

# Fact Sheet

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## Local food micro funding

### Background

Interest in local food has been increasing in Scotland, across all income groups. While community food retailers (including fruit and vegetable co-ops, stalls, barras and community-owned shops) and community caterers (including community cafés) were reporting an increase in demand for locally-grown produce from their customers, many were unable (or unwilling) to meet this demand.

Community Food and Health (Scotland) or CFHS wanted to encourage more community food initiatives to buy and sell or use locally-grown fruit and vegetables. In May 2012 we launched a micro funding scheme for community food initiatives that wanted to reduce or remove the barriers that were stopping them from purchasing or using local produce. Community food initiatives operating in low-income areas were able to apply for up to £1000.

### The community food initiatives funded

A two-stage application process was used. Initial interest in the funding was strong, with 26 enquiries received. Of these, six organisations were invited to submit more details about their proposed activities; all six were awarded funding. The level of award ranged from £462 to £1000.

**Kintyre Environment Group** was funded to purchase storage boxes (including cool boxes) to transport fruit and vegetables from the Campbeltown Community Garden to customers that are part of its Isolated and Elderly Home Delivery scheme. Part of the funding was also used to cover transport costs.

**Camelon Community Project** received funding to promote the new fruit and vegetable barra established by the Project. The barra is supplied by a local farmer, and sells as much locally-grown produce as possible.

**Community Food Moray** used its funding for additional staff time to identify and make links with more local fruit and vegetable growers and suppliers. It also carried out a piece of work with parent and toddler groups to raise awareness about local produce. This included gathering baseline information about their views of local food and their knowledge of local produce, followed up by an awareness-raising session.

**Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership** was funded to cover additional costs of sourcing produce from growers involved in the Clyde and Avon Valley Regeneration Partnership. This Partnership,

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which aims to reinvigorate fruit and vegetable growing in the area, has received considerable investment from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Voluntary Action Angus wanted to become more enterprising, and sell more of the fruit and vegetables grown by the **House of Dun Community Garden Project** to other local third sector organisations. It used the funding to purchase equipment for storage and freezing of produce and for transport costs.

The **Food for Thought Forum** in North Edinburgh used part of its funding to purchase bicycle trailers, to transport surplus produce grown in community gardens in North Edinburgh to community cafés and community retailing outlets, and part to develop branding for the Forum.

## Measuring impact

An important part of the funding scheme was measuring the impact of the funding. CFHS wanted to see if the increasing access to locally-grown fresh produce in low-income communities resulted in a reduction in health inequalities. CFHS also wanted to find out if this increased access also brought an economic benefit for the organisations funded, or had led to other benefits.

The six groups funded were visited to discuss possible evaluation methods they could use, commensurate to the level of funding awarded. All were also offered evaluation support through Evaluation Support Scotland. One, Community Food Moray, received support by telephone.

## How did things go?

Originally CFHS intended to bring the six funded community food initiatives together, to discuss the activities they had run, how

these had been evaluated, and other methods of evaluation that could be used. However, for reasons of time, distance or staff shortages, some of the community food initiatives were unable to meet. Instead, feedback was obtained in April and May from the community food initiatives through visits and phone calls or by email.

Four of the community food initiatives used all or most of the funding awarded as intended. One of the initiatives has been using some of the funding for other activities; the sixth was unable to use the funding as intended in the timescales.

As well as other storage equipment, House of Dun Community Garden Project was able to purchase a larger freezer than originally intended, and therefore, was able to freeze more produce and reduce waste. The poor summer weather adversely affected the amount of types of produce that it was able to grow, but it was able to sell some of its produce to a local community café run by a national third sector organisation, and to the café situated at the House of Dun. It also donated vegetables to a community flat. Some of the produce was also used at Voluntary Action Angus' Life Skills centre to help trainees develop cooking skills and learn about nutrition. Volunteers involved in the garden, many of whom are unemployed were also provided with produce.

Kintyre Environment Group (KEG) estimated that the funding supported delivery of produce to between 80 and 100 people living in the Kintyre peninsula. Most were attending the day hospital of one of the three senior clubs running in the area. The delivery scheme stopped in November when the garden's produce ran out, but began again in June 2013.

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As a result of research carried out, Community Food Moray has produced a spreadsheet of local growers, producers and suppliers. It has also made changes to how it promotes and displays local produce, following feedback from the parents and toddlers groups that it worked with.

The Food for Thought Forum in North Edinburgh developed a branding for the Forum, which is being used widely, and also purchased the bike trailers. However, the poor summer resulted in very little surplus produce being grown locally by the community gardens, and the bike trailers were not required. The Forum is intending to start its collection/delivery service this year; a list of growers and potential buyers has been compiled, with a system established for e-mailing details of surplus produce when this becomes available.

In addition to using some of its funding to promote the new fruit and vegetable barra directly (for example, through 'buy one get one free' promotions), Camelon Community Project provided free fruit for children attending the playgroup in the Centre. The Project hoped to encourage parents attending the playgroup, which runs at the same time, to buy produce from the barra. The barra accepts Healthy Start vouchers.

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership (LCFHP) intended to use the funding to source produce from growers that were part of the Clyde and Avon Valley Regeneration Partnership (renamed the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership). The bad weather and poor harvest made this impossible. However, having made links with the local growers, including the members of the Clyde Valley Orchard Project, LCFHP intends to source

apples, pears and plums from them this summer/autumn.

## **What barriers did the community food initiatives face?**

For four, the poor summer weather and subsequent poor harvest affected the activities they intended to run. In addition to the difficulties encountered by Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership and the Food for Thought Forum, both Kintyre Environment Group and House of Dun Community Garden Project had a smaller range and quantity of produce available for their customers.

Both the timing of the application process and the funding timescales limited the ability of some of the groups to spend the funding by the end of March 2013 (the end of the funding scheme). Camelon Community Project had, at the end of April 2013, about half of the funding remaining. Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership was unable to spend any of the funding by the end of the financial year. One community food initiative commented that launching the funding in May, during the growing season, made it more difficult to build working relationships with local growers.

## **The funding's impact**

Most of the community food initiatives reported the funding had brought benefits for their organisations.

For Kintyre Environment Group, the funding has resulted in the garden generating more income, and it has been able to employ an additional member of staff (a young person who may not have been able to find work in the area). To gather the views of the customers using the service it carried out an evaluation at the end of the growing season.

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All agreed that the service had been very helpful to them, and that the garden offered a good variety and quality of produce. Most said that they were eating a wider bigger range of fruit and vegetables, which had impacted positively on their health and well-being. The customers that find it more difficult to cook and prepare food particularly welcomed the soft fruits and salad products that required no preparation. Equally important to many of the customers was the social dimension of the service. The evaluation highlighted that many of the customers looked forward to receiving the produce, as it provided them with an opportunity to talk about it: the colours and smells, and cooking methods. They also claimed to benefit from increased social contact and reduced isolation as a result of the weekly delivery.

House of Dun Community Garden Project also indicated that the sale of produce has brought in additional income, which was used to purchase new gardening equipment and seeds. The National Trust, which runs the House, has offered the garden a sales outlet in the main courtyard, and has asked the garden to consider registering as an organic grower, which it is investigating. Informal feedback was very positive about the produce from the groups it sold and donated to. It had not carried out any formal evaluation.

As a result of approaching the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership the manager of LCFHP has become a community representative on one of its sub groups.

More local people are becoming involved in the Food for Thought Forum.

The development of the Forum's branding has been one of the factors contributing to the increase in membership.

Identifying more local producers and suppliers has resulted in Community Food Moray making significant savings on its produce purchase costs, and increasing its income. Following the awareness-raising session with the parent and toddler groups, monthly sales increased by 153% and customer numbers by 126%. Together with savings made through identifying local producers, and building relationships with them, it estimated that the monthly income had increased by around £200 per month.

Camelon Community Project has had a small number of parents from the parent and toddler groups buying from the fruit barra. They are hoping that more will, over time.

## Learning points for CFHS

- If similar funding is available in future, the fund should be launched earlier in the year, before the start of the growing season.
- The timescale for the funding should be extended to make it more likely that those funded can deliver their activities.
- While measuring the impact of any funding scheme is important, the detail and amount of information requested from groups needs to reflect the level of funding awarded and the capacity of the groups to collect and collate the information.

## Conclusion

The local food micro funding scheme has enabled some of the community initiatives funded to increase the amount of locally-grown fresh produce that they sell, buy or use in their activities.