



Greener Leith Food Summit Report

On Wednesday the 4th of January, Greener Leith held a 'Food Summit' at Out of the Blue, in order to assess the scope for developing Food related projects in Leith that would build on our 'Berry Hedge' project, and Persevere Community Garden project, but avoid duplicating the work of other organisations active in the area.

On the day, around 30 people participated representing a range of interests, ages and backgrounds. Local residents were in the majority although we were very grateful to see at least one local councillor, as well as 'food experts' from around Edinburgh and beyond in the group to.

Hugh Raven, Director of the Soil Association Scotland was kind enough to set the scene, explaining a bit about the work of his organisation as well as the impact our food system has on climate change, on our health and on wildlife.



By way of introduction we then asked everyone in the room to help us to pinpoint 'local food' activities in Leith using a map and lots of post it notes. We learnt a great deal.

Here are some of the activities this mapping activity identified (in no particular order):

- The Persevere Community Garden
- The ACE Food Co-Op
- The 'Little Leithers' Food Co-op at Dr Bells
- Asian Food Co-op
- Lochend Food Co-op
- The Pilmeny Development Project Cooking and Allotment Projects for Older Men
- Pilrig Park Berry Hedge
- Edinburgh Community Food Initiative and The Cyrenians on Tenant Street
- Upward Mobility Green seeds project for adults with learning disabilities
- Redbraes Community Garden
- Allotments on Leith Links, Warriston, Pilrig Park to name but a few sites
- Friends of Dalmeny Street Park schools project
- Proposed Berry Hedge and Children's Orchard on Leith Links
- Leith Open Spaces



After the mapping was completed, we then had a round table discussion that sought to answer these questions:

- What could we be doing more of?
- Where can Greener Leith add value to what's already happening?

Many local people remarked that they had no idea that there was so much already going on in Leith. In particular, I think we were all pretty surprised to learn that there are already four food co-ops established in the Leith area. The discussion turned to the ever increasing waiting list for allotments and the general increase in interest towards growing local food. It was noted that 2008 was the first year in a long time when sales of vegetable seeds outstripped the sale of flower seeds.

The group also discussed the need for a community garden support worker to encourage volunteers to get involved in all the various community garden projects throughout Leith, and the scope for expanding this into supporting 'landshare' type projects and a mentoring network.

After the formal discussion the group took a tea break and with it the chance to mingle more informally. The group was then asked to put as many 'foody' ideas and suggestions as possible on post it notes. Each participant was then given three sticky dots to vote for the ideas that seemed the most promising. The list below shows all the ideas that the group came up with and the number in brackets indicates the number of votes each idea received.

Leith Food Summit Ideas

- Visit London – Or get London to visit here, as there's lot's of 'best practice' going on there (3)
- Community Gardens/ Local Food Development Worker (10)
- An on-line local food directory (11)
- A Leith “Soil/Compost Bank” with transport and tools to collect and deliver compost from gardens and back greens(4)
- Community Orchards in public spaces (6)
- Back green Gardening, encouraging people to set-up residents groups to improve their back greens (1)
- Food stall for sharing free excess food grown in allotments and gardens with cooking demonstrations (2)
- Youth Clubs encouraged to get involved in growing schemes (5)
- “Farm to School” programmes that promote pupil (and parent) education (6)
- A local seed and plant supply(1)
- Sow and grow vegetable plants for distribution (1)
- Influencing suppliers to be Greener (1)
- “Master Gardener” volunteer mentoring programme (3)
- Community Garden/ Allotment/ Back Green Gardeners Volunteer Network (2)

What happens next?

Greener Leith will take these results, and seek to develop the more popular proposals. If you are interested in helping, please do get in touch.

www.greenerleith.org

