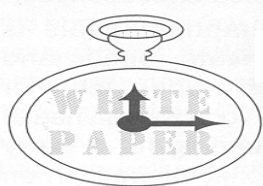


Fare Choice

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH COMMUNITY DIET PROJECT



TIME FOR CHANGE

"This White Paper sets out proposals that will transform the way Food Standards issues are handled in this country. For too long, consumers in the UK have suffered from uncertainty and confusion about the quality and safety of the food they buy."

Rt Hon Tony Blair PM

A White Paper recommending the setting up of Food Standards Agency has been published.

The government is encouraging widespread consultation and public scrutiny to ensure a new agency has the necessary responsibilities to regain the confidence of the public and the powers to carry out these responsibilities.

The Scottish Community Diet Project has always been committed to holding a seminar, as soon as possible after the publication of the White Paper, to allow those working at community level the opportunity to hear what is being proposed and to examine its implications.

A seminar is therefore planned, for Thursday 5 February 10am/10.30am - 2.30pm in the Renfield St Stephen's Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow.

There will be no charge for the seminar, a limited creche (please book in advance) and a light lunch. You can register on the day but it would help the organisers if we had some idea of how many intend to come.

*"The agency will:
develop appropriate mechanisms for effective two-way exchange of information with the public at large, consumer organisations, industry, enforcement bodies and the media ..
devise appropriate systems for improving its understanding of consumer opinion on food safety and standards matters to inform its own policy development and communications."*

A special edition of **Fare Choice**, the newsletter of the Scottish Community Diet Project, has been distributed giving some background to the proposals, highlighting key issues and providing an invaluable glossary.

It is unfortunate that greater notice for this event cannot be given. However, it is important that an agency committed to regaining the confidence of the public has as much public involvement in the development of its structures and responsibilities as possible.

It is to be hoped that as many people as possible take this opportunity to have their say on the most significant development for food in Scotland since the second world war.

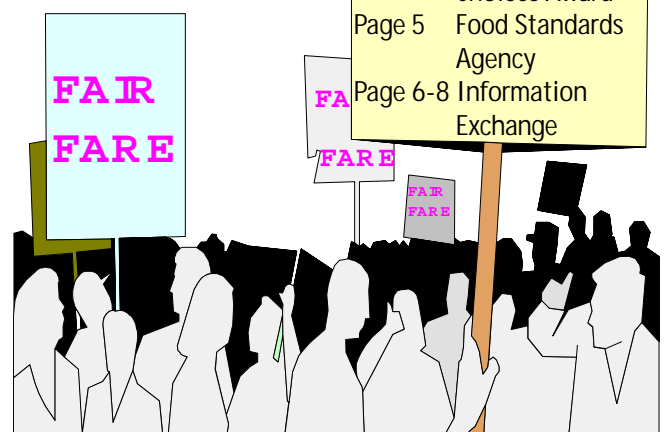
If you require any further details about the proposed event, do not hesitate to contact Bill or Jacquie at SCDP.

"The area of nutrition has been the subject of vigorous debate ... in particular the government expect that there will continue to be debate on whether the responsibility for definition of a balanced, healthy diet should rest with the Agency ... it will consider the precise attribution of responsibilities further in the light of the response to this White Paper".¹

See page 5 for a summary of the White Paper proposals

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¹The Food Standards Agency: A Force for Change, 1998



LESSONS FROM A COLD CLIMATE

Open any academic text on fruit and vegetable consumption in Scotland and it will probably say that Scots are disadvantaged because of the cool climate, absence of warm, sunny days and traditionally Scots do not rate (or like) vegetables.

Well the same could be said of Finland except that the climate is colder (even as low as – 30) and that something has happened to make Finns double their fruit and veg intake over the last 25 years, so that the mean intake per person is now around 380g (ie almost 5 portions per day). The Finnish diet was traditionally high in total fats and saturated fats and has decreased significantly since the 1960's. Small changes like the average fat spread on bread falling from 9g to 3g, use of low fat spreads and a drop in butter consumption (from 90% to 20% of the population) have brought fat intake down to around 33% of energy. Heart disease has also fallen especially in middle-aged men.

More information about these changes are documented in a recent article in Health Bulletin [55(6), November 1997, pp 432-443]. However, I obtained further insight to some of the mechanisms of how Finns have changed their diet during a recent study tour comprising Tayside professionals interested in production, processing, and consumption of soft fruit.

Finland produces something in the region of

33000 tons of berries per annum in an extremely short growing season. Cultivated berries include strawberries, blackcurrants, other currants and raspberries, whilst wild berries include lingon berries, bilberry, cranberry, crowberry, cloudberry and rowan berry. Around 3% of the population (5 million) eat berries every day (including winter).

Maintaining high consumption levels is undoubtedly due to a private, public and voluntary sector partnership approach. For example, the public sector (North Karelia health project) provided some funding for a berry project as well as promotional information on the health benefits of berries, the voluntary sector (mainly through womens institute equivalents) help provide advice on practical skills for using berries and the private sector agreed to make fruit part of local authority and health service catering provision.

The North Karelia project has focused on a number of practical ways to change diet including:

increasing health knowledge

(eg information provision)

persuasion

(eg marketing strategies)

training for practical skills

(eg food preparation and cooking classes)

social support

(eg working with families and villages)

environmental modification

(eg making fruit available at low cost)

community organisation

(eg involving schools & community groups in fruit picking)

Mass catering is a major feature of Finnish food intake including workplace canteens and government office etc. These catering outlets serve as a local market for local products, follow voluntary nutritional guidelines and serve limited, but tasty choices (at least 2 salad choices and fruit each day with a main course, range of breads and spreads and potatoes). Actually experiencing the healthy school meal, seeing



teenagers eat berry soup and noting that the junk food is sold only considerably later than the main meal provides evidence that young adults can choose to eat well if the options are provided at appropriate costs.

One major socio-demographic trend that has influenced food eaten in and food eaten out of the home in the last couple of decades has been employment patterns especially for women. Unemployment rates in Finland are high (16-17%) and about 70% of men and women work full-time. In Scotland, employment of women has generally resulted in significant pressure on women (most men still escape this!) to fulfil both domestic and economic requirements (which, apart from increasing guilt and coping problems) has tended to result in an increase in ready prepared, convenience, calorie dense food choices. Finland seems to have dealt with this through a highly relevant practical home economics in schools maintaining essential skills (soup and fish emphasis rather than cakes and pizzas) and by mass catering providing a highly nutritious main meal at lunch time

Schools in Finland have become increasingly involved with berry harvesting, especially in rural areas where children can pick wild berries which are then used in school catering. Berries are widely available - fresh and frozen, or as juices and a range of products. In fact it is these "added-value" products which help sustain small (10 hectare) berry farms to keep going and contributes to rural employment.

Tayside is the major soft fruit growing area in Scotland, but only a small amount of the crop is used locally. The time is ripe for developing local, home markets for our own locally grown fruit, cutting down on food miles, improving health and enjoying a really great fruit feast!!

If anyone is interested in developing projects on local soft fruit this summer for community food initiatives please contact me (Annie Anderson) t 01382 345383.



The Scottish Community Diet Project is committed to contributing to the training needs of Scotland's community food initiatives. After talking to many of those involved with local projects and taking on board comments at the

national conferences, SCDP are planning a training roadshow.

The plan is to hold three two-day residentials in various parts of the country open particularly to volunteers running, or planning to run, community-based initiatives, with a few places kept for staff working with local initiatives.

Over the two days participants will be put into teams and asked to plan their own community food initiative. Quality advice and information will be on hand from experienced practitioners in practical nutrition, food safety, community entrepreneurship and getting started!

It is hoped to be able to accommodate forty people at each event. Application forms will be coming out shortly so get yours returned as soon as possible.



There are still some places available at the **Food, Local Communities and Rural Development** seminar being organised by the Scottish Community Diet Project in collaboration with the Scottish National Rural Partnership.

The Seminar will take place on 30 January in Lockerbie and will look at locally determined collaborative responses to issues around food and their relationship to issues of national and global concern.

It is hoped the seminar will attract people from a variety of backgrounds, linking economic development, community development, sustainable development and health promotion.

The seminar costs £35 and small scale community-based initiatives can apply for assistance with travel and accommodation costs if required.

Application forms and further details are still available from Jacquie at SCDP (address/t and fax numbers on back page).



The Scottish Healthy Choices Award was launched in the Cyberbytes Community Cafe in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh on 24 October by Sam Galbraith MP, Minister of Health at the Scottish Office.

It is the first national healthy eating award scheme in Scotland and is a response to one of the challenges set out in the Scottish Office report Eating for Health - A Diet Action Plan for Scotland. The scheme was piloted in three health board areas, Ayrshire & Arran, Tayside and Orkney.

This national award is open to all caterers from sandwich bars to cafes and restaurants including hospitals, schools and workplaces. There are two grades of award; Commended and Highly Commended, reflecting rising degrees of quality, choice, care and customer attention. The aim of a progressive award is to encourage continuing improvement in quality.

There are three elements common to each grade of award:

Healthier choices in food

Menus must offer increased choice by adding and identifying healthier alternatives prepared in a healthier way, offering more fibre and less fat, salt and sugar.

To support the provision of healthier choices for all age groups catering establishments can provide a supportive and helpful environment for mothers who wish to breastfeed their babies.

Food Safety, Hygiene and Management

As an environment for healthy eating it is essential that good standards of food safety and hygiene are guaranteed throughout the premises.

This is the only section of the award where there is no choice. All premises and practices in the scheme must comply with the food safety regulations.

Smoking Areas

Non-smoking is regarded as the norm and smoking is only to be permitted in less than half the seating area, where there is no seating, eg take-always, no-smoking is to be permitted. This section of the award

requires catering establishments to give clear indications of smoking and non-smoking areas.

The scheme will be reviewed in the year 2000 and it is intended to revise the criteria to require smoke free eating areas.

The Scottish Healthy Choices Award Scheme is a joint initiative between the Health Education Board For Scotland (HEBS) and the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC). The Scottish office has provided funding for a co-ordinator, Patricia Cassidy, who is based at the SCC offices in Glasgow, liaising with HEBS.

The scheme will be delivered locally through partnerships between health promotion departments, community dietitians and environmental health specialists. Such partnerships have been established in most health board areas, caterers who wish to obtain the award should contact their local health promotion department.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE AWARD

A self-assessment form and information pack can be obtained from the local health promotion department.

The form is completed and returned with a range of sample menus to the assessor, who will then visit the premises and consult the local environmental health officer for a record of the most recent Food Safety & Hygiene inspection.

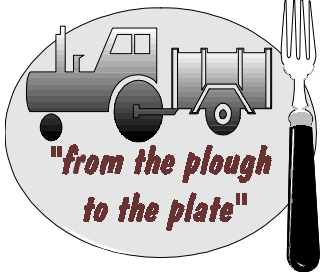
The local assessor will provide support and guidance to applicants.

If successful the caterer receives an Award certificate and standards charter, which must be clearly displayed in the premises.

The award is valid for two years and can be withdrawn if criteria are not met.

Currently the project plan and evaluation strategy are being drafted and a network is being established. The implementation of the Scottish Healthy Choices Award will vary within different health boards, the first award is expected early in the new year.

Scottish Healthy Choices Award was launched in a community cafe, it is hoped that many more will follow to reflect the standard and range of food available. The award is a national symbol of care and quality which gives the customer more control over the food they eat and where they eat it, guaranteeing high standards in the way the food is prepared, presented and served.



Food Standards Agency

- A Force for Change

"The Agency's essential aim will be the protection of public health in relation to food."

The White Paper proposes the Agency will:

- Be a public body comprised of an appointed commission supported by an executive (ie staff).
- Have commissioners with a range of relevant skills and experience.
- Have a majority of commissioners drawn from a 'public interest' background.
- Have a Scottish advisory committee and executive.
- Have appointees who sit on the Scottish Advisory Committee and also on the UK Commission.
- The Agency will be funded by industry through a registration or licensing scheme.

The Agency will be responsible for:

- Providing policy advice to ministers on food safety, standards and aspects of nutrition.
- Providing the public with information and advice.
- Utilising the best available science.
- Exchanging information with the public, consumer organisations, industry, enforcement bodies and the media.
- Encouraging consistent food law enforcement.

The Agency will contribute to the work on:

- Food safety on the farm.
- Control of animal diseases which could enter the food chain.
- Animal feeding stuffs.
- Pesticides and veterinary medicines.
- Food hygiene policy and microbiological safety of food.
- Food borne illness.
- Novel foods and processes (including genetically modified and irradiated foods).
- Food additives.
- Chemical contaminants.
- Food emergencies.
- Food standards (including composition and labelling).

Nutrition

"The agency will provide authoritative and unbiased information to help people to decide for themselves what they wish to eat" including "the nutrient content of foods and the diet as a whole" and "will provide the definition of a balanced diet for use in health education material" and "where appropriate it will propose legislation".

What happens next:

- White Paper consultation will end on 16 March 1998.
- Further consultation promised after the publication of the Bill later this year.
- Agency launched late 1999 at the earliest.

Copies of the White Paper (price £10.50) are available from the Stationery Office and all good bookshops. The full text of the White Paper and its accompanying factsheet is also available on the internet on the Open Government website: <http://www.open.gov.uk>.

Major retailers are also planning to distribute summaries of the proposals.

Taken from the Scottish Consumer Council's initial response to the launch of the White Paper:

"The establishment of a robust, independent and transparent Food Standards Agency represents a unique opportunity to restore the confidence of consumers in the safety of their food ...

The SCC is particularly pleased to see that the vital area of nutrition will be the responsibility of the Agency, ensuring that authoritative and unbiased information about diet will get to consumers ...

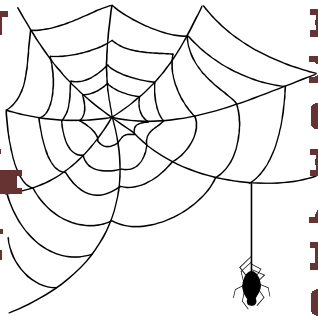
However, the SCC urges the Government to think carefully about moving towards an Agency which is fully funded by industry. We certainly support licensing as a means of enforcing high standards of food hygiene, but consumers may be less confident in the Agency if the whole of its activities including research, are to be funded by the food industry ...

The setting up of a Scottish body to represent Scottish interests and Scottish aspects of UK issues is also welcomed by the SCC. However the SCC hopes that the Scottish body will be robust enough to protect those interests and is glad that two members of the commission will also be part of the UK body ...

The SCC welcomes the commitment to make the Agency's advice to Ministers public and the recognition that a majority of public interest members of the Commission will be vital to ensure independence."



INFORMATION



EXCHANGE

After the last edition's 'Alphabet Soup' of organisations tackling issues around food in Scotland, Fare Choice can now introduce you to another agency.

The Food Trust of Scotland is a new organisation with an educational role which aims to expand informed public knowledge of issues and interpret them for Scots and visitors alike. The Food Trust of Scotland seeks to foster an intelligent public culture of food in Scotland:

- ↳ its importance to the national economy
- ↳ its nutritional significance
- ↳ its role in everyday eating
- ↳ its part in our national heritage
- ↳ its role in our social conviviality
- ↳ its gastronomical aspirations and opportunities

The Food Trust of Scotland is a recognised Scottish Charity for further information contact :

Dr Michael Cuthbert, Chief Executive
110 Gilmore Place, Edinburgh EH3 9PL
t/Fax: 0131 229 8242



Another organisation Fare Choice has recently heard from is the National Federation of City Farms. *The National Federation of City Farms is a charity which acts as a support and development organisation for community managed City Farms and Community Gardens, and for a range of other organisations and individuals with an interest in the regeneration and development of urban areas.*

The Federation has its own newsletter "Growing Places" and also "Up the Garden Path" produced specifically for community gardens. The first ever UK gathering of community gardeners is planned for March 24-26 in Bristol, a guide is planned and a survey underway.

For further information on the NCF contact:

Mick Marston, c/o 21 Beech Grove, Blackhall Mill, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE17 7TD
t/Fax: 01207 562317



Yet another organisation worth taking a note of is the Institute of Home Economics. The Institute of Home Economics started life in 1954 as The Association of Home Economists. When it achieved institute status in 1982 it became the official body for the profession and gained recognition for the status and discipline of home economics and the developing role of the home economics.

Home Economics is a study of the inter-relationships between the provision of food, clothing, shelter and related services and the individual's physical, economic and aesthetic needs in the context of the home, in business and education and the global environment.

IHE can be contacted at:

21 Portland Place, London, W1N 3AF
t 0171 436 5677.



Thanks are due to everyone who returned their Fare Choice readership survey. As well as improving the accuracy and effectiveness of the newsletter's distribution it will also help to improve networking and ensure specific information reaches those who would benefit most.

If you have yet to return your form, please do so or at least let us know you still wish to receive Fare Choice. It is obviously wasteful to send the newsletter to groups that no longer exist or individuals who have moved posts. The survey has already resulted in the expansion of the readership and requests to be included on the mailing list continue to come in. If you want to guarantee you will not miss out on what's happening make sure Jacquie knows you still want to receive Fare Choice!

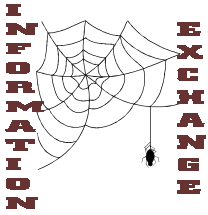


November's very successful "Foodlinks" conference organised by Highland Health Board included the launch of "End of the Road? Food Access and Availability in Upper Torridon and Thurso". The full 60 page report will be available soon and a well produced summary (4 pages) is available free from:

Cathy Steer, Health Promotion Department, Highland Health Board, Ness Walk, Inverness t 01463 230600.

A report of the conference proceedings will also be sent out to participants by late February / early March and copies can also be requested from Cathy while stocks last.





"The hidden struggle - Food Poverty in West Lothian" is a report produced by the West Lothian Poverty Action Forum with support from the Health Unit at West Lothian Council. The report is based on a *food basket survey* along with discussions and interviews with local groups and individuals. Copies of the report are available (price £1 including p&p) from West Lothian Poverty Action Forum, 36 King Street, Bathgate t 01506 653357 OR from the Health Unit at West Lothian Council, West Lothian House, Livingston t 01506 777357. A community conference is currently being planned for February/March to follow up the reports findings.



The Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) are planning a national conference around the theme of inequalities and health. In order to ensure that the views and concerns of those working at community level are represented at the event, HEBS are planning to tap the networking currently being encouraged by the Scottish Community Health Network Project and the Scottish Community Diet Project. A seminar prior to the main event is planned and both projects will also be using their newsletters to generate discussion and debate. Around one third of the places at the event will be allocated to people working at community level and both projects will be attempting to ensure that not only are these places taken up by a good cross section of Scottish community-based initiatives but also that those who attend take with them the fears and hopes of the many groups and individuals who will be unable to be there in person. Further details will be out shortly!



Why not p-p-pick up some fish from your local food co-op?, was the question being asked when the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative launched their latest venture. Six Edinburgh Food Co-ops have been fitted out with fridge freezers, funded through the SCDP/ Scottish Office grant scheme, and are now able to offer frozen fresh fish to customers.

This new initiative clearly tackles the Scottish Diet Action Plan's recommendations regarding stimulating consumer demand for oil rich fish in a very practical and effective manner.

For more information on the scheme contact Chris Clark, Edinburgh Community Food Initiative, 22 Tennant Street, Edinburgh t 0131 467 7326



The Scottish Federation of Community Food Initiatives (SFCFI) is happy to announce that community groups can apply for help to fund joint '**Get Shopping and Cooking**' (GS&C) projects running from 1 April 1998.

The initiative will be funded jointly by a £5000.00 grant from the Scottish Community Diet Project and further resources from the Scottish Co-op and will be open to any bona fide community group which wishes to run courses in basic shopping and cooking skills.

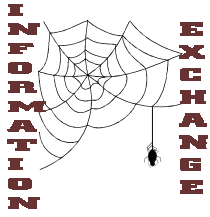
Many people do not have the basic cookery and shopping skills to buy, prepare and cook the foods which can contribute to improved health. With this in mind the Scottish Federation of Community Food Initiatives approached the National Food Alliance with a proposal to use its Get Shopping and Get Cooking materials as the basis for a combined national campaign to deliver these skills to community groups. Using a selection of these recipes and shopping hints, publications from the Scottish Co-op, and a variety of new link materials for students and tutors, the Federation, and its partner organisations, is offering a comprehensive course to improve peoples ability to shop and cook for health.

The topics covered range from food preparation, cookery and shopping skills, useful hints for fuel economy, health and safety, food hygiene, to consumer issues of ethical retailing, labelling and food packaging and recycling.

You must have at the time of application

- a constitution or articles of association;
- a bank account or recognised accounting procedures;
- a tutor qualified by experience and/or recognised professional qualification (a minimum of a nationally recognised hygiene certificate will be required of all tutors);
- a GS&C course proposal in line with the aims and objectives of the campaign;
- the name contact address of an independent referee who has or is working with your group





(a local health promotions officer, community worker etc).

It would also be advantageous if there were a participating Scottish Co-op store in your area to maximise the benefits of participation for your group, but this is not essential.

The Federation will provide the course packs necessary to operate the initiative for both tutors and participants. A grant of up to £500 per group is also available (please only apply for the money you need as only limited funds are available, eg if you do not have to pay for a tutor only apply for the money you need for ingredients etc). The grant may only be used for expenses related to the course, that is cost of ingredients, equipment, tutor fees, the cost of child care for participants, hire of premises etc.

Supplementary training will also be offered by The Scottish Co-op. For those of you who have a participating store, there can be promotions in store covering the products related-to the recipes of the day, plus further information and competitions related to the course, and help and information on shopping from store staff. For those who do not have a local Scottish Co-op store, we shall endeavour to make such materials available to your local community food co-op or food initiative where applicable.

You may also find that your local authority or health board will help match fund the course, or provide access to free premises or child care.

Groups need not be Federation members to apply, but only Federation members will be awarded grants. Membership can cost as little as £1 and details of how to apply will be forwarded with all applications.

In the first instance please send all requests for applications and information in writing to:

Scottish Federation of Community Food Initiatives, c/o Money Matters, 986-988 Govan Rd, Glasgow G51.



From time to time, Scottish Co-op has fixtures and fittings (shelving, refrigeration equipment, etc) available as a result of store refurbishments. If any community food initiatives have require such items, please contact Angela Meechan at the Scottish Co-op, t: 0141 420 7341, to establish whether such assistance can be given. It is, unfortunately, not possible for the Scottish Co-op to store items against

future requirements.

The Scottish Co-op is also planning a major weekend of celebrations at New Lanark on 4-5 July to mark International Co-operative Day. This will include space for exhibitions, displays etc. Further details from Victoria Bancroft t 0141 420 7274.



****STOP PRESS**STOP PRESS**STOP PRESS****

HEBS have just commissioned Dundee University to update their database of community food initiatives and produce a new expanded directory. The information will also be available as usual on *HEBS on CD* and via the *HEBSWEB* internet site:

(<http://www.hebs.scot.nhs.uk>)

Rita Callander, from the research team, will be in touch with you shortly. The database is not only well used by local groups but also by policy makers and funders (hint,hint). It is in the interests of all community food initiatives to co-operate fully and not to be excluded.

If you are doing something you think is worth sharing, or are looking for advice or practical assistance, or simply want to declare your existence, then *Fare Choice* will be glad to hear from you. The next edition is due out in early April and the deadline for contributions is mid-March.

If this copy of *Fare Choice* has been sent to the wrong address, or you wish a copy to be sent to another agency, or a different part of your own organisation, or you no longer wish to receive a copy, please let us know.

Bill Gray



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