

Moray Food Network – a briefing paper for the Sustainability and Communities Community Planning Partnership

1. Moray Food Network is an association of partners in Moray formed in June 2012. Original partners included Community Food Moray, Greenfingers, The Moray Council Health and Wellbeing team, NHS Grampian locality workers, REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project) and Transition Town Forres
2. In the first 2 years, approaches were made to others involved in local food in Moray through events, local lunches, attending markets, contacting suppliers etc. An organisational way of working developed involving a steering group of more frequently meeting partners. One of the partners, REAP, successfully obtained funding through Moray Leader, NHS Grampian and others to set up a directory and website, employ a Development Worker, support the Moray Food Network and promote local, healthy food with a programme of events and activities, including training community cooks and running Confidence to Cook courses. New members of the steering group joined, notably Elgin Youth Café.
3. As part of this work, the following aims and objectives for the Moray Food Network were developed:

Aims

Increase co-operation between partners involved in Food and Health in Moray
Promote growing, production and marketing of local food
Improve access to locally grown produce for the benefit of Moray communities
Raise awareness of knowledge and skills around food and health

Objectives

Establish and develop the Moray food Network (MFN)
Develop membership of the MFN including its marketing material and a local food and grower's directory
Link with community planning and other strategic partners to fulfil the aims of the network
Hold regular (minimum quarterly) network meetings
Contribute to or hold a number of public events each year

4. In 2014 as funding came to an end, a successful bid was made to work with NHS Grampian funding in a 3-year project, Eat Canny which aims to promote food access, food skills and gardening skills across Moray through the Moray Food Network partners to March 2017. The most recent report (July 2016) on outcomes and activities shows the following in its summary:
 - The Eat Canny project is a partnership of four local charities – Community Food Moray (CFM), Elgin Youth Development Group (EYDG), REAP and Transition Town Forres (TTF). The strands of the project are 'Food Access', 'Skilling up – Cooking' and 'Skilling up – Growing', all with the aim of supporting healthy eating. Eat Canny is funded by Moray Health and Social Care Partnership until March 2017.
 - Considerable progress has been made to reach more vulnerable and hard-to-reach people by running courses/ working with organisations such as Step by Step, SACRO and the DWP
 - 'Food Access' nutritional workshops run by CFM reached 287 people. Targets were exceeded and positive behaviour change was reported as a result of participants being involved.

- Nearly 200 cooking workshops were held as part of 'Skilling up – Cooking'. Over 1300 participants were involved. As well as improving cooking skills, feedback showed that the workshops increased confidence and self-esteem. In addition, 25 new people were trained via three Confidence to Cook Training for Trainers courses.
 - Gardening demonstrations and workshops were included in 'Skilling up – Growing'. REAP worked with others to enable them to use their own grounds for food growing, providing taster sessions and courses at a number of locations, and reaching 52 people. A further 22 attended library talks. TTF linked food growing to 21 of its cooking workshops, giving participants (including families) the opportunity to harvest fresh produce from the community garden and use it in their cooking.
 - REAP also provided research, and training, MFN network and website support through a Development Officer.
5. Plans for the future include increasing cooking training sessions outwith Elgin and Forres, working with Elgin Youth Café and their new community kitchen to develop mobile cooking course 'kits', further MFN events, talks and activities; promoting links between community garden growing/ produce and cooking on a budget; increased accreditation for community cooks and support through the trainers' forum on the website; and increased food access activity
 6. The Moray Food Network remains a community- and health- focussed network. Links have been made to local food businesses through the directory on the MFN website www.morayfoodnetwork.org.uk and through farmers' markets and other events. Moray is also covered by the Grampian Food Network, which is a commercially and food tourism focussed group.
 7. The achievements of the MFN around cooking courses/ food skills, access to growing spaces and working in partnership with organisations targeting vulnerable people/ those on a low income could help feed into targets for the SCP group. However, as this work is never likely to be self-financing, this would depend on 3rd Sector organisations having the capacity and skill to successfully access grant funding to deliver.

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