

Leicestershire Food Summit #2



At our first summit we were in the grounds of a stately home in rural south Leicestershire and for our second, we went urban and to Holywell Park Conference Centre at the University of Loughborough for a full day of talks, tours and workshops.

Good Food Leicestershire's guests spanned academia, farming, recycling, public health, local government, retail, community food growing, environmental health, foodbanks and fridges, food co-operatives, community supported agriculture, food procurement, the charity sector, communications, and so on.

Councillor Louise Richardson, Leicestershire County Council's Lead Member for Health, gave the welcome, and with the county's Sustainable Food Places' Bronze award to her right, signed off, asking the question...

"Where do you see your place within a sustainable food system?"



That said, Leicestershire County Council committed to creating the first Leicestershire Food Plan in 2017, with goals to tighten strategic planning to shape and develop a sustainable food infrastructure.

And it turns out that our iconic Leicestershire cheese - Stilton - has also been pursuing its own sustainability journey.

Which meant that Kim Kettle, Long Clawson Dairy's Farm Liaison Director and the Chairman of the Stilton Cheesemakers' Association, was perfectly placed to give the food summit's keynote speech.

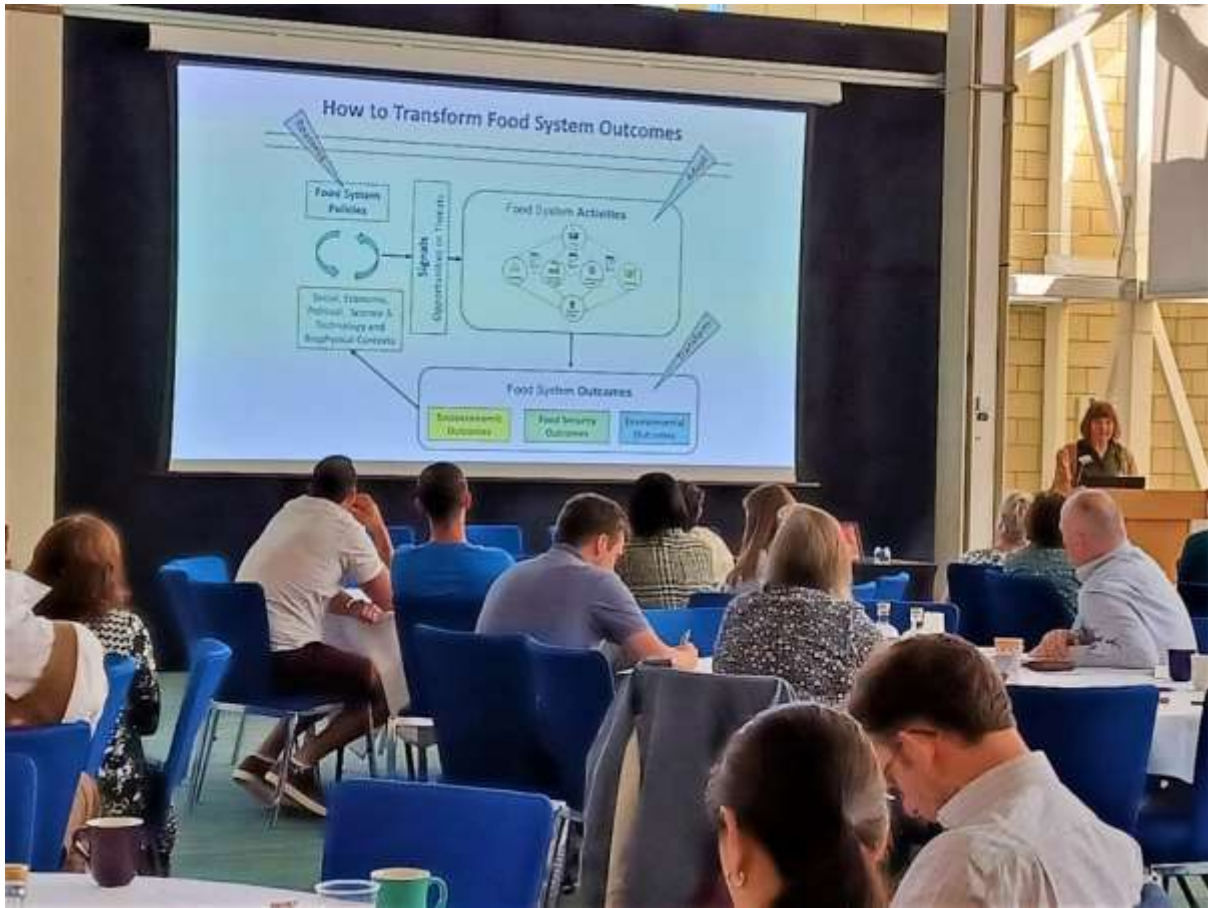
Kim as farm sustainability director for Long Clawson Dairy, overseeing the cheese co-operative's 32 farms (28 in Leicestershire) shared their work on how they are mapping and reducing carbon around their four pillars of Feed, Fertiliser, Fuel and Future, referred to as the 4 Fs.



Of their carbon emissions, around half come from methane and 20 per cent from feed production. Their dedication to date has seen soy feed in their supply chain drop 50 per cent, over the past three years. It now only accounts for around 5.9 per cent of purchased feed and less than 2 per cent of their cows' overall diet.

Kim outlined that Clawson is very much at the start of their Corporate Social Responsibility journey and the dairy and their farmer members will continue to work hard to improve their green credentials.

From Long Clawson we headed to BeanMeals, to learn more about the University of Oxford led project that looks at getting higher nutrition UK grown beans into school meals, with taste trials ongoing at six Leicester and Leicestershire primary schools.



Led by Monika Zurek of Oxford University, the talk weaved us through the complexity of the food system, and even featured the presentation talents of three pupils of Narborough's Greystoke Primary School.



From BeanMeals we went to Enva, a company that deals in recycling and resource recovery. Unsurprisingly, when it came to food waste, Matt Farnsworth, Enva's Chief Sustainability Officer, had a lot to say. Here are some bullet points.



*For every 100 potatoes grown in the UK, only 25 get eaten.

*The UK sends 18.5 million tonnes of waste food to landfill each year. A third of waste food is lost in production and the supply chain, a third from retailers and a third from households.

*Waste food generates millions of tonnes of methane, a highly damaging greenhouse gas.

*Biodegradable waste is set to be banned from landfill in 2028.

[Meanwhile, across Leicestershire, the county council spends £123 million each year processing household food waste].

Prevent surplus	Redistribute surplus	Make animal feed	Process to biomaterials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join Courtauld Commitment 2030 • Signatory to Food Waste Reduction Roadmap • Strategy, measure & record • Consumers – Love Food Hate Waste campaign • Use by / BB labels • Just in Time / lean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charities • Schools • Commercial redistributors • Food banks • Use WRAP and Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with feed hygiene requirements • No material of animal origin • Use WRAP and UK Former Foodstuffs Processors Association guidance and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fibre packaging • Feather pillows • Leather • Fuels / oils • Bioplastics • Filters • Growing media • Bone polymer-ceramic composite • Vascular bioink • Collagen & Chitin • Dyes / pigments

As an indication of how well his talk went down, people were asking for Matt's slides at the end of the summit, so they could share them with colleagues and clients.

Next up we had Nik Hunt, Loughborough University's Environmental Manager, who led the panel discussion on the role of anchor institutions leading food systems change.

On the panel we had Faye Tomson (Tomson Consulting), Raksha Mistry (Leicestershire Soil Association Food for Life programme manager), Chris Yap (City University) and Jo Trewern (WWF-UK).



We also had microphone-issues abetted by the acoustics of the conference centre's Turing room.

Central to discussion was Sheffield's Local Food Action Plan 2023 to 2033. The Sheffield model was mentioned for its collaboration with 100 key organisations.

While our four panellists discussed the collective weight of anchors such as local authorities and the NHS, be it in the role of food education or procurement, some of our attendees were being given a tour of the leafier aspects of Loughborough's campus.



Fruit Routes and its 141 fruit and nut trees weave their way around the university and, in this instance, led visitors to the students' gardening patch.

It was noted that this edible campus wasn't just a hit with undergraduates, faculty and employees, it was also top of the crops with the campus squirrels, birds and rodents.

After lunch, community food growers Incredible Edible Loughborough were quick to ensure that surplus lunch food was given the correct home.

The afternoon workshops

Workshop 1 – Sustain and Incredible Edible Loughborough discussed Bridging The Gap, an initiative connecting agroecological food with those in food poverty and food insecurity. Words by Sian Rigby, GFL Food Poverty Officer.

“A workshop led by Sustain explored ways to “bridge the gap” between affordable food, on the one hand, and food that is good for us and the planet, on the other. The workshop was attended by a broad range of attendees, from District and Borough colleagues and foodbank coordinators to representatives from the NHS. We heard from Incredible Edible Loughborough, who shared the work they've been doing to make allotment-grown food accessible and free for all and from a community fridge coordinator. We were inspired to explore how these projects could strengthen each other and their communities across Leicestershire.”

Workshop 2 – BeanMeals. More on the project to unite schools and consumers with UK beans. Words by Gavin Fletcher, GFL Co-ordinator.

“In this workshop we heard from Lisa Didier from Oxford University and Lucy Michaels from the University of Hertfordshire on their work with schools and families in the BeanMeals project. This has seen six schools in Leicester and Leicestershire learn about the food system, the trade-offs we face as we look towards healthier food and more sustainable farming and production, and the choices we can all make as consumers – using new UK bean varieties as ‘the vehicle’ for learning. This is then tested in the dinner hall, with beans on the menu. Acceptability and behaviour are being researched as we try to understand what works. We learned that the key to a lot of this working is that familiarity helps with acceptability; that there is no flexibility or capacity in school meal-times to allow for midday supervisors to influence or encourage

children to eat healthily or to try new things; and that much of the work

Workshop 3 - Leicestershire County Council and Enva talked food waste interventions. Words by Senior Health Improvement Officer Luke Cleaver.

“Food waste, it applies to every layer of the food recovery triangle. This was illuminated in the Enva food waste workshop. We were guided through tangible steps how to prevent wasting food within the household - where we learned that huge amounts of food get wasted. We then turned our attention to our work food waste challenges, creating tangible action plans to identify, get to the root cause of the problem, and ultimately solve food waste at the source. Finally, how did we solve them? Well, a whole host of ways - from composting to communicating better with our food system partners.”

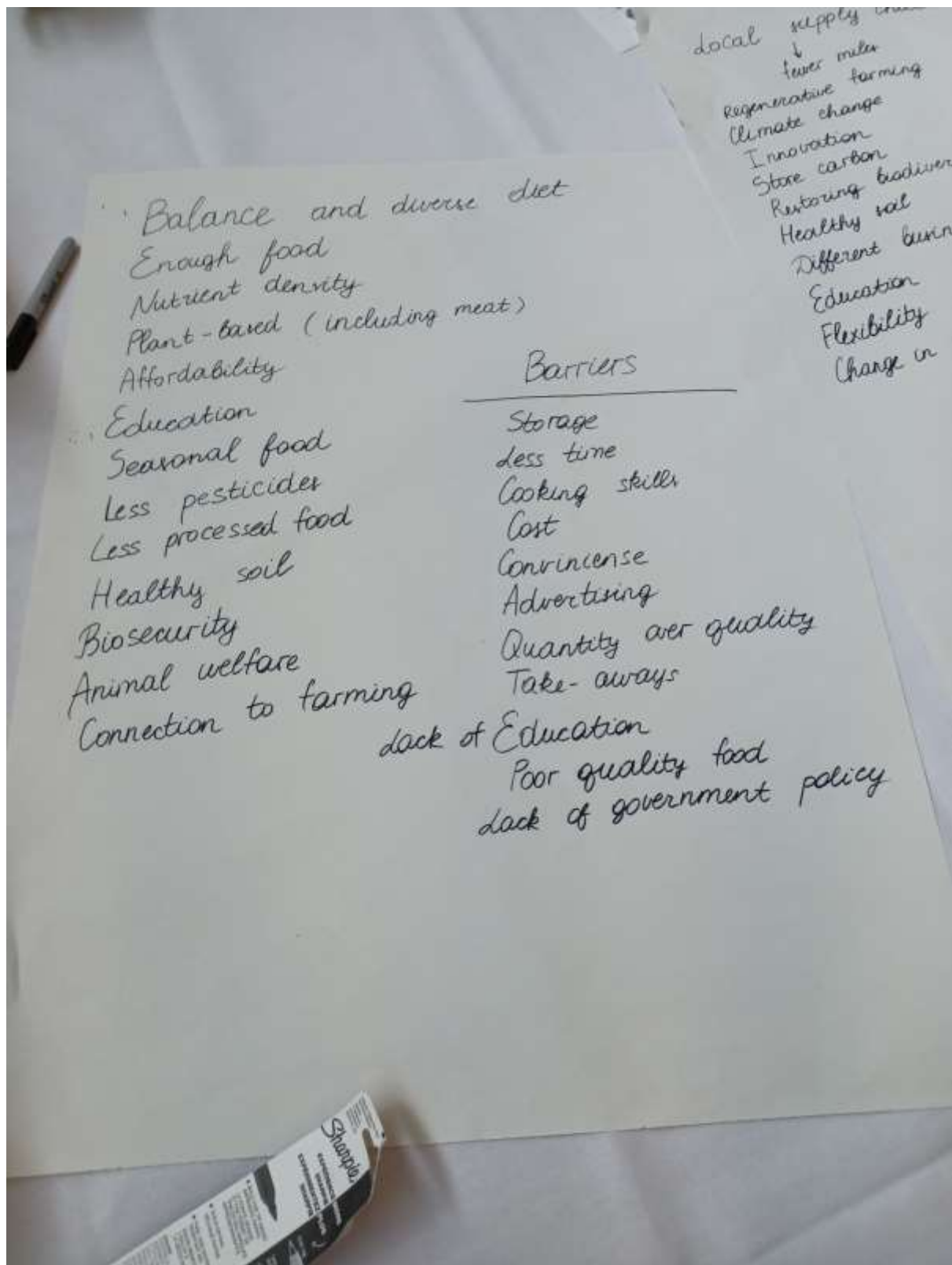
Workshop 4 - This workshop looked at healthy sustainable diets and featured Alex Gray of SMB College Group’s Brooksby Campus and Monika Zurek of Oxford University. It drew the largest crowd of the afternoon.



Monika asked: What does a healthy and sustainable diet mean in Leicestershire? How do you define a healthy diet? What do you see as the main barriers to healthy diets?

There was also a quick heads-up on the food sector: it's mostly small and medium sized businesses. It's responsible for four million UK jobs and is the biggest manufacturing sector. Its different drivers include policy, environmental factors, social attitudes, etc.

Divided into three groups, the boardmarkers on each table got a good work out. Education was considered important for a healthy/sustainable diet, so too affordability, nutrient density and many, many other factors.



Alex looked at growing sustainable food through low input agriculture versus conventional use of monoculture, tilling, spraying, over fertilisation and set stocking. Sustainable ag was perceived to cost more but was cheaper due to fewer inputs. Healthy plants + healthy soil life = healthy animals, he explained.

Elemental to healthy soil was mob grazing, as cows evolved from grass-eating aurochs. Ruminant droppings feed the soil life, which feeds the plants, which feed the animals and repeat. It uses biological systems to support biological systems. When it came to influencing demand for food grown this way, localised purchasing systems were briefly discussed, but Alex, and others, felt the topic was big enough to be the subject of its own summit.

After the workshops, the remaining attendees met in the Turing room.

During wider discussion about HFSS or 'unhealthy' supermarket food,

Kim from Long Clawson Dairy said the supermarkets weren't the problem, the supermarkets, he said, wanted to sell healthier food but the public wasn't ready to relinquish its high fat salt sugar habits.

Many of the big retailers had begun to reduce and reformulate salt, fat and sugar ahead of a National Food Strategy proposal to tax goods that weaken public health. Of the strategy's many recommendations, it was noted that only one for Land Use Frameworks, still exists.

Mention of land sparked an enquiry about how young people, outside of traditional agricultural backgrounds, pursue careers in farming, or get access to land? This remains a long-standing and unresolved issue.

And finally, to sign off, we're happy to report the second Leicestershire Food Summit was a full and informative event creating new connections and alliances. Thank you to all those who presented, helped or took time from a jam-packed June to be there.

Next steps...

A keynote on regenerative farming, using Brooksby as the base, or a separate event, was suggested. Work at Loughborough University into the development of AI in food waste was mentioned. Or we could have something else entirely? Could there be a theme? Such as changing the public perception around food, involving the Soil Association's Food for Life programme? Leicestershire, as of July 2023, now holds more than half of the UK's highest gold standard FfL awards.

We also have excellent colleagues in the Health Improvement Team who could present some of their work at the next summit.

It would be great to have the Feeding Britain charity, of which our county is the most recent member, at the next summit, too.

The team who worked on this year's event would like 2024's summit to be more 'crowd sourced' so please let us know if you'd like to contribute, or what you'd like to see...or ask us to help you run the next one.

What are our 'take homes' from LFS#2?

How do we replicate Sheffield's model in Leicestershire?

How can we use county council land to build on best practice already in action across Leicestershire?

Oxford University wish to help the county and city kickstart work on governance. How do we get greater buy-in?

How do we enable networking between summits?

Feedback

And finally, how was the summit for you? What would you like to see in 2024? Please send your feedback to gavin.fletcher@leics.gov.uk

*Leicestershire Food Summit 2023 was brought to you by Good Food Leicestershire/Leicestershire Sustainable Food Partnership. It sits within Public Health at Leicestershire County Council. We are grateful to Enva for providing funding towards the summit.

Leicestershire Food Summit



Wi-Fi: Imago-Venues
Weekly Authorisation Code: 0090