of a new CFH initiative would further spread scarce resources. Several stakeholders raised the prospect of simply providing funding for currently operating initiatives, which would allow them to operate with greater capacity. Should a new CFH be created in some form, it could address this issue of funding distribution by serving as an umbrella organisation that provides an opportunity to collaborate and share resources.

5.3 Sustainability

5.3.1 Food Diversity

Relying on locally grown produce can be difficult to achieve across seasons, particularly when attempting to maintain a healthy and diverse diet. Moreover, it can be difficult to encourage people to alter their diets if they prefer unsustainable imported food products.

5.3.2 Skills and Training

Multiple stakeholders suggested that a lack of education on sustainable and healthy food options coupled with inadequate understanding of cooking techniques make it difficult for people to cook at home. At the same time, stakeholders noted that the nature of education programmes addressing these issues must be engaging and focused on practical skills that would not intimidate people new to cooking.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Approach

6.1.1 Community owned

There is a general consensus among stakeholders that a *bottom-up approach* should guide the design of CFH in North Edinburgh. Addressing the agreement that CFHs should grow organically from the grassroots level, we suggest that designers of a CFH address the local needs and challenges of this culturally diverse community through continuous collaborative and deliberative methods. Any public, private or non-profit organisation wishing to create a CFH should engage with local people to establish a baseline understanding of their needs and concerns. This could be done in a variety of ways, from distributing leaflets to holding participatory meetings and workshops. There are many potential benefits to this approach. A wider range of consultations could give access to local expertise and leadership from within that will lead to the successful implementation of a CFH in the future. This will facilitate the establishment of a CFH with little opposition and in coordination with ongoing initiatives. A CFH will benefit from the legitimacy obtained through the process of engaging the end-users in a consultative process that will lead to the incorporation of social learning by drawing on lessons from community and food initiatives already in implementation. Enhancing ownership of CFHs would ensure long-term project sustainability.

6.1.2 Inclusive

Addressing the general agreement that inclusiveness is critical to a successful CFH, we recommend that CFH designers in North Edinburgh foster social inclusion by trying to reach a diverse public and make the services viable to a wide range of audiences. CFHs should not only target low-income groups; they should address diverse needs, including those of children and youth, refugees, the homeless, and elderly people. Public awareness of food initiatives needs to be increased so that CFHs in the future are truly inclusive, and people from all demographics feel empowered to shape community projects.

6.1.3 Holistic

A CFH has the potential to solve multi-dimensional problems encompassing economic, environmental and social issues. We suggest that future CFHs should link food initiatives to community empowerment. Providing opportunities for social interaction could ultimately encourage social cohesion while contributing to the community members' health and social wellbeing. A CFH should be a welcoming space where activities should not be restricted to food issues alone. It should also include ongoing capacity-building activities that involve arts, music and sport. This approach should also help to develop monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities that help community members assess the progress made.

6.2 Practical Steps

6.2.1 Networks

It is necessary to acknowledge and highlight the existing food initiatives in Northern Edinburgh. We recommend a CFH network to strengthen existing food initiatives in the area. Such a network could be established through three practical steps: sharing space, a food festival and providing coordinator roles.

i) Sharing spaces

Sharing spaces between initiatives within the network was identified as a practical way to tackle lack of funding and space. Further, education was one of the main functions that stakeholders wished a CFH would perform. Sharing spaces within the network could therefore be an opportunity to share resources, tools, skills and knowledge. We would however recommend that education should focus on providing practical skills and knowledge as merely information-provision could potentially be overwhelming, leading to inaction and less involvement. Skills provision is important as it has the potential to empower individuals to make healthier choices and these skills could possibly lead to employment opportunities.

Sharing spaces, skills and knowledge rather than providing a separate space with external tools and educational resources is also beneficial from a sustainability perspective. This would be in line with circular economic theory which seeks to maximise the value of existing resources and share knowledge.

ii) Festival

A practical way of building on a network between food initiatives in Northern Edinburgh is to hold a food festival. This festival could be an opportunity to celebrate food, connect local consumers and producers, share knowledge and skills through workshops, and thus cater for the wide array of interests that our stakeholders identified. A festival would also provide a forum for organisations related to food issues to come together and share experiences and best practice.

iii) Co-ordinator roles for long-term networking

Leadership as a coordinating force within the network would be important to ensure the longevity of a CFH. Creating a role for a coordinator who can build links between food initiatives would decrease dependency on volunteers and provide more consistency and conviction in the operations. This could potentially increase cost-efficiency of existing projects. We would also suggest that this co-ordinator provide an active and up-to-date online presence as this was another feature that was deemed important to some of our stakeholders.

6.2.2 Supporting/Enabling CFHs

The *bottom-up* approach to CFH development that we have recommended must be supported and facilitated by top-level actions from a higher public/private body. To improve the food system in North Edinburgh additional funding should be allocated to CFH projects. With more resources, existing food initiatives can increase their capacities and better meet the needs of the communities they work with. Wherever possible,

funding should be granted on a long-term basis, as insecure funding streams negatively impinge on the capabilities of community projects. Further, we recommend better promotion of existing food projects. We suggest that the role of any external public, private or not-for-profit organisation should be to place resources at the disposal of communities. By providing financial resources and skills-development opportunities, these bodies can incentivise participative, people-led projects.

6.2.3 Making Sustainable Food Accessible

To increase the sustainability of the food system it is essential that local, seasonal produce is made more accessible and affordable. Despite there being many food initiatives in North Edinburgh, there are very limited opportunities for people to purchase wholesome, local food. A CFH could address this gap by supporting sales-points for sustainable produce.

Education can also play an important role in making healthy, local food more accessible. By providing training, recipes, and tasters, a CFH could help make local and unfamiliar ingredients appealing and exciting for everyone. A strong network between existing food initiatives in North Edinburgh could act as a platform for climate change education in local contexts that will resonate with people.

6.2.4 Mobile Markets

We suggest that affordable markets, held in a variety of easily accessible locations, have the potential to increase access to local, sustainable food in North Edinburgh. A regular market stall that moves to different community locations each



Fig 3: Glasgow has a range of community food initiatives that could serve as models for Mobile Markets (Source: SEAL Community Health Project).

day of the week could be an integral part of a CFH network. Markets can strengthen local supply chains and enable people from across socio-economic backgrounds to purchase healthy, sustainable foods.

Markets could reconnect consumers with food producers; the needs and preferences of customers could be directly fed back to farmers, allowing people to regain some control of the food system. Rekindling emotional, tangible connections with food producers may also serve to increase understanding of food systems and reduce waste. The 'Fruit and Veg Barras' project, run by North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, provides a successful model of a mobile market scheme.

For many people, ease of access to food is crucially important. If mobile markets can offer reasonably priced food, in convenient locations, supported by educational and community activities, they could contribute to making healthy, sustainable food the easy option for consumers. This would help shift consumption away from heavily packaged supermarket foods towards healthier, environmentally friendly alternatives.

In addition to mobile markets, we suggest introducing an Outreach Bus to build stronger links between communities and existing projects. An example of this is Centrestage, a double-decker bus that tours to remote villages in Scotland, providing music and performances for the community as well as free hot meals that they cook in the kitchen in the bus. An outreach bus would not only make a CFH accessible for areas where the mobile markets will not be present, but it would also be an important venue to educate people, promote a CFH, and to get new initiatives involved.

6.2.5. Sustainable Procurement in Existing Initiatives

Our research identified a large number of community food projects and cafés in North Edinburgh, many of which regularly provide cooking classes, coffee mornings, and community meals. Collectively, these projects present an opportunity to increase sustainable food procurement in Edinburgh. We recognise the possibility of introducing sustainable procurement into existing food initiatives and recommend further research to assess the viability of such

projects, particularly as the *Sustainable Food Cities* award includes, "transforming catering and food procurement."

Currently, costs of sustainable food are prohibitively high for many projects. By using creative partnerships, community groups may be able to establish tailored contracts with local producers, shorten supply chains, and increase consumption of sustainable food on a large scale.

6.2.6. Alternative Payment Schemes

Food provision at a CFH should be inclusive and recognise the diverse needs of community members. To ensure that individuals on low-incomes are not excluded from mobile markets we recommend the use of a voucher scheme. The 'Fruit and Veg Barras' in Glasgow accept *Healthy Start Vouchers*, a means-tested NHS scheme that parents of young children can use to purchase fruit, vegetables, and milk.

By working with partners in food production and health services, a CFH could make similar arrangements to address food poverty. For example, a voucher, token, or pre-paid card system could be introduced at mobile markets to assist people on low-incomes. This might also make emergency food provision more dignified, allowing people to select for themselves good quality items, rather than receiving donated or surplus goods from food banks.

6.2.7. Potential Funding Sources

Stakeholders suggested the following streams as potential funding mechanisms for a CFH: (1) Cashback for Communities, which diverts money recovered from crime to opportunities for young people; (2) Aspiring Communities Fund, which delivers long-term solutions managed by local communities; (3) Community Food and Health Scotland, which is funded by the Scottish Government and the Peoples' Postcode Lottery; and (4) the Fair Food Transformation Fund.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Climate Change & Sustainability

Climate change was mentioned in both local and global contexts. Some farmers mentioned that it had negatively affected their crops, but did not

express immediate concern. Most people, however, had noticed the costs of produce that had been affected by the floods in Spain, which have been attributed to climate change. Ultimately, climate change was not prioritised as highly as sustainability.

Sustainability for stakeholders ranged from local produce to zero food waste to reducing the ecological footprint of foods. Many stakeholders thought that the local food system is unsustainable and should prioritise Scottish food products over global imports. Having food sourced locally and fresh from farmers also fit into perceptions of what healthy food is and could be useful in linking sustainability to health and climate change. Thus, dealing with issues of climate change may be more effective by classifying them under sustainability rather than framed as a separate issue.

7.2 Edinburgh as a Sustainable Food City

A CFH in North Edinburgh, no matter its shape or form, is meant to provide solutions to help Edinburgh become a *Sustainable Food City*. From the above analysis, it is clear which aspects stakeholders deem most important and which factors are the perceived barriers. The following discussion will briefly look at Edible Edinburgh's Sustainable Food City Plan (SFCP) and show how our analysis relates to this plan.

Edible Edinburgh (SFCP) calls for action in six areas: health and wellbeing, land use, environment, buying food, economy, and cultural change. (1) *Health and wellbeing* played a very prominent role in stakeholder views and was linked to community cohesion, access to food, food education, and affordability of food. (2) *Land use*: although there are growing spaces in and near Edinburgh, stakeholders identified lack of knowledge and access to information as barriers to sustainable agriculture. (3) *Environment*: sustainability was a common theme in stakeholder interviews, and many thought it related to access to local food, prioritising small farmers over supermarkets. (4) *Buying food*: local food producers expressed a desire to form direct links with consumers in a way that would be beneficial to both parties. (5) *Economy*: building a more resilient food system will require new skills and expertise, potentially opening up employment opportunities. (6) *Cultural*

change: with a focus on community cohesion, a CFH could provide education about local food and how to grow it, contributing to changes in culture and behaviour surrounding sustainable food.

With our recommendations, we hope that the food system in North Edinburgh can be improved and that this will increase ways of sharing and celebrating food.

Contributors

Sophie Amar
 Alasdair Anderson
 Kelsie Blanthorn
 Bethany Bottoms
 Steven Carrion
 Ana Maria Chaparro Toro
 Joseph Cooper
 Mariana Cover Rincon
 Francisco Donoso Galdames
 Gareth Gorst
 Gavin Grassick
 Eilidh Henry
 Amerindia Jamarillo Allendes
 Ariana Johnson
 Anzhelika Khasanova
 Michael Mackenzie
 Abigail Martin
 Ellie McGuire
 Tom McKenna
 Amanda Midhamre
 Deyshawn Moser
 David Nasser
 Siri Pantzar
 Christie Paterson
 Mark Robinson
 Clarissa Samson
 Francisco Urquiza Gomez
 Bei Zhang