

Bridport Local Food Hub: Concept Proposal

Start small, think big!



1. INTRODUCTION

This idea is being championed by Seeding our Future, working with Bridport Local Food Group. SoF have consulted in 2020 with community groups, producers, retailers and consumers. This proposal sums up the elements of a Hub which have attracted most support. SoF is a small non-profit project based in Bridport which aims to help local communities with resilience to climate change.

SoF has had offers of help with grant funding from Tamar Grow Local, who are assisting other food hubs in the South-West and from Dorset Food and Drink. Looking ahead, a local share issue for a Community Benefit Company is another funding option.

2. WHAT IS A FOOD HUB? THE BIG PICTURE

This term is used to describe a variety of activities by different projects. For Bridport, we imagine it including some of the elements listed below. Whilst the term hub may suggest one location including various operations, that's not always the case. We think there are four main possibilities for Bridport, starting with A and B.

Scenario A: A series of short-term, pop-up activities in borrowed locations to test out some of these ideas.

Scenario B: A patchwork of locations, shared with existing organisations where possible.

Scenario C: A single location, ideally a largeish space in or near the town centre, such as the former Sunnydays nursery in West Street.

Scenario D: Longer-term, a location with several acres of land for food growing and demonstrations, starter units for food enterprises, and a teaching/social space.

3. POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR A BRIDPORT HUB

This list starts with the elements which have attracted the highest interest in consultations, and which would be our early priorities.

a. *Education through activities and entertainment: changing consumer habits*

Many experts believe our food supplies, both local and imported, will see severe disruption within the next few years. We could prepare for this if consumers changed habits:

- Buying more produce from local growers and retailers, less from supermarkets
- Supporting local food innovations by buying them, e.g. oat milk, flour, legumes from Dorset
- Changing diet to reduce supply vulnerability and raise sustainability e.g. less meat

A hub could promote such changes through interactive, entertaining events, e.g. parent and child cookery classes, and by providing information and resources.

b. *Information resources and joining the dots*

There are many projects and a lot of expertise available to help with food security and food poverty issues. One role for a hub could be to improve communication and coordination, preferably as part of Bridport Local Food Group's umbrella role. Elements of this could include:

- An expanded website, building on the BLFG site
- An updated 'food map' for Bridport
- A physical hub space could provide a location for information and resources
- A stall on Bridport Market could be another channel

c. *Support to enhance current food poverty initiatives*

These ideas draw on input from some of these initiatives, but not all, hence more consultation would be needed on these possibilities:

- Educational programmes, on the lines described above, but focussed on affordable cooking, and how to grow some of your own food. Ideally some programmes would happen in Skilling or Court Orchard.
- Space for storing and possibly distributing food
- Receiving donations of food and money from the public, and informing them of the food poverty initiatives in Bridport

d. *Promoting local produce, especially new climate-responsive products*

A catalyst for this could be a Dorset Diet Scheme, encouraging consumers to buy 80% of their food from producers or processors within 30 miles of home. SoF have researched precedents, and are exploring ways to launch the Dorset Diet in late 2021, following consultation with local producers and networks.

In May, SoF published a report showing how local farmers and growers could adapt to climate change. This suggested a number of new crops, and new processed products. It's probable that producers will need more assurance of demand before investing in such innovations. To see the full report, or a summary, go to <https://www.seedingourfuture.org.uk/local-communities>.

e. *Encouraging more veg and fruit growing locally*

These categories are the biggest shortfall in food security, nationally and locally. A hub could provide information and contacts (e.g. the FarmStart Network) for startups, and connect them with retailers and consumers.

f. *A small-batch production kitchen for new local produce*

This could enable small-scale professional producers and private individuals to create new products to improve the amount of our food which could be supplied locally, such as preserves, pickles etc.

g. *A café or bistro showcasing local produce*

If the hub was in one location with enough floor area this would be a valuable element. We would hope it could be run by an existing operator in our area.

4. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

SoF will base their next steps on these proposals. Key steps will include:

- Putting a funding proposal for a Development Worker into a grant bid with Tamar Grow Local, due for submission early 2021.
- Take forward with BLFG plans for an enhanced website, new food map, and pop-up presences e.g. a market stall.
- Continue to work on these ideas through our team and our partner organisations, Transition Town Bridport and Bridport Local Food Group.

5. KEEPING INFORMED

Please sign up for our periodic [newsletters](#).

Visit <https://seedingourfuture.org.uk> for further information about Seeding Our Future's food security work including [Growing Through Climate Change](#).

January 2021