

In praise of UNICEF – from the Chair of Edible Edinburgh Partnership

Cllr George Gordon is Chair of Edible Edinburgh Partnership, and here he writes for us throwing a spotlight on the UNICEF food hamper distribution programme.

A few days ago the Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg said that the UN agency was guilty of a political stunt, stepping in as it did to provide food for deprived children in the UK during the pandemic. He said in parliament that the agency should be ‘ashamed’ of itself. He was challenged by Zarah Sultana Labour MP for Coventry South:

This morning I challenged Jacob Rees-Mogg on [@UNICEF](#) having to feed working class kids in Britain.

Watch his response.

The only people who should be ashamed with themselves are this rotten Conservative government.
pic.twitter.com/lXNKBZKiXc

– Zarah Sultana MP (@zarahsultana) [December 17, 2020](#)



Cllr George Gordon

Cllr Gordon writes: “Writing in my role as the Chair of Edible

Edinburgh Partnership, I wanted to highlight the superb food hamper distribution programme recently launched by UNICEF in association with the Partnership and Edinburgh Community Foods.

“Unlike certain prominent Westminster politicians, UNICEF recognises that the pandemic has had a devastating effect on individuals and families in the lower income bracket who are now experiencing food poverty and insecurity.

“This is the first time the charity has directly invested in the UK as they, like we do, recognise that this has created a situation that will take a considerable length of time to fix. Yes, we can see light at the end of the tunnel as we roll out a UK-wide vaccination programme, but this will take time to achieve.

“Edible Edinburgh is working closely with The City of Edinburgh Council and other partners to try and tackle poverty right here in Scotland’s capital city – a very real and unacceptable situation.

“Thanks to the work of the [Edinburgh Poverty Commission](#), published earlier this year, there can be no doubt that this support is desperately needed – and I’m delighted that the Council has committed to ending poverty in our city by 2030.

“This specific programme will supply 450 individual families with the necessary food they require to survive through this Christmas period. I hasten to point out these are all newly identified families who have not been part of any previous existing programmes put in place by the Scottish Government or the Council. The vast majority are delivered through the third sector, who are predominantly charitable organisations.

“I could fill this whole column with praise for the organisations involved and with the statistics and individual testimonies from those hardest hit – the many people I’ve spoken to in my various positions as a Councillor about the

real hardship many of our fellow citizens are faced with.

“I also want to take this opportunity to highlight another key piece of work that Edible Edinburgh are doing in association with the Council – that is the provision of areas of land for food growing as part of the Community Empowerment Act.

“A [consultation on the draft Edinburgh Food Growing Strategy, Growing Locally](#), which sets out a plan to grow more locally, consume more locally and to increase awareness and engagement, went live on 1 December.

“Our aim is to identify areas of food growing through allotments, community growing space and at least four areas for market gardens which will be run and maintained by community groups and organisations. A fine example of this is what is being currently built at Lauriston Farm and I look forward to seeing progress over the next couple of years.

“My request to you is simple: get involved! Please take the time to give your views (before the closing date on 18 January) and remember there are no stupid ideas. This is hugely relevant and important as we move toward providing more locally produced sustainable food sources for our city and our country.

“By doing so we can live better while helping to reduce food insecurity, carbon emissions – and, of course, poverty.”