

Comment – What is Edinburgh doing to create a sustainable food chain?

by Cllr George Gordon, Sustainability Champion and Chair of Edible Edinburgh Partnership.

Shortages of many food products have been discussed recently, associated with a possible no deal or delayed Brexit. This is something that we in Edible Edinburgh with our partners are trying to ensure doesn't happen. The Scottish Government have wisely set up a 2020 target to turn us into a Good Food Nation. [The government's consultation](#) on how to take this forward is open to all and I would encourage everyone to respond.

As part of this legislation we're trying to bring a model of sustainability into our food supply chain. This will go some way to tackle food insecurity and food poverty.

A primary part of the legislation will also focus on local authorities publishing figures and monitoring programmes to tackle these issues. The holiday hunger programme running in my own community took children from Granton Primary School who were entitled to free school meals, and during the holiday period this pilot continued via Granton Parish Church and the Spartans Football Academy- who must be congratulated for its success.

In fact, we hoped to roll out across the city. However, in the current financial climate, it is incumbent on both Westminster and Holyrood to work with Councils and local groups to resource these programmes.

Another project being developed is "Grow your Own". In Edinburgh alone, there are over 2,500 on the waiting list for allotments. If we could provide land to meet, or even partially meet, this demand and if Scottish Water could provide standpipes to allotments at an affordable cost, this would get more local producers growing for their own use and the wider community.



The waiting list for an allotment in Edinburgh has not reduced in years

There is also a great opportunity to develop more community gardens such as [Gracemount](#) and [Granton Walled Gardens](#) who run educational and participation programmes for their communities. [Leith's community croft](#) has also taken on a life of its own, now not only growing food locally on Leith Links, but becoming a hub of community activity. It would be good to see this kind of activity being developed further, just as [Bridgend](#) and others have done- all extremely worthwhile visiting!

There is a great requirement for education and we are monitoring a pilot instigated by Broughton High School. This is currently developing growing beds and outdoor storage and classrooms to teach students how easy it is to grow their own food. All produce will be reabsorbed in the school for their own use and if it produces a surplus of crops, it will be sold through their social enterprise. I'm sure this scheme's success will motivate other schools to replicate.

I also welcome [Edible Edinburgh](#) signing The City of Edinburgh Council up as a Veg City, promoting vegetables as part of a balanced diet. You might have seen the adverts on STV and the national campaign ties Edinburgh to other capitals such as Cardiff and London.

The Council is also in the process of applying for the bronze award for [Sustainable Food Cities](#). This is a national organisation that Edinburgh proudly founded many years ago which promotes sustainable and affordable local produce and underlines our ambition to be at the forefront of this work.

I would encourage all communities to get more involved with local organisations which can be seen on the council and [Edible Edinburgh's](#) websites. We also hope that the national politicians see the work we are doing and assist by lobbying their respective governments to support financially and in kind this type of initiative. Its benefits far exceed just food production; it contributes to both mental and physical wellbeing, bringing people into contact with each other and tackling social isolation.