

# Sustainable Food/Agriculture Activity in Swansea

## Position Statement For Information Only

Commissioned by Swansea Council



Contributors: Rhian Corcoran, Philip McDonnell, Anna Williams

# CONTENTS

- 1. National Context**
- 2. Regional Context**
- 3. Bwyd Abertawe**
  - 3.1 Sustainable Food Places and Food Sense Wales
  - 3.2 Bwyd Abertawe's Key Objectives and Future Plans
- 4. Local Community Initiatives**
  - 4.1 Food Poverty Activities
    - 4.1.1 Food Poverty Challenges
    - 4.1.2 Food Poverty Opportunities
  - 4.2 Community Growing Activities
    - 4.2.1 Swansea Community Green Spaces Project
    - 4.2.2 Swansea Community Growing Network
    - 4.2.3 Mapping Community Growing Projects
    - 4.2.4 Community Orchards and Fruit Trees
    - 4.2.5 Allotments
  - 4.3 Food and Health-related Activities
  - 4.4 Food-related Training and Learning Activities
    - 4.4.1 Food Growing Skills
    - 4.4.2 Cooking Skills
    - 4.4.3 Whole System Food Education Projects
  - 4.5 Food Waste Activities
    - 4.5.1 Food Waste Collections
    - 4.5.2 Surplus Food Waste Initiatives
    - 4.5.3 Packaging and Food Refills
    - 4.5.4 Food Waste Challenges
    - 4.5.5 Food Waste Opportunities
- 5. Sustainable Farming and Land Availability**
  - 5.1 Community Supported Agriculture
- 6. Local Food Industry**
  - 6.1 Swansea Food Partnership
  - 6.2 Local Produce Markets and Farm Shops
  - 6.3 Local Food Producer Challenges
- 7. Next Steps**

## **1. National Context**

Swansea exists within a larger national context and, as Covid-19 demonstrated, Britain's food supply is extremely vulnerable. This vulnerability is exacerbated by our dependence on imported food. Future risks to food security are posed by climate change, the exploitation of natural resources, biodiversity loss, degradation of soil health, labour availability, reliance on energy imports and the impact of external shocks such as geopolitical events and global pandemics.

The **Food Foundation** latest annual State of the Nation's Food System report, *The Broken Plate*, suggests our food system punishes poverty with reduced life expectancy as, calorie for calorie, healthy foods in the UK are three times as expensive as unhealthy food. It suggests that the poorest households would need to spend almost half their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government-recommended healthy diet. ([foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/broken-plate](https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/broken-plate)). Food waste in the UK is endemic with the average consumer eating just two thirds of the food they buy. Food production contributes approximate one third of our greenhouse gas emissions and requires dramatic restructuring if we are to meet net zero emissions by 2050. However, the urgent need for change also offers positive opportunities: if we transform the way we farm and what we eat, we could improve health, protect nature, combat climate change and be more food secure as a nation.

**National Resources Wales** (NRW), through their State of the Natural Resources Report in 2020, identified the need for, and ecosystem, economic and social aspects of, transforming our food system to be fit for the future. ([naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/state-of-natural-resources-report-sonarr-for-wales-2020/sonarr2020-bridges-to-the-future/transforming-the-food-system](https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/state-of-natural-resources-report-sonarr-for-wales-2020/sonarr2020-bridges-to-the-future/transforming-the-food-system)). As a roadmap for change, the report stresses that support for ecosystems involves changing the way land and seas are managed, with the adoption of more sustainable farming, forestry and fishing practices. Economically this involves a better balance between ecosystem improvements and the provision of food, represented in economic incentives and regulatory mechanisms. Most importantly, NRW identify that 'To totally transform the food system and do so quickly, focused effort within civil society and the social sphere is necessary'. This involves changing diets, reducing food waste and increasing food production from a smaller area of land.

Part of the change to a more sustainable food system would mean a transition in how and what we grow. This process is outlined by the **Sustainable Food Trust** in *Feeding Britain from the Ground Up* report, published in 2022. ([sustainablefoodtrust.org/our-work/feeding-Britain/](https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/our-work/feeding-Britain/)).

The **Welsh Government** has acknowledged the need for change by introducing the Agriculture (Wales) Bill ([www.gov.wales/agriculture-wales-bill-2022](https://www.gov.wales/agriculture-wales-bill-2022)) and the Food (Wales) Bill, which recently went through public consultation period, both of which prioritise sustainability and are likely to have a significant impact on food production and consumption. The Food Bill includes a requirement for a national food strategy and local food plans, and seeks to establish 'food goals' which public bodies will be tasked with delivering. A Welsh Food Commission will assist with the advancement and achievement of these goals. The concept of food sovereignty is embedded within the Bill with an emphasis on ecologically appropriate production, distribution and consumption, social-economic justice and ensuring local food systems tackle hunger and poverty, and guarantee sustainable food security for all. Producing the two bills at the same time allows food and farming in Wales to be better integrated and support a circular economy.

A cross sector food movement has been emerging in Wales in recent years which has included the collective development of a **Food Manifesto For Wales** ([foodmanifesto.wales](https://foodmanifesto.wales)) to help shape a new food system in Wales that is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and based on principles of citizenship and shared values. The annual

Wales **Real Food and Farming Conference**, which has now taken place in each of the last four years, is arranged collaboratively by a team from range of organisations in the food, farming and other sectors. In the 2022 conference, the **Community Land Advisory Service** ([www.farmgarden.org.uk/clas/wales](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/clas/wales)), presented on how a local authority could support and promote local growing with a vision that covers county farms, new entrants, mapping, the planning process, parks, farm subsidies, support for commercial horticulture, land use planning, food hubs, community supported agriculture, land trusts, community asset transfers, orchards, local development plans, knowledge sharing, corporate engagement, volunteering and home gardens. The presentation can be viewed at [youtu.be/562Btmpe450](https://youtu.be/562Btmpe450).

The developing new legislative framework and widening sustainable food movement gives public bodies added impetus to take practical action, such as increasing procurement from local suppliers for schools and hospitals, and to actively work to increase local sustainable farming so that it can meet the demand. School meals present the council with a win win opportunity to educate young people on what a more sustainable diet looks like and source/reward local suppliers. Examining such a model, **Food Sense Wales**, in January 2023 published “The Courgette Report: agroecological veg for Welsh primary schools” ([www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/01/CourgetteReport\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/01/CourgetteReport_Eng.pdf)). This kind of action and change is a powerful way of reframing local, sustainable food as a way of life for everyone rather than a narrow, middle-class privilege.

## **2. Regional Context**

The transformation towards a more sustainable food system cannot take place within the confines of a single county as most food is imported from outside the area. Reducing the supply chain and increasing local food production is more likely within a regional context. With this in mind, 4theRegion, in collaboration with Swansea Environmental Forum and other partners organised the online **Food for the Region Conference** in October 2021, which attracted over 100 participants who shared a wide range of perspectives on our food systems and how they might be improved to better meet the needs of people and the planet.

The conference report highlighted participants’ comments around three key themes – health, environment and land – and listed actions that five key stakeholders groups could take.

### **Public Sector & Policy Makers**

- Involve and listen to people.
- Make land available for growing.
- Lead the way through procurement.

### **Businesses & Producers**

- Connect hospitality businesses with local suppliers.
- Facilitate better collaboration among small producers.
- Map regional infrastructure, facilities and local producers.

### **Schools & Educators**

- Growing food, cooking skills and food confidence should be embedded.
- Schools can “adopt” local farms to reconnect children with where their food comes from.
- Giving young people a broader perspective on the variety of land-based and food-based careers that exist.

### **Communities**

- Create opportunities for people to connect with each other around healthy local food.
- Developing place-based solutions and nurturing active food citizenship.
- Increasing the number of community supported agriculture schemes.

## People - All of Us

- Source food from local, regenerative, ethical suppliers as much as possible.
- affect change in our own spheres of influence.
- Ask for more regional, sustainable produce in local shops.

A follow-up session was convened in April 2022 to share updates, explore emerging projects and encourage collaboration on all things relating to growing, producing, distributing, sharing and caring about food in South West Wales. A second regional food conference took place in January 2023, again over two days. This time over 80 participated and the discussions focused on four key themes:

- Marketing of local food / collaborating on "buy local" campaign to put local food on everyone's agenda.
- Getting more local produce into school meals and how we can better connect young people with farming and local food
- Access to land – how we can unlock access to underused land for growing.
- Hospitality and local food - how we can encourage more connections between local growers/producers and local cafes, restaurants etc.

In the lead up to both these conferences, 4theRegion also hosted roundtable discussions with invited stakeholders to explore key issues. These were recorded and posted on their website alongside comprehensive reports on the regional food events ([www.4theregion.org.uk/projects/food-for-the-region](http://www.4theregion.org.uk/projects/food-for-the-region)).

## 3. Bwyd Abertawe

Bwyd Abertawe (BA) is the new sustainable food partnership for Swansea that grew out of a grassroots movement that began in March 2021 with an initial meeting about food resilience, organised by Swansea Community Growing Network. Over the course of a year, a dozen meetings were held with over 100 different participants including councillors, food producers and representatives of third sector organisations, public bodies and educational establishments and interested individuals. It became clear that there was a huge appetite to establish a broad partnership to drive a transformation of the food system in Swansea and that the **Sustainable Food Places** programme offered a framework and support to enable this to happen.

BA's Strategic direction and decision making is currently managed by a multi-sector Interim Steering Group (ISG) which meets monthly with wider full partnership meetings / public events proposed to take place on a quarterly basis. In summer 2022, the Bwyd Abertawe ISG made a successful grant application to Sustainable Food Places to enable the recruitment of a coordinator, who started in October on a 1-day per week basis for a year. More recently, Bwyd Abertawe secured £97,000 from the Welsh Government's **Food Poverty Alleviation Fund** to '*accelerate progress to a more sustainable food system and tackle local food insecurity / poverty*'. £37,000 is earmarked to extend the BA Coordinator post to the end of 2023 and the remaining £60,000 will be for BA to work with partners to delivery projects that will progress agreed priorities.

### 3.1 Sustainable Food Places and Food Sense Wales

**Sustainable Food Places** (SFP), previously Sustainable Food Cities, supports the development of a network of food partnerships across the UK to help drive innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food. SFP provides grants, advice and support to enable local food partnerships to undertake campaigns, practical projects and public engagement initiatives, and push for changes to local policy and practice. SFP is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain.

SFP runs a national award scheme, based around a framework for action that benchmarks, motivates and recognises achievement. SFP promotes a place-based systems approach that involves and connects key actors at all levels and across all parts of the food system. This approach is encapsulated in the six 'key issues' of the SFP framework for action:

- **Food Governance and Strategy:** Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
- **Good Food Movement:** Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
- **Healthy Food for All:** Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food
- **Sustainable Food Economy:** Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy
- **Catering and Procurement:** Transforming catering and procurement and revitalizing local supply chains
- **Food for the Planet:** Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste.  
([www.sustainablefoodplaces.org](http://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org)).

**Food Sense Wales**, founded in 2018, is Sustainable Food Places' national partner in Wales and has an ambition to see a food partnership in every local authority in Wales. It also organises the annual Wales Real Food and Farming Conference. Food Sense Wales is supporting Wales' seven current food partnerships and supporting others, including Swansea, to develop their partnership and work towards becoming a member of the Sustainable Food Places network. ([www.foodsensewales.org.uk](http://www.foodsensewales.org.uk)).

**Food Cardiff** was established in 2014 as one of the founding Sustainable Food Places in the UK. During the last seven years, it has developed and grown significantly, making a recognisable impact at a citywide level. In 2021, Cardiff achieved Silver Sustainable Food Places status, becoming the first place in Wales to achieve the prestigious accolade. Information about this SFP example can be found at [foodcardiff.com](http://foodcardiff.com).

### 3.2 Bwyd Abertawe's Key Objectives and Future Plans

In March 2022, BA organised the first Swansea Food Forum, using a People's Assembly approach, to gather ideas to help co-design a Vision and Food Charter for Swansea. There were 75 attendees representing a range of stakeholders and from the detailed discussions several key themes stood out as priorities:

- **Improved Collaboration**
  - Across the local food industry to develop shorter local supply chains.
  - Between sectors to ensure local procurement is supported and made easier, and organisations of all sizes and types can work for mutual benefit.
  - Between growers/producers to improve markets and supply levels and to cater for local needs. Across the region to connect producers and customers.
  - Between policy makers, producers, distributors and people to end food waste. Local producers and services to be mapped to facilitate local collaboration and develop networks.
- **Ending Food Poverty**
  - Initiatives and practical support backed up by policy to help those on lower incomes access quality local produce.
  - Education in communities, with emphasis on more deprived areas so people want to start growing, buying, and eating healthy local food that is of both health and economic benefit.
  - Increased number of local growing and community food initiatives so everyone has access to the healthy food they need

- **Land Availability & Policy**
  - More land given over to growing, from school grounds to council and hospital land as well as rural land currently used for other purposes.
  - More space available for both commercial and community growing.
  - Policies that resolve planning issues for growers and support smaller producers to be viable whilst encouraging larger producers to work in a regenerative way.
  - Policy makers to place greater importance on local sustainable food when developing Health, Social, Environmental and Economic policy.
- **Education & Skills**
  - Develop education and skills of children and young people about food and growing, and embed growing in schools.
  - Skill building opportunities for farmers and potential new entrants to the food sector focussed on sustainable/ regenerative growing practices.
  - Good marketing of local produce to increase understanding of the health, social and environmental benefits of sustainably produced local food.
- **Swansea's Food Landscape**
  - More local markets and outlets available for producers.
  - More small scale producers, with larger producers growing in a more regenerative way and selling locally. Larger organisations procuring local produce.
  - More people/communities 'growing their own' and able to access local produce whatever their socio-economic status.
  - People in Swansea understand the benefits to themselves and their environment of using local food, leading to increased demand.

This was followed up with a visioning workshop in June 2022, involving primarily ISG members and facilitated by Hannah Norman, Wales Community Food Manager with Food Sense Wales. The workshop explored which partners are linked to what themes and shared priorities. A list was compiled of networks and key groups that could help deliver shared priorities and several actions and projects were proposed including:

- Substantially increase the local CSA network, land and growers.
- Find hubs for selling local foods and identify storage possibilities.
- Map all networks and create a local directory of people doing what in Swansea.
- Mapping of land for food production.
- Create a network for those working with children on eating and cooking healthy foods.
- CSAs to facilitate training in growing skills / including regenerative agriculture.
- Develop a local badge scheme for shops/restaurants.
- Increase selling of local produce to local schools and hospitals.
- Set up centralised cooking hub and bus for cooking to go to schools / city centre.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023, the ISG invited key partners to a further explore the development of a Bwyd Abertawe charter, building on the themes and proposals put forward in the Swansea Food Forum event. The aim is to formally launch the charter at the City Centre Conference in March.

BA will work towards joining the Sustainable Food Places Network this year and, in its successful application for the **Food Poverty Alleviation Fund** grant, set out the following key actions that it will look to deliver in 2023:

1. **Project funding:** Make funding and support available to local existing and new projects; develop innovative and sustainable solutions to local food insecurity.
2. **Co-production:** Continue to consult, map and engage with a diverse range of communities and organisations; co-produce solutions to food insecurity in line with the SFP framework.

3. **Supply chains:** Connect local producers to their communities, shorten supply chains and promote food citizenship. Support community and home growing practices for hyper local production. Create a public services pilot, calculating how much veg is being procured per head, and increase local food procurement. Undertake study of food standards, checks and protocols; and pilot systems that can be managed via growers / cooperatives.
4. **Public profile:** Further develop BA's public profile, via website, local events and Social Media development. Develop BA website as virtual Hub for Swansea's sustainable food movement. Use Social Media and video to create and promote "how to" sustainable food resources.
5. **Build BA network:** Fully establish BA Steering Committee and working-groups, with cross sector / community representation and adopt a Food Charter for Swansea. Development of BA policies.
6. **Food strategies:** Support key stakeholders to embed sustainable food strategies in their policies and plans. Including work towards incorporation of sustainable food indicators within PSB and SBUHB Plans.
7. **Education and training:** Promote and facilitate education/training across Swansea's food landscape, from schools to local farmers; to facilitate the transition to a circular food economy, reduction in food insecurity, and increase of regenerative agriculture and use of local seasonal foods.
8. **Create BA 5 year plan:** Based on community needs and partnership priorities that emerge over the term of this grant.

## **4. Local Community Initiatives**

### **4.1 Food Poverty Activities**

Swansea has a wide range of initiatives that work to mitigate food poverty, most of which are listed on the Council website ([www.swansea.gov.uk/foodbanks](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/foodbanks)). These are overwhelmingly run by volunteers and can be divided into four groups: food banks, food pantries/food shares, affordable food clubs and meal providers.

- **Food banks** typically provide prepacked parcels of food to clients and at present Swansea has 20. The Trussell Trust run seven of these, SOS Shelters run one in Gorseinon, another is run by the Swansea Mosque, and the remainder are independent. Food banks typically require users to have a referral documenting need, which can make them inaccessible to those who lack access to institutional support systems.
- **Food pantries/food shares** give clients the choice of which foods to take home. In Swansea four initiatives operate using this model: Ty Fforest Resource Hub in Fforestfach, Blaenymaes Food Share at the Blaenymaes Drop In Centre, the Community Food Share at City Church and the Goleudy Community Fridge in the Maritime Quarter. The Community Fridge is part of a national network set up by Hubbub, a London-based environmental charity. St Thomas Church is also looking at setting up a community fridge independently, not following the Hubbub model. Food pantries and food shares are typically open to anyone and do not use a referral system.
- **Affordable food clubs** are a distribution model in which clients pay a steeply discounted price for food items, allowing people to spend a lower proportion of their income on food. Like food pantries/food shares, the client is given an active role in choosing their food, which helps to reduce food waste. By enabling people to stretch their budgets they prevent crisis situations arising in household finances which can trigger recourse to food banks. **Feeding Britain** has developed a comprehensive

toolkit ([feedingbritain.org/what-works-centre/affordable-food-clubs](https://feedingbritain.org/what-works-centre/affordable-food-clubs)) for creating and developing an Affordable Food Club. Goleudy are currently trialling an 8-week food club with Hafod School, funded by the Direct Food Support Fund. This pilot project provides 15 packs per week with food up to the value of £20, the family will pay £5. Clase Primary School is planning a 'pay as you can' shop as part of the **Big Bocs Bwyd** scheme ([www.bigbocsbwyd.co.uk](http://www.bigbocsbwyd.co.uk)). Goleudy is also exploring the possibility of transitioning the Community Fridge to a Social Supermarket, perhaps in collaboration with FareShare. Members would pay £5 for £20 worth of food, with more choice than is offered by the Community Fridge or a food bank.

- Swansea has nine **meal providers**: six provide sit down meals and three provide meals to take away. Sit down meals are provided by Matt's Café, St. Thomas Church, St. Mary's Church, Ogaf Adullam, Unity in Diversity and FoodCycle. Takeaway meals are provided by The Missionaries of Charity of Mother Theresa based in the Strand, Zac's Place and i58 (City Church in Dyfatty). Like food pantries, meal suppliers typically require no referral documentation and provide social engagement and the dignified experience of a sit-down meal.

These food poverty initiatives source surplus food from supermarket and farms (either directly and/or via a FareShare subscription) along with public donations of food and cash. **FareShare** is a national charity that distributes surplus food from supermarkets and farms; its Welsh arm is FareShare Cymru ([fareshare.cymru](http://fareshare.cymru)), based in Cardiff. In 2022, FareShare Cymru saved 511 tonnes of surplus food from waste, – enough to provide almost 950,000 meals – which was diverted to 136 organisations, including homeless shelters, school breakfast clubs and community centres. A FareShare van brings food to Swansea twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday. Subscribing groups must collect their food from a pickup point at the Recreation Ground Car Park on the Mumbles Road. Cae Tan CSA (see below) takes surplus vegetables to Matt's Café and the Trussell Trust food bank in St. Thomas. FareShare also distributes apples from Cyfoeth Y Coed (see below) to its subscribers in Swansea.

#### 4.1.1 Food Poverty Challenges

There are a number of key challenges that food poverty initiatives say they face:

- **Transport:** This is an ongoing issue for most food groups. Food may sometimes be available but there is a lack of drivers and/or vehicles available to collect it. Some food banks lack the capacity to collect food from FareShare because of the distance and the fuel expense for volunteers. As one food bank organiser explained, "It's just too big an ask." Insufficient capacity also makes it difficult to collect food from the often-narrow time window that it is available at the supermarket. When a lot of food is available it can also be difficult to marshal enough volunteers with vehicles.
- **Supply:** There has been a general reduction in supply, as supermarkets reduce spending, coinciding with an increase in demand. Food initiatives also often find it particularly hard to source fresh fruit and vegetables. Since food groups are very much dependent on local supermarkets, they are vulnerable to interruptions and reductions of surplus in those supply chains.
- **Access:** Most food banks are only open once a week in the day, making them hard to access for most working people.
- **Waste disposal:** Food banks and other food initiatives sometimes receive food in bulk from supermarkets that they cannot use, e.g., the packaging has been opened or it is past its use by date.
- **Natasha's law:** Supermarkets often collect and donate unwanted baked goods in black plastic bags. This causes cross contamination and a potential problem for people with food allergies, so should be thrown away. Supermarkets also often fail to provide ingredients lists for baked goods when they are donated in bulk.

### 4.1.2 Food Poverty Opportunities

Several suggestions were made by local community food poverty projects on how the Council might support them to address some of the challenges and improve their service:

- **Transport:** the Council could assign at least two drivers and vans, freed up by reduced mowing in response to the climate and nature emergencies, to work with food groups to improve access to available food. Alternatively, it could offer an electric van at low cost.
- **Supply:** the Council should encourage and facilitate more resilient, local food supplies. Examples include:
  - The Eastside food bank in Bonymaen is re-establishing its garden to grow fresh fruit and vegetables to supplement food parcels.
  - The Council could also facilitate collaborations between The Orchard Project, Cyfoeth Y Coed and food groups to grow and maintain fruit trees on their sites.
  - To improve the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, the Council could facilitate connections between Cyfoeth Y Coed and local farmers to promote gleaning.
- **Access:** the Council could give food groups access to spaces that are open in the evenings and weekends e.g. community centres and libraries.

## 4.2 Community Growing Activities

Over the past decade there has been a rapid increase in the number and spread of community growing projects across Swansea. One of the unexpected positive outcomes of the pandemic was an increasing interest in growing from individuals and communities – people growing at home and looking for opportunities to engage with the natural environment and their communities. Though not all community growing and green space projects include food growing – some focussing on biodiversity or improving amenity – many do and most have the potential to. An increasing number of green space projects incorporate the planting of fruit trees or orchards.

This growing interest in growing has been coupled with an expansion in the resources, grants and support available to support growing, usually linked to the nature and climate emergencies. Examples include the **Local Places for Nature fund** (Welsh Government and National Lottery), which was partly delivered by Keep Wales Tidy, and the **Growing the Future project** at the National Botanic Garden of Wales.

The expansion of community growing projects in Swansea has been significantly supported and promoted in the past ten years by two key initiatives:

### 4.2.1 Swansea Community Green Spaces Project

Initiated in 2013 by Swansea Environmental Forum (SEF) as part of a portfolio of schemes under the Big Lottery Community Voice Programme and led by Swansea CVS. The original aim of the project was to enable citizens to have a greater influence on the planning and provision of urban green space areas by building their skills and the confidence to work with service providers. Though the support provided by the Green Spaces Project Officer and the groups and projects helped were wide ranging, the majority of projects involved community growing.

Once the Lottery funding came to an end, SEF, and the project's multi-agency steering group, continued the initiative using funding from other sources. In addition to hands-on support, the project has produced a comprehensive online green space toolkit ([swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com](http://swanseacommunitygreenspaces.weebly.com)) and supported groups to access capital funding. In 2022, the Green Spaces Project Officer connected with almost 50 different groups and projects within Swansea. The type of support given to community growing projects varies from advice on governance or help with funding applications to community engagement or site planning, or hands-on help onsite e.g. bed building or tree planting.

#### 4.2.2 Swansea Community Growing Network (SCGN)

Inspired by the increasing interest in community growing, several groups came together in 2014 to establish a network of community growing projects. Those involved at the start included Swansea Community Farm, Coeden Fach Tree Nursery, Cae Tan CSA, and some smaller projects. With assistance from Swansea Environmental Forum, the Social Farms and Gardens and Swansea Council, the group became constituted as a membership body with a committee made up of member representatives. Its overarching aim is promoting and supporting community growing in Swansea to improve food security and community resilience. ([swanseacommunitygrowing.weebly.com](http://swanseacommunitygrowing.weebly.com)).

For three years SCGN benefitted from Swansea Council's Grow Local Fund which enabled it to employ a part-time project worker and deliver a programme of training and networking events. In collaboration with Swansea Council officers, SCGN developed a proposal for Swansea to create a food strategy and join what was then the Sustainable Food Cities programme, but changes to Council staff and funding resulted in momentum being lost.

Securing small grants from the National Lottery, Community Foundation Wales and Swansea Council, SCGN has generally been able to deliver four or five training and networking events each year. The network currently has a formal membership of around 180 individuals which receive e-newsletters and updates throughout the year. The SCGN Facebook Group has over 500 members and the Facebook page has almost 1,500 followers. The high level of attendance and interest in SCGN events and the strong social media following demonstrates an ongoing value in the work provided by SCGN. Over the past two years, SCGN and its Project Worker also played an important role in supporting the Food Resilience Group, leading to the establishment of Bwyd Abertawe and revisiting the notion of a Swansea Food Strategy. SCGN currently does not have a Project Worker and very limited resources but has an enthusiastic committee and membership.

#### 4.2.3 Mapping Community Growing Projects

It is difficult to gauge exactly how many growing projects are currently active as not all are involved with the existing networks and whilst the overall number does still appear to be increasing, the voluntary nature of these projects means that from time-to-time some do fail. In 2017, Swansea Environmental Forum published a Green Map of Growing Spaces in Swansea, as part of its Sustainable Swansea Initiative, which identified around 20 community projects (not including allotments or schools gardens). Drawing on information from the Green Spaces Project and SCGN, it might be estimated that there are now over 40 community growing projects in Swansea (not including projects with limited or no public access e.g. in schools, allotments, private spaces).

There is a great range of community growing projects in terms of size, type of location, activities undertaken and how the project has developed and is run. The level of food growing at these sites can also vary and does change – some projects begin to grow food but find it difficult to maintain the level of commitment needed. Some projects utilise a very small patch next to a community building (e.g. Blaen-y-maes Drop in Centre or the rooftop garden at the Grand Theatre run by Race Council Cymru) whilst others are more extensive (e.g. Vetch Community Garden or Swansea Community Farm); some focus on a specific group, need or interest within the community (e.g. an ethnic minority or substance abuse project) whilst others are more widely open to anyone (e.g. Graft at the National Waterfront Museum); some are based in public spaces (e.g. Mayhill Washing Lake and Community Food Garden) while others are on private land but made available to the community (e.g. Spring Mills Community Garden or Gaia's Garden Project); some projects are entirely driven by local volunteers whilst some are part of a wider initiative, supported by paid staff and used to engage volunteers, particular groups or the wider community (e.g. Down to Earth or Coeden Fach). The vast majority of community growing projects in Swansea have received

some level of support from the Swansea Community Green Spaces Project and/or the Swansea Community Growing Network.

#### 4.2.4 Community Orchards and Fruit Trees

Orchards have a key role in providing access to local, sustainable and ongoing provision of fruit, whilst also contributing significantly to local biodiversity and the enhancement of climate change measures within the area. Examples of local orchards planted in recent years include St.Paul's Church Sketty, Cwmdonkin Park, Waverley Park in Clydach and Primrose Hill Community Garden.

**The Orchard Project** is a national charity dedicated to the creation, restoration and celebration of community orchards, with hubs in England, Scotland and Wales. Their overall mission is that "everyone (in the UK) is within easy reach of a thriving community orchard." The existence and enthusiasm of SCGN and its partners resulted in Swansea being chosen to host the first Wales hub. The Orchard Project started working with orchards in Swansea in September 2020 and currently has funding to August 2023, though the aim to continue working in the area beyond this. Each year the project aims to plant 5-6 new orchards and renovate a further 5 existing orchards, so over 30 orchards in total during the three years. The Orchard Project website includes a map showing the orchard projects they have supported ([www.theorchardproject.org.uk/orchards-map](http://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/orchards-map)).

**The People's Trust for Endangered Species** has mapped traditional orchards and fruit trees across the UK, which includes well over 100 entries for the Swansea area ([ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside/traditional-orchard-survey/orchard-maps](http://ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside/traditional-orchard-survey/orchard-maps)).

**Cyfoeth y Coed** is a local project which picks unwanted apples and other tree fruit from across Swansea for distribution through local food banks and other food sharing initiatives ([www.cyfoeth.org](http://www.cyfoeth.org)). As a key aim of this project is to reduce food waste, more information is provided below under food waste initiatives.

**Coeden Fach Tree Nursery** ([coedenfach.org.uk](http://coedenfach.org.uk)) is a community-led organisation growing native species of trees from locally collected seeds using organic, peat free methods. These are then mainly used for hedging, woodland and community planting. They graft their own fruit trees and also grow fruit bushes and some herbs. Originally established at a site near Brandy Cove, the project developed to a new site at the top of Clyne Gardens. Coeden Fach offers opportunities for volunteering and learning new skills, with regular volunteer sessions on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. They also work with school and community groups who visit the site for therapeutic outdoor sessions based around all aspects of growing and planting trees.

#### 4.2.4 Allotments

Swansea has 17 allotments which are mapped on the Council's website ([www.swansea.gov.uk/allotments](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/allotments)) – 16 are managed by allotment associations and one is privately-owned. All the allotments have long waiting lists, limiting access, which is further exacerbated by their extremely uneven distribution. Mumbles has a dense cluster of four allotments with a fifth close by in West Cross: almost one third of the total. In contrast large areas of the city including Fforestfach and the Penderi area, and all of the Gower and Mawr areas have none.

### 4.3 Food and Health-related Activities

The links between what we eat and our health is widely understood. Eating a healthy, balanced diet with a wide variety of foods in the right proportions, and consuming the right quantities of food and drink not only keep fit and healthy in the present but also reduce the risks of long-term health issues. The NHS, government bodies (both national and local) and third sector organisations, from time to time, undertake campaigns and initiatives to promote

healthy eating. Whilst there may be lots of information available about healthy eating, access to affordable nutritious foods is not readily available to everyone.

The **Nutrition Skills for Life** initiative, run by NHS Wales, aims to work with partner agencies and organisations to ensure that everyone in Wales has the skills, opportunity and confidence to access the food they need for good health. The Swansea Bay Nutrition Skills for Life Team works with and supports local community workers and health professionals to promote healthy eating and incorporate food and nutrition skills into their work. The programme also offers a wide range of resources and information and offers a number of different training courses for the public and for workers on healthy eating and cooking skills. ([nutritionskillsforlife.com/swansea-bay-university-health-board](https://nutritionskillsforlife.com/swansea-bay-university-health-board)).

**Growing Real Food For Nutrition** (GRFFN) is a UK social enterprise that promotes the growing, measuring and benefits of nutrient dense food. One of its directors is Swansea-based and actively involved in Bwyd Abertawe and other local networks, bringing this specific area of expertise and knowledge to local discussions. ([grffn.org](https://grffn.org)).

Involvement in food growing itself has also been recognised as having tangible benefits for both physical health and mental wellbeing. An increasing number of local Men's Shed projects include growing activities and a Women's Shed is thriving at the Summit Good CSA, working with the Petallica Flower Farm. Some health and wellbeing projects have made use of allotments and community growing spaces. Some work has also been done in Swansea around **Social Prescribing**, including the use of community growing sites. A good example of this is the **Clydach Community Garden** which was developed with extensive support through the Swansea Community Green Spaces Project and a specific focus on providing a space to support social prescribing and community health and wellbeing.

## 4.4 Food-related Training and Learning Activities

### 4.4.1 Food Growing Skills

Training and learning activities related to growing are provided by several groups across Swansea, including Swansea Community Growing Network and many of its members (such as Coeden Fach, Summit Good, Climate and Community, Cae Tan and Big Meadow). This includes formal training workshops or certified courses, informational learning sessions with volunteers or the public, or work with schools and colleges. It can range from bed building and site maintenance, to sustainable methodologies (e.g. permaculture) and practical growing skills, such as pruning fruit trees or harvesting seeds.

**Cae Tan CSA** (see below) currently offers an extensive online training course and a summer residential training weekend to support new entrants in the Community Supported Agriculture field. This is accredited training and some of their trainees are now running their own growing projects in Swansea. Cae Tan also runs a number of schools and community outreach programmes which includes their Grow from Home project and 'seed to plate' projects (see below).

The **Grow From Home** project, run by the Cae Tan Education Officer, works with local families in Clase, identified through outreach via Clase Primary School, to grow seasonal vegetables in their own gardens. In 2022, the project worked with ten families to produce over £1,000 worth of produce from 45m<sup>2</sup> of growing space.

**The Orchard Project** in Swansea runs the Wales Certificate in Community Orchard, a year-long course combining in-person and online learning. This has now run twice and the first course included four Swansea residents who are also orchard mentors in the development and restoration of local community orchards. The Orchard project also a variety of other orchard care, grafting and pruning courses, and has organised orchard summits.

The **Cyfoeth Y Coed** project also teaches volunteers and members of the public how to prune fruit trees, and **Coeden Fach Tree Nursery** also provides tree-related training.

**Climate and Community** is a small local charity that has taken on a field in Murton to demonstrate carbon negative and no dig food growing. They provide volunteering opportunities and organise training in growing, conservation skills and rural crafts e.g. hedge laying and scything. ([climateandcommunity.org.uk](http://climateandcommunity.org.uk)).

#### 4.4.2 Cooking Skills

Cooking initiatives have been led by a number of different organisations in Swansea (e.g. Swansea CVS, Swansea Community Farm, Swansea Council and the local health board) over many years but also often occur on an ad hoc basis. Some recent examples include a 6-week programme of community cooking classes held at St Thomas Church in Autumn 2022, and a sustainable cooking workshop arranged by the Centre for African Entrepreneurship (CAE) with The Shared Plate in Autumn 2022.

**The Shared Plate**, is a community interest company that aim to connect, inspire and build resilience in people and communities, through food cooking and meal sharing activities. It established a community kitchen and workshop space in Mumbles and has run cookery programmes from the space for people of all ages and abilities. Although some Shared Plate projects have ceased, or are on hold, they still continue to provide 'Chop 'n' Chat sessions once per month at the Red Community Project in Mumbles and their Youth Cooks Programme, which teaches collaborative cooking skills to young people 11-16yr olds, is expected to recommence May 2023. ([www.thesharedplate.co.uk](http://www.thesharedplate.co.uk)).

Also Mumbles based, **The Sharing Table** is a local charity seeking to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Gower and Swansea. It places food at the heart of its activities and set up a kitchen and cooking club in a local school ([www.sharingtablecymru.co.uk](http://www.sharingtablecymru.co.uk)). Monthly plant-based cookery workshops and seasonal cookery classes for young people have been organised by **The V Hub** on Craddock Street ([www.thevhub.co.uk](http://www.thevhub.co.uk)).

Interest has been expressed by a number of other groups, such as The CAE, the Multicultural Hub at The Grand Theatre and Friends of the Young Disabled, about setting up a café space to utilise surplus food and produce locally sourced and sustainable menus. Such initiatives could also provide training opportunities.

#### 4.4.3 Whole System Food Education Projects

Some initiatives involve growing, processing and cooking – sometimes referred to as field to fork projects. Local examples of this approach include:

Cae Tan's school's programme includes a '**Seed to Plate**' pizza project which offers hands-on experience of sustainable food growing through a mix of school and field-based learning. Pupils are shown how to grow wheat, tomatoes, onions, flowers and herbs. They winnow and grind the wheat to flour, then bake pizzas for the whole school in a wood fired oven. They also run a schools winter soup project that involves pupils in harvesting and processing produce to make soup for them and their families. ([www.caetancsa.org/en/children-schools](http://www.caetancsa.org/en/children-schools)).

The **Gower Field to Fork** project, coordinated by 4theRegion in 2022, brought together local farms with Bishopston Comprehensive School and Castell Howell for a series of activities that saw food from the farms being delivered to the school and used to prepare a nutritious meal. Children learned about local food production, sustainability, cooking, marketing, and agriculture. The project was run in partnership with Swansea Council and sought to uncover some of the challenges and find solutions to make local sourcing a more viable proposition for school catering procurement. ([www.4theregion.org.uk/projects/field-to-fork](http://www.4theregion.org.uk/projects/field-to-fork)).

**Swansea Community Farm** have offered a wide-range of food-related activities and learning opportunities over many years, to school and adult groups alike. Their site offers an

experience of many aspects of the food system, including growing, composting, animal husbandry and food preparation. They have livestock, a community garden, a small orchard and bee hives – often organising events, volunteering opportunities and training courses linked to these. There is also a well equipped kitchen which has been used for training activities in the past. ([www.swanseacommunityfarm.org.uk](http://www.swanseacommunityfarm.org.uk)).

## 4.5 Food Waste Activities

This section primarily considers food waste disposed of through waste collections and then surplus food supplied to organisations for community benefit (linked to earlier section of food poverty initiatives).

### 4.5.1 Food Waste Collections

In 2021/22, Swansea Council reported recycling just short of 26,000 tonnes of organics waste from domestic properties. Organics waste includes food waste, along with garden waste and other forms of biodegradable waste.

Commercial food waste disposal data is not so readily available. Swansea Council provides a commercial food waste service which is utilised by many local businesses. National providers such as Biffa, Veolia and Olleco are also used (the latter, in particular, for waste cooking oils).

**WRAP** provides comprehensive information on waste food at a UK level, including:

- Annual food waste arisings from UK households, hospitality and food service, food manufacture, retail and wholesale sectors in 2018 was around 9.5 million tonnes, 70% of which was intended to be consumed (30% being the ‘inedible parts’).
- Household food waste makes up 70% of the UK post-farm-gate total, manufacturing 16%, hospitality and food service 12% and retail 3%.
- In 2020, circa 80,000 tonnes of food surplus from manufacturing, retail and hospitality and food service was redistributed via charitable and commercial routes. This is considered waste prevention rather than waste disposal. ([wrap.org.uk/resources/report/food-surplus-and-waste-uk-key-facts](http://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/food-surplus-and-waste-uk-key-facts)).

WRAP also established and runs the Love food hate waste awareness campaign ([www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)) with lots of online and printed information and resources linked to food waste including recipes and practical tips for preventing waste.

It would have been useful for this report to have been able to obtain information on local commercial food waste disposal volumes, volumes of surplus food provided to third parties (charities and social enterprises) and the differences between volumes of avoidable and unavoidable (e.g. food peelings) food waste.

### 4.5.2 Surplus Food Waste Initiatives

Some surplus food projects operating in Swansea are run or supported by national initiatives whilst others have been developed locally.

**FoodCycle** is a national initiative which supports community dining by hiring local community spaces and taking responsibility for all aspects of the project, from sourcing surplus food to recruiting volunteers. Their aim is to ‘feed the hungry and give company to the lonely in our communities; providing delicious meals, great conversation. and using food which would otherwise go to waste.’ FoodCycle has been operating a weekly meal in the Phoenix Centre, Townhill since summer 2021. The project had been serving 15 meals a day but since becoming a Warm Hub this has increased to over 30. On a good day, 70-80% of the meal is from surplus food, 50% on a bad day. ([foodcycle.org.uk/find-a-meal](http://foodcycle.org.uk/find-a-meal)).

**The Real Junk Food Project**, established in August 2017, intercepts edible food destined for waste from supermarkets, restaurants and shops, and makes it available for human

consumption through a network of local community cafes and food markets. Everything is run on a 'Pay As You Feel' basis. **Matt's Cafe** is the flagship project for this approach in Swansea, providing 600-800 meals a week which, on average, use 70% surplus food waste. The scheme involves 28 volunteer-led surplus food collections per week from markets, supermarkets, restaurants and farms, at times ranging from 7am to 11pm. This runs alongside their food share initiative. ([matthewshouse.org.uk/matts-cafe](http://matthewshouse.org.uk/matts-cafe)).

**Cyfoeth Y Coed** (CYC), which means 'The Riches of The Trees' harvests mainly surplus apples, and other tree fruit. During the harvest season, FareShare Cymru collects most of the fruit twice weekly from the Environment Centre, taking them on to their pickup point where recipients include local food banks, Matt's Cafe and the Community Fridge. Some of the fruit is collected directly from the Environment Centre by food groups including the North Gower Food Hub, Unity in Diversity and Swansea Asylum Seeker Support. Another portion was set aside for juicing workshops that CYC ran with local children. Working with volunteers, CYC diverts fruit that has previously been discarded as garden waste to create a low carbon food source for Swansea. In its first year of operation, CYC harvested 600 kg of fruit but this increased in 2022 the harvest grew to 2.8 tonnes. The project has a part-time Project Manager who is supported by around twelve extremely committed volunteers. As there is likely to be at least one apple tree on every other street in Swansea this project has enormous potential for growth. ([www.cyfoeth.org](http://www.cyfoeth.org)).

#### 4.5.3 Food Waste Apps

Food waste apps provide a link to shops, restaurants and neighbours within a local area that have surplus food. Anecdotally, the use of food waste apps in Swansea is low compared to other cities in the UK so there is potential to improve this and increase the amount of surplus food collected from hospitality and retail businesses (after being offered to charities and social enterprises) and to expand the sharing of surplus food between households.

One example of a surplus food app is **Olio** ([olioex.com](http://olioex.com)) which connects neighbours with each other and with local businesses so surplus food can be shared, not thrown away. This could be food nearing its sell-by date in local stores, spare home-grown vegetables, bread from a baker, or unused groceries left in someone's fridge before they go away. In Swansea, there are 3,032 users of the app within 1.2 miles of central Swansea. Olio uses **Food Waste Hero** (FWH) volunteers to pick up unsold surplus food from businesses, bring it home, list it on the Olio app, and redistribute the food to their neighbours, who can then pick up the food. At the time of compiling this information, only 10 individual food items were listed within 5 miles of central Swansea.

**Too Good To Go** ([toogoodtogo.co.uk](http://toogoodtogo.co.uk)) is an anti-food waste app that lets people rescue unsold food from businesses to save it from going to waste. Registered organisations provide 'magic bags' of surplus food at a much-reduced cost, at the end of the day, often for evening collection. In Swansea, 59 venues are registered within 4.3 miles of central Swansea. These are mainly smaller supermarkets and coffee shops but also includes catering venues, such as at Swansea University.

#### 4.5.3 Packaging and Food Refills

Another component of waste related to the food industry is packaging and whilst this may fall outside the scope of this report, it is worth mentioning food refill schemes and shops. These not only cut down on packaging but can also reduce food waste as customers have greater control over the amount of product they buy, reducing the risk of it being surplus to requirements or going out of date. There may also be a cost benefit too.

A local example of an independent refill outlet is the **Balance Responsible Living** zero waste shop in Sketty. Customers are able to buy bulk food, cleaning products and personal hygiene items to take away in your own containers. Food products include sugar, flour, coffee, tea, dried fruit, grains and cereals, rice, pasta, oil and vinegar.

#### 4.5.4 Food Waste Challenges

There are a number of challenges linked to food waste:

- Lack of sufficient data on food waste, including surplus food.
- Diminishing supplies from supermarkets (outlined in a recent 5 News report – [youtu.be/mlo1BCZNvxl](https://youtu.be/mlo1BCZNvxl))
- The provision of unusable surplus food (i.e. food provided in the evening which reaches a use-by-date that day).
- The provision of surplus food in mixed causing cross-contamination.
- The cost of disposing of unusable food being passed on to charities and social enterprises as a result of the issues outlined above.
- Times when surplus food is available (evenings) is not often compatible with the times when organisations and volunteers can collect.
- Transport costs incurred by volunteers using their own vehicles when surplus food is collected outside of the immediate neighbourhood.
- Adequate provision from central suppliers such as FareShare, as the organisation itself struggles with increased demand.
- Poor/lack of connections with local farms or other growing initiatives to provide fresh produce.

#### 4.5.5 Food Waste Opportunities

Several suggestions were made by local community food projects on how to improve the use of surplus food:

- Consider working with Swansea BID and other partnerships on an awareness-raising campaign with food producers, hospitality and food retailers on benefits of and best practice in supplying surplus food, with guidance to support the positive working relationships between surplus food providers and charities. This may lead to a scheme to acknowledge businesses that perform well in reducing commercial food collections.
- Work with hospitality businesses to help update their practices so that more food can be redistributed (e.g. caterers provide food in a way that means it has a better chance of being distributed)
- Consider feasibility into a city-wide approach to managing the redistribution of surplus food, perhaps via a centralised drop-off / collection point, which could remove many barriers experienced by groups, increase the proportion of surplus food being used and potentially introduce new opportunities. Could also link to initiatives such as use of electric cargo bikes.
- Extend projects such as Cyfoeth Y Coed, in terms of collecting from more fruit trees in the area and working with farms on gleaning vegetables that are sometimes left to rot in the field. Also connect with more community food growing initiatives that could provide surplus.
- Explore ways to increase the volumes of fresh food reaching food banks, etc
- Consider a campaign to increase the use of food share apps by the community, including sharing surplus food within communities (not just from retail and hospitality).
- Develop and promote the Store More scheme (see below) and encourage more drying, bottling, tinning, pressing, smoking, salting, pickling, brining, jamming, juicing etc' activities.
- Consider how the redistribution of surplus from hospitality and events could be more coordinated and widespread.

## **5. Sustainable Farming and Land Availability**

In the timescale available to prepare this report, it was not possible to undertake comprehensive research into this aspect. However, there is clearly an increase in more diverse farming practices taking place in Gower. Examples include Paviland Farm, a 1,000 acre arable farm in Rhossili that has reintroduced cattle grazing to improve soil fertility where ten years ago it would have had a wheat, oat and barley rotation. It grows vegetables without chemical herbicides and pesticides. Shepherds Farm in Penmaen grows veg and supplies its own green grocery in Gorseinon. Two farms that have historically raised sheep are adding in vegetables: Manselford Farm in Llanrhidian is growing asparagus and swede while Little Walterstone Farm in Penmaen now grows seasonal vegetables and sells honey and beeswax products from its hives. Last year, Gower Pick Your Own at Surlage added broad beans to its soft fruit.

Some local growers involved in smaller scale operations suggest there is a lack of land available for growing, particularly at scale. However, others suggest the main issue is a significant lack of growers rather than access to land. It has been suggested that local farmers may be happy to lease fields that are no longer in production or in use for other purposes but that there is a lack of growers to take this on.

### **5.1 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**

The CSA model differs from commercial farming in a number of ways. CSAs are always local food producers who provide food for people who live nearby. They operate on CSAs grow on much smaller plots of land and use sustainable techniques e.g. organic and/or biodynamic, rejecting the use of industrial herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers. CSAs have members who pay ahead of time to receive a weekly box of produce and members are often encouraged to take part, as volunteers, in the operation of the farm. CSAs also embrace their role as community assets, encouraging volunteering and running educational activities, e.g. with local schools, to connect people with the often invisible realities of food growing. CSAs usually actively promote more sustainable farming methods and eating habits.

There are currently 7 food growing CSA projects in Swansea; 5 fully operational (Cae Tan, Big Meadow, Summit Good, Bramble and Nettle, and The Rowan Tree) and 2 in the early stages of development (Cae Felin and Good for You Fairwood CSA). There is also a few smaller, niche CSAs focussed on beef, pork, mushrooms or flowers. This is probably the largest concentration of CSAs in Wales and a local CSA network group has now formed and started to meet regularly. Most CSAs offer volunteering opportunities and some work with schools or groups.

The most well-established CSA in Swansea is **Cae Tan**, which was set up in 2015 with support from Gower Power and is currently providing weekly organic produce to over 130 households. This project has been pivotal in providing inspiration and practical support and mentoring to other CSAs that have emerged over the past few years, including through schools projects and training provision (see above).

**Banc Organics**, a well-established community supported food scheme based near Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire, also distributes veg boxes in Swansea area, and has a weekly drop off at the Environment Centre.

Whilst not involved in food production, and not a CSA, it is worth noting that **Gower Flax** has recently been established on a certified organic farm on Gower with a focus on researching and creating a sustainable model for the growth of regenerative textile systems in Wales.

## **6. Local Food Industry**

As in most areas of the UK, Swansea is home to a diverse range of small and medium size food and drink producers from small homebased operations that sell small quantities at local markets and online, to more established brands, such as Joe's Ice Cream, which has several shops of its own and supplies products to many venues and other outlets. Smaller producers are often supported through development and funding schemes, often delivered through national government programmes, local authority projects, and local partnerships.

### **6.1 Swansea Food Partnership**

Swansea Food Partnership provides support and networking opportunities for food and drink businesses throughout Swansea and Gower. It was formed in September 2019 as a direct response to discussions with rural food businesses in Swansea and focuses on working to create a vibrant and prosperous food offer for Swansea; to strengthen and shorten supply chains; enhance the food tourism and bridge the gap between rural and urban food. Swansea Food Partnership has an online presence, including over 1,200 followers on Instagram. ([www.swansea.gov.uk/foodpartnership](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/foodpartnership)).

In February 2020 the partnership identified a number of key areas were through a consultation event with rural food and tourism businesses. Following this, the core partnership group set out several priorities:

- Improved awareness of the local food/drink offer.
- Improved perceptions of local food/drink offer - locally and externally.
- Stronger local networks (business to business and business to customer).
- More food and drink produced and consumed locally, through greater use of local suppliers by the local food and drink industry and by local communities.
- Improved infrastructure to support food and drink businesses locally, focused on start-up/small businesses.
- Reduced food waste, including packaging.

In 2022, Swansea Council took on an Economic Development Local Food Coordinator whose role includes supporting the Swansea Food Partnership and its priorities. In November 2022, two events - called *Made in Swansea* and *Made in Rural Swansea*, were organised to bring Swansea businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, pubs and shops, together with local producers, including farmers, growers, bakers and brewers.

Also in 2022, Swansea Food Partnership commissioned a research project, undertaken by Afallen, in collaboration with the Open Food Network and Urban Foundry, which sought to understand what could be done to support local food supply in Swansea. This involved questionnaires to three groups of stakeholders: food producers (growers, manufacturers, farmers), food 'sellers' (cafes, pubs, restaurants, hotels, wholesalers, markets) and consumers (householders, other retail users). Results from this study are expected in March and may reveal many opportunities to support local producers.

### **6.2 Local Produce Markets and Farm Shops**

There are several community-run local produce markets across Swansea, which generally run on a monthly basis, some of which have been established for decades (e.g. in Penclawdd and Mumbles). The award-winning Uplands Market first appeared in 2013 and is run by **Urban Foundry** which also set up several other markets over the last ten years, taking over management of the Mumbles Market, setting up the Marina Market and more recently, markets in Pontardawe and Port Talbot. Other independent local community markets currently run in Sketty and Pontarddulais. For a short time, Urban Foundry tried a market in Morriston but this didn't last and some local community markets haven't managed to keep going.

Urban Foundry were also responsible for setting up the South Wales Food and Drink online platform to promote local food and drink businesses across Swansea, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot and allow them to provide customers an ordering service. (<https://southwalesfoodanddrink.com>).

**Farm Co.** originated in 2017 as Swansea Food Assembly, part of the international Food Assembly network which provides an online farmers' market to help farmers sell their produce direct to consumers. When the Food Assembly network ceased trading in the UK, FarmCo was launched utilising a similar online platform and continuing to work with the same producers. In addition to the online farm shop, there is an actual shop in Kingsbridge and there have been other collection points around Swansea.

**Swansea market** is an iconic feature in Swansea and an award-winning market with lots of fresh local produce available including meats, vegetables and baking products. It is also home to the **Brontosaurus Vegan Lifestyle Store**, established in 2017, which stocks chilled, frozen and pre-packed foods, and also hosts the Swansea Vegan Mini Market where local vendors come together to sell their prepared foods and products on the first Saturday of each month.

There are a number of farm shops in Swansea, though the extent to which these focus on local produce may vary. One good example is **Dunvant Farm Shop and Café**, which offers a wide range of locally produced meats, eggs, vegetables, preserves and homemade cakes, and flavoured milks from Llaeth Beynon Dairy, Llanelli. **Penyfodau Fawr Farm Shop**, near Garden Village, also sells a good range of locally grown products and locally produced goods.

There are many other high street or village shops that make an effort to stock local produce, such as The Coterie in Clydach and Shepherd's Fruit & Veg in Gorseinon. There are also restaurants and cafes that look to use local ingredients and suppliers, such as Hoogah Café on Bryn Y Mor Road and Mor restaurant in Mumbles.

The **Store More** project offers low cost loan of professional food processing equipment to help community gardens, CSA's and other organisations or individuals who grow local produce to preserve and package their produce for a longer shelf life. The project was originally set up with funding from Swansea Council's Grow Local Fund and is based at Spring Mills in North Gower. A key aim of the project was to enable storage without refrigeration in order to reduce carbon emissions. The equipment available includes a pasteurising kettle, vacuum packer, food dehydrator, meat mincer, bottle corker and various other tools, utensils and containers. ([www.gowergroup.org/store-more.html](http://www.gowergroup.org/store-more.html)).

### 6.3 Local Food Producer Challenges

There are many challenges facing local food producers:

- **Supply:** While Swansea does not lack agricultural land e.g. much of Gower, agricultural production is limited because that land is not currently available for growing. A local supplier commented that the only local produce he could source at present was beetroot.
- **Demand:** Britain lags behind much of continental Europe in terms of the percentage of income we are prepared to pay for good food. At present, if there was a renaissance of local growing, the market is not present to buy it.
- **Competition/costs:** Small and medium food businesses face intense competition from the large food retailers whose size enables them to absorb shocks and generate far reaching economies of scale.

## **7. Next Steps**

This report provides an overview of sustainable food and agriculture and a snapshot of food-related activity in Swansea. It is not exhaustive and in no way claims to include every initiative and opportunity, which are continually developing and emerging across all sectors.

Swansea Environmental Forum and The Environment Centre will continue to work with Swansea Council to explore actions that can be taken in support of this cross cutting agenda. These will focus on how Swansea Council can help and further support the good work already being undertaken across the county.