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Welsh Assembly Government

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Community Grown Food Action Plan

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Foreword

I am delighted to launch this action plan to promote community grown food in Wales. Growing locally sourced food is very close to my heart and I was further inspired when visiting Cuba and seeing the vast array of projects taking place to encourage growing.

Wales has a huge amount of growing expertise both in our farming community and in our existing community projects and I hope this action plan expands on this so that more people in Wales share my enthusiasm.

This action plan is very much the result of joint working with a number of organisations that share an active interest and have expertise in promoting community growing and I am grateful for their input. Their continued energy and initiative will be vital if we are to deliver against this plan. I look forward to seeing progress in Wales and details of the new growing projects set up as a result of this initiative.

Elin Jones AM
Minister for Rural Affairs

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1. Introduction

In 2009 the Minister for Rural Affairs, Elin Jones commissioned a review to indentify what the Welsh Assembly Government could do to promote and encourage 'Community Growing' in Wales.

Community growing has many benefits which tie in with the policy aims of the One Wales agenda and cross cuts a number of Ministerial portfolios including environment, health, education and training, economic development and community development. It will also deliver on our overarching sustainable development commitments including climate change, reducing carbon and our ecological footprint.

The existing overarching strategies are discussed in further detail below:

Environment and Sustainability:

- The food chain accounts for 31% of greenhouse gas emissions within the EU. The benefits of community grown food include; reducing food miles and inputs of agrochemicals, hence a potential reduction in carbon emissions; a reduction in pollution in cities as the increase in green spaces helps absorb the CO_2 emissions and less food packaging contributing to reducing waste and landfill. There can also be an increase in the creation of biodiversity habitats for insects and wildlife – as long as growing projects are sited on appropriate land and do not compromise any existing biodiversity on a site. Environmental Impact Assessment (agriculture) Regulations are in place to prevent farmers doing this but there is nothing currently in place to regulate this for community growing.
- Locally grown food also assists with food security and 'future proofing' of the local area with regard to pressures on food and other essentials.

Health and Well-being:

- Working with nature and being outdoors has been proven to have both physical and mental health benefits. It provides relief from stress, increases self esteem and helps to combat depression. Also, with obesity rising in Wales it has never been more important for people to eat healthy food and raise activity levels. Research shows that being physically active and eating healthily reduces the risk of developing illnesses such as heart disease, strokes and diabetes.

Education and training:

- Children and adults benefit from community growing by developing their knowledge and skills in learning how and when to grow produce and how to cook the food grown. Additional benefits include physical activity, social interaction and increased self esteem.
- Community grown food initiatives can offer skills and knowledge training opportunities within the local community.

Community Development:

- Community gardens often bring different cultures and generations together and improve individual and community confidence by bridging the divide between ethnic, political and socio-economic groups. All members of the community have an opportunity to become involved and work together for the benefit of the community. The participants involved in community growing cover wide age ranges and include single parents, people with health problems, disabilities and those on low incomes.
- Communities also benefit from a tie-in to 'Get Cooking' and similar projects currently run in many areas of Wales. This promotes health and well-being but also develops community activity. This has been particularly important in our most deprived (Communities First) areas.

Economic Development:

- Community Grown Food projects can also provide opportunities to develop local business in the form of social enterprises.

2. Aims of the project

The main aim of the project is to promote, support and encourage community grown food in Wales; both among communities and for individual's growing in their gardens. Further aims include:

- Working towards improving food security by increasing the availability of locally grown horticultural produce in Wales.
- Connecting people to the food chain.
- Improving health and well being in Wales.
- Evidencing current work and providing a best practice guide for future community projects.
- To increase the number of people interested in growing food.

3. Current Situation

Community Growing has become hugely popular in recent years. There are countless projects, schemes and initiatives available across Wales. Publicity has brought the serious issue of future food security, climate change and health and well-being to the forefront. Academic and nutritional experts and celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall have further highlighted issues such as healthy eating in schools and locally sourced food.

It is acknowledged that there are many difficulties facing people who wish to start community growing projects and this action plan will aim to help rectify these. Difficulties include lengthy waiting lists for local authority allotments, problems related to finding land for new growing projects and the lack of an appropriate dedicated funding stream in Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government already supports a number of schemes which could assist the development and upkeep of allotments, such as Environment Wales, the Tidy Towns initiative and Local Environmental Quality Improvement Project Grants. For example, the Tidy Towns initiative in Rhondda Cynon Taf has supported the clearance ready for reuse of the Abercwmboi and Maerdy allotments, as well as an allotment garden project at Trallwn. An overarching community growing strategy will aim to draw these disparate strands together in a shared plan of action and avoid duplication or confusion.

Local authority strategic plans such as Health Social Care and Wellbeing, have developed strategies on nutrition and fitness and encouraged local action on local growing, together with improved cooking skills and nutritional information. As part of their involvement in the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes and Appetite for Life, schools have been working to improve the food and drink provided in schools to inform pupils and their parents of the importance of healthier eating and to develop cooking and growing skills. Many Communities First Partnerships have also undertaken work in this area.

There are also many voluntary organisations in Wales who have been carrying out excellent work to promote and encourage community growing.

4. Progress to date

A Task and Finish Group comprising of external stakeholders and officers of the Welsh Assembly Government was set up to develop an action plan to promote community grown food. This Group was set up in September 2009 and has met four times.

Further to this a scoping paper was submitted to the Minister for Rural Affairs detailing the current situation in Wales with regards to Community Grown Food. The paper listed some of the current schemes in operation both funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and other organisations. It also gave a series of recommendations on how to promote community growing in Wales. These recommendations have been expanded since the original paper and can be found in the action plan section.

As community grown food covers a vast area of work it was decided to focus on three key themes. Further information on these key themes is below:

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA):

- CSA is a partnership between farmers and members of the community and can work in several ways. Examples of these are where volunteers work with farmers on land managed by community groups to produce food, or members of the community enter into an agreement with a local farmer in which the farmer is paid and/or helped regularly to produce food for them whilst retaining control of the land.

- There are numerous benefits of CSA projects; these include sharing growing knowledge, community development and social interaction, locally sourced food and environmental benefits.

- The main issue preventing the take-up of CSA projects is an understandable reluctance amongst farmers to enter into agreements which are perceived as relinquishing control of their land and not giving a guaranteed income. This can be for several reasons: funding (starting a project can be expensive); loss of traditional secure income from agriculture; confusion regarding continued eligibility for the Single Payment Scheme and cross-compliance requirements and difficulty in believing that such projects will continue to work and provide income.

Community Growing:

- Community growing covers all types of growing; ranging from individuals growing food in their garden to large scale community gardens. Some community growing enterprises are profit making and are able to expand to include larger numbers of the community. Some schemes are also used by local food co-ops.

- Benefits of community growing include locally sourced food, health impacts due both to the physical nature of the work and to the fresher food and uniting members of the community in a social activity.

- Issues relating to community growing include lack of growing knowledge, limited funding and land availability.

Allotments:

- Allotments are small parcels of land rented to individuals for the purpose of growing food crops. Most plots are around 250 square metres in size. The land is often owned by the local authority though some are self managed through an allotment association and they can also be privately owned. Allotments are governed by the Allotments Act and local authorities have commitments under this Act.

- Local authority allotments are either statutory or temporary. Statutory allotments normally have a very long lease, the land being originally purchased for allotments or subsequently used for allotment use. Temporary allotments are rented/or owned by an allotments authority but are destined for some other use in the future.

- Issues relating to allotments include a shortage of suitable land and resources within the local authority to monitor and expand allotment provision. There are also issues with security of tenure of some sites and vandalism.

5. Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group

The aim of the task and finish group is to help with the preparation of this action plan and to support and develop all aspects of community grown food, including looking at issues surrounding allotments and the potential for CSA.

The Group's terms of reference are:

1. To consider issues relating to Community Growing and discuss what can be done to promote and support the interests of people wishing to grow their own produce.
2. To provide workable options for the Minister for Rural Affair's consideration in the form of this action plan.
3. To link up with other interested groups and work in partnership to achieve the objective of this project.
4. To consider how the schemes and initiatives in this action plan can be supported over the longer term.

The Group has met four times and brings together a wide range of expertise from inside and outside of the Welsh Assembly Government. A list of members is available at Annex A.

6. Principles of the project

The Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group have identified the following guiding principles for this project:

Community Development

- Recognise that community food growing activities take time to develop and become established, particularly if they are to be truly community led.

- Recognise that community grown food has wide social, health, environmental and economic benefits.

- Promote the reconnection of people and communities with each other, with food, the soil and the seasons. This provides people with an opportunity to learn from each other, in recognition of the wider benefits that this will have for society as a whole.

- Recognise community connections – any project must prove that it has potential or existing community support in order to gain funding.

Skills and Knowledge:

- Recognise what is happening at ground level and avoid duplicating or undermining the valuable work already undertaken by many existing organisations.

Partnership:

- Any project must show a broad collaborative approach which includes statutory, third sector organisations and local community groups, as well as cross local authority boundary working where appropriate.

Flexibility

- Provide flexible support to allow for the variety, scale and nature of community food projects.

Environmental Impacts:

- Promote and use environmentally friendly methods of farming and gardening as much as possible.

Sustainability:

- Any funded projects must demonstrate how they would be sustained following funding withdrawal.

- Provision of a monitoring and evaluation framework for evidence of a project's current outcomes and also for use in evidence-based future development.

7. Community Grown Food – Action Plan

The action plan below lists all actions we will carry out to promote and encourage community grown food in Wales. Each action has a responsible organisation that will ensure its delivery by the timescale set.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
INFORMATION SHARING					
1.	Wales Rural Observatory (WRO) to undertake a research project on all levels of Community Growing in Wales.	There are many existing schemes in Wales that provide a service/s which meets the objectives of this project. Also there may be many areas in Wales or specific communities who have a shortage of funding for this type of project. This exercise is being undertaken to identify needs, barriers, current provision and gaps in provision. This exercise will look at Community Growing, CSA and Allotments as well as individual growing.	1. Draft a specification and commission the WRO to undertake a project which looks into Community Growing in Wales. 2. WRO to survey all Community Grown Food projects/schemes in Wales. 3. The WRO final report to identify potential funding gaps, barriers, case studies etc within Wales.	The Wales Rural Observatory will undertake this work under the guidance of the Welsh Assembly Government and with support from members of the task and finish group.	WRO estimate this work will take 6-12 months from the launch.

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2.	Welsh Assembly Government and the WRO to undertake a mapping exercise of current funding.	This work will be done in conjunction with the WRO research project. The main aim is to identify Welsh Assembly Government funded schemes.	1. Develop a table to capture the information and request completion from all Departments within the Welsh Assembly Government and external members of the Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group. 2. Collate responses and look for potential funding gaps in certain areas of Wales, specific communities or growing theme e.g. CSA/Community Growing or Allotments. 3. Share this work with the WRO. 4. WRO to expand on mapping exercise and incorporate results into final report.	The Countryside Policy Division of the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for collation. This data is to be provided initially by the members of the Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group. The WRO will further investigate as part of their research project.	Exercise completed by the Welsh Assembly Government at the end of April 2010. Further work from WRO to be completed as part of Action 1, this is to be finalised within 6-12 months of launch.
3.	Production of a community growing resource pack.	There is a shortage of horticultural skills within Wales. Many communities/ individuals will not have the knowledge or expertise to start a growing project. A community growing resource	1. Case studies on community grown food projects sought. 2. Task and finish group members to provide information on the guidance they already have which could form a resource pack.	WRO and members of the task and finish group to provide case studies. Resource pack possible funded by the Welsh Assembly	This will incorporate some of the work completed in Action 1 therefore may

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		practice case studies will inspire them and provide a starting point for setting up their project and managing it. This should include advice on environmental measures e.g. habitat protection and wildlife friendly gardens. There should also be a dedicated section to encourage land owners to take part. The advice needs to include issues relating to public liability, Health and Safety, Cross Compliance and Single Payment Scheme commitments. A model tenancy agreement would also need to be included. Further guidance on governance, planning, design and layout would also need to be included.	3. Bids invited from all task and finish group members to produce resource pack. 4. Resource pack drafted. 5. Publication of the resource to be placed on all related websites and circulated by all members of the task and finish group.	Government's publicity budget.	not be finalised until 6-12 months following the launch.

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4.	To investigate the creation of a web portal using the Change 4 Life branding to signpost people to community growing schemes/ projects/events.	There are many schemes already in existence with various organisations each having their own website. The Welsh Assembly Government has no comprehensive web portal linking this information. Communities/individuals would find it easier to set up growing projects if the information was easy to locate. The web portal could also link to relevant case studies to further disseminate information.	1. Utilise Change4Life Wales to develop a sub brand linking the Community Growing Project to this social marketing campaign, including the web site. 2. If successful use the WRO research (Action 1) to link all related organisations to this site. 3. If this is not successful funding should be sought to develop a dedicated Community Grown Food web portal. 4. If required produce a specification document to invite interested organisations to bid for work to set up a web portal on community growing.	Members of the task and finish group to provide information as well as the WRO. Welsh Assembly Government to provide funding if necessary.	Web portal set up within 3 months of the launch. WRO to provide information from their research project within 6-12 months.
5.	To disseminate knowledge and to promote and encourage links and networking	One of the easiest ways to spread messages and promote good practice on community growing is to arrange for interested parties to view existing projects and meet fellow interested	1. Provision of a community growing resource pack (see action 3). 2. Promote and support organisations engaging in community growing and provide a list of appropriate links on the web	Members of the task and finish group to share information. Welsh Assembly Government to ensure Change4Life	Events arranged and publicised 3-6 months following the launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
		individuals and community groups.	portal (see action 4) of projects that are willing to share knowledge with others. 3. Keep an updated list of project 'open days' on the web portal. 4. Link with events under Farming Connect which visit growers across Wales.	web portal is kept up to date with the dates of the open days/events.	
6.	Establishment of an evidence base.	Based on the collection of relevant information and outcomes from the monitoring and evaluation of existing and developing Community Grown Food projects.	1. Base any further funding decisions on the use of an agreed and relevant monitoring system for the project. 2. Collect monitoring and evaluation information and place on the web-portal.	WRO.	6-12 months following launch.
LAND AVAILABILITY AND MANAGEMENT					
7.	To work towards identifying current local government land resources and to determine what further resources	Land availability is one of the key issues in establishing community growing projects. Local authorities may have vacant land in their possession that could easily	1. Each local authority is to work with the WRO (Action 1) to provide a list of all the land they currently have available. Where possible this list should list future plans for the land in the next 5-10 years.	WLGA and local authorities – subject to resource availability – to work alongside the WRO.	6-12 months from launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
	are needed to fill gaps identified by the mapping exercise.	be used for community growing projects.	2. Use the results to identify areas of land in a suitable location and condition for growing food. 3. A planning guidance note is to be issued to the local authority to provide best practice examples. 4. Investigation into whether targets for land availability could be introduced.		
8.	WRO to investigate the creation of a Land Bank for Wales.	There may be a large amount of land owned by the public, private and third sector in Wales which could be utilised for community growing. A land bank would aim to identify and classify this land.	1. Public, private and third sector organisations/landowners to be contacted and asked to identify whether there is any land they would like to sell or lease and to inform them on the benefits of community growing. 2. Investigate whether the existing websites can be used for this purpose and whether existing models and proposals for Community Land Banks can be utilised and assess the feasibility for Wales.	WRO to undertake this work. Funded by the Welsh Assembly Government under the Rural Development Plan.	6-12 months from launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
			3. All available land to be placed in a database which can be viewed by anyone interested in community growing.		
9.	The WRO to work with relevant organisations and local authorities to improve the mechanisms for managing allotments.	Within some local authority areas there is a shortage of allotment land and some local authorities may need further resources in order to improve the management of these allotments. Existing allotment organisations are to work with local authorities to identify issues.	1. Identify local authorities which have a shortage of allotment land or need assistance with improved management. 2. Identify local authorities that need a management plan for allotments. 3. Meet with those local authorities needing assistance to discuss the issues and suggest workable solutions with members of the task and finish group.	WRO with support from the WLGA, subject to resource, and members of the task and finish group.	6-12 months from launch.
FUNDING					
10.	The WRO to investigate capital and revenue funding for community growing.	Funding for community growing is required for both capital and revenue. Any available funding is to be identified and utilised appropriately.	1. Carry out a mapping exercise to locate funding gaps (Actions 1 and 2). 2. Using this information the WRO will review existing funding streams	WRO, Welsh Assembly Government, WLGA and all members of the task and finish group.	6-12 months from launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
			and determine whether further Welsh Assembly Government funds can be utilised. 3. Any identified non Welsh Assembly Government funds to be advertised on the web portal (Action 4).		
SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE					
11.	To promote and develop knowledge transfer projects to disseminate skills and training.	Knowledge transfer projects are in existence and these provide funding for the provision of training. These are not well known and need to be promoted further to encourage take-up.	1. Create a web portal (Action 4). 2. Place information on all knowledge transfer projects onto the web portal. 3. Provide funding if appropriate to hold events and promote networking. 4. Consider grant support for knowledge transfer projects.	Welsh Assembly Government to lead and fund under the Supply Chain Efficiencies Scheme. Task and finish group members to provide support.	Funding available currently. Promotion to commence immediately following launch.
12.	To promote the development of Community Supported	CSA is uncommon in Wales. Work is to take place to promote the benefits to farmers and provide them	1. Gather case studies on farmers who have benefitted from CSA projects.	Welsh Assembly Government through the Horticulture Strategy for Wales	Events arranged and publicised within

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
	Agriculture (CSA) in Wales through the Horticulture Strategy for Wales and Farming Connect.	with information on the financial incentives.	2. Produce advice packs on business planning and community facilitation. 3. Arrange initial meeting with the Farming Unions to explain the benefits of CSA and get their 'buy-in' before releasing gathered information. 4. Circulate this information through Farming Connect, Gwlad and other farming publications. 5. Establish a discussion forum for land owners and their representatives (e.g. CLA, Farming Unions) to examine the opportunities for making land available and agree how this can best be encouraged. 6. Investigate the development of networking events, discussion forums or field trips for farmers/landowners to view/discuss existing schemes.	and Farming Connect.	3-6 months of launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
13.	To investigate linking the Community Grown Food Agenda to all policy areas within the Welsh Assembly Government.	Community food already has many links with health and wellbeing and education and should be linked to existing work as much as possible, for example the Communities First agenda. Current links through the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies and the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes should be strengthened. Adopt the cross government Change4Life Wales social marketing campaign as the marketing brand for all community growing work.	1. Meetings set up with Welsh Assembly Government and local authority departments through Local Service Boards and existing networks to promote and discuss current projects. 2. Develop a sub brand of Change4Life Wales as the brand for promoting and growing throughout Wales. 3. Welsh Assembly Government Ministers to promote Community Grown Food. WRO to arrange an event to bring together organisations that have an interest in Community Grown Food to further promote.	Welsh Assembly Government, WLGA, WRO and other professional networks. All members of the task and finish group to inform the Welsh Assembly Government of events which could be used to make this link.	3-6 months following the launch.
14.	Investigate the creation of Community Growing development officers to	The community grown food task and finish group suggest that the creation of community growing development officers may assist communities in the	1. Welsh Assembly Government to look at existing Development Officers carrying out duties for alternative departments and identify whether any could be utilised to cover community growing in addition	Welsh Assembly Government to explore funding options through the Rural Development Plan.	3-6 months following launch.

No	Action	Why are we doing this?	What are we going to do?	Who is responsible?	Timescale
	provide support and guidance to communities setting up growing projects/ CSA.	setting up and maintenance of growing projects/CSA. Development officers are needed to coordinate the activities needed to develop and maintain community interest and establish future sustainability. Development officers could provide daily/weekly/monthly advice to projects relating to their needs.	to their normal role. 2. If no existing Development Officers can be utilised investigations to take place to fund dedicated community growing Development Officers. 3. Use funding from Axis 3 and 4 and consider proposals from the third sector to provide community growing development officers.	All members of the task and finish group to provide proposals for the creation of development officers.	

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Wales already has many projects in existence providing assistance in Community Growing. We have looked at a number of these schemes but will be undertaking a mapping exercise as part of this project to establish our baseline. This mapping exercise will be very thorough and will enable us to locate funding or locality gaps.

In addition to the mapping exercise we anticipate utilising the Wales Rural Observatory and members of the task and finish group to look at community growing at more of a grass roots level. This will give us information on land, individual growers and funding streams we have not been aware of previously. This work will provide us enough information to review the situation in a year and determine what difference has been made by the work of this action plan.

The action plan is the property of all in the Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group and we will jointly be responsible for ensuring the actions are completed by the agreed deadlines. Regular review sessions will take place to update the action plan as well as a formal review after a year of the launch.

Annex A

Members of the Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group

Welsh Assembly Government Members

Terri Thomas – Chair, Head of Countryside Policy Division

Anna Nicholl – Special Adviser to the Minister for Rural Affairs

Ceri Davies – Local Environment Quality Division

Maureen Howell – Health Improvement Division

Nia Griffiths or Michelle Brunt – Wales Rural Network

Sue Bowker – Health Improvement Division

Claire Rowlands or Richard Lowcock James – School Effectiveness Branch

Julie Bowes or Daniel Bevan – Technical Services Division

James Cooke – Technical Services Division

Caryl Tudor Jones – Food, Fish and Market Development Division

Neil Howard – Food, Fish and Market Development Division

Carol Driver – Countryside Policy Division

Deborah Lewis – Secretariat, Countryside Policy Division

External Members

Kevin Morgan – Cardiff University

Tom Andrews or Ben Raskin – Soil Association

Tony Little or Jane Powell – Organic Centre Wales (OCW)

Geraint Hughes – West Wales Eco Centre

Mark Jones or Richard Reast - Rural Regeneration Unit (RRU)

Jane Richmond – Garden of Wales

Claire Sain-ley-Berry – Environment Wales

Gill Clark – Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Jenny Howell – Riverside Community Market Association (RCMA)

Katie Jones – Federation of City Farms and Gardens (FCFG)

Adrian Walsh – Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)

Allan Rees – National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners (NSALG)

Hannah Pitt – National Trust

Mark Proctor – Forestry Commission

Nicole Jones – Groundwork

Steve Garrett – Riverside Community Market Assoc. Social Enterprise Ltd

Paul Milbourne – Director, Wales Rural Observatory