



Greater Brighton Food Systems Investment Costings Project

Task and Finish Group Final Report

Greater Brighton: The Future of Food

23rd June 2023

Produced by Food Matters, Alex Britten-Zondani, Food Systems Consultant, and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, on behalf of the Greater Brighton Economic Board Task and Finish Group for Food Systems

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1. Executive Summary and Recommendations

This report summarises the findings of the Greater Brighton Food Systems Investment Costings Project, commissioned by the Greater Brighton Economic Board, and led by Food Matters, Alex Britten-Zondani, Food Systems Consultant, and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, from March to June 2023.

The project explored an initial list of potential food systems infrastructure projects that could be invested in across the Greater Brighton region, to bring about economic, health, social, environmental, equity¹ and place-based benefits. Conducting research, gathering existing evidence and interviewing across a range of stakeholders, the project has outlined some initial indicative costings across five potential projects:

- Dynamic food procurement system
A dynamic food procurement system streamlines the procurement process for local food businesses by connecting them with local suppliers and providing real-time information on availability and pricing.
- Food hub (depot)
This project is modelling a food depot, whose primary aim is to give local producers a route to local markets, increasing the accessibility of local food, and the sustainability of the food supply in the region. It is modelled as a purpose-led commercial business.
- Training and support programmes
This modelling looks at potential training and support programmes for businesses around circular economy practices.
- Community supported agriculture
A partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, financial and other risks are shared.
- Large scale community composting
Community composting diverts household and/or business food waste to produce compost for use locally.

It is recommended that to achieve broader systems change and economic, health, social, environmental, equity and place-based benefits, these projects be seen as individual elements of one systems change project, which we are calling Greater Brighton: The Future of Food.

The Greater Brighton region has many pre-existing assets that give it the potential to become a world leader in local food economy development, including:

¹ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

- 1) An economy and geography with food already at its heart
- 2) Proximity to valuable markets
- 3) World class knowledge and resources already at its disposal
- 4) Local complementary assets to facilitate a local and sustainable food system

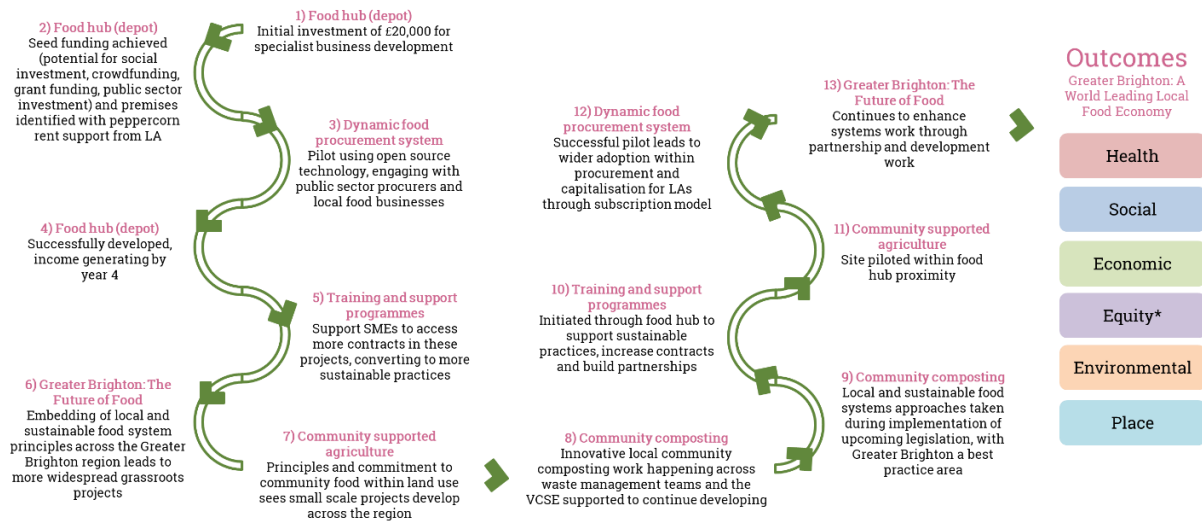
Because food is so integral to so many elements of our lives, investing in food systems approaches has a broad and long-term impact across many areas, including:

- Reducing inequality and tackling the cost-of-living crisis in the long-term, by creating resilient food systems for everyone, not just funding food banks
- Increasing wellbeing and social outcomes through bringing people together and community development
- Improving public health through better access to nutritious food
- Supporting both the rural and urban economy through supporting SMEs
- Tackling the climate crisis and the carbon emissions produced within our food system
- Increasing the quality of the places we live and spend time in
- Ensuring public sector stability through income generation and local economic growth

It is suggested that the Greater Brighton: Future of Food systems project could work to the following potential set of combined strategic objectives:

- 1) Systems approach to economic growth
- 2) Local food to local markets
- 3) Minimum waste, maximum efficiency
- 4) World-leading experts and skilled communities
- 5) Maximised social, health, environmental, equity and place outcomes for every £1 spent

The following diagram outlines one potential success scenario for how a small initial amount of investment, alongside non-monetary commitments to influence change across the region, could produce a snowball effect of systems change and wide benefits for Greater Brighton.



Recommendations

The following recommendations provide a suggested pathway to implementing the Greater Brighton: The Future of Food project, should the Greater Brighton Economic Board wish to do so.

1) Leverage cross-region commitment to building a local and sustainable food system by embedding these principles into policy and practice

Using transformative food systems change principles, and championing the potential outcomes that this approach could achieve. This would mean continuously exploring opportunities to embed these principles into policy and practice across the Greater Brighton region, for example building objectives and targets into strategies, action plans and job descriptions. This will provide the framework and momentum for drawing further outside investment into the work, building further partnership work to leverage existing assets and resources, and ensure that small pilots and grant funding can multiply in effect.

2) Provide seed funding for the next phase of this work

This will require bringing in expertise for further business development and investment planning. The potential model demonstrates that with broad commitment and the right expertise involved, the region does not need to wait for large pots of public funding before beginning the work, and there are multiple opportunities for leveraging external funding. This project will need ongoing support in order to remain investment ready, and maintain the momentum and partnership work that has already begun. Because this recommendation involves engaging specific expertise, in IT, supply chain logistics and related business management, the project team recommend that they not be the lead in taking this forward.

However, the project team are happy to support the transition in identifying the next lead, and further developing the framework for the project.

3) Ensure key metrics and data is collected to baseline and measure the impact of investment

These metrics could include number of households that are food insecure, mapping and reviewing policies that impact the local food system, and environmental impacts of the local food system.

4) Further support the development of the individual project elements explored in this work:

- a. Ask public sector procurement staff and institutions to prioritise the purchasing of food from local suppliers, exploring mechanisms to facilitate this, such as adopting a **dynamic food procurement system**. The [Open Food Network](#) is a free, open-source platform that provides potential to pilot this in a low-cost way.
- b. Identify a viable premises for a **food hub (depot)** and offer it at peppercorn rent for an initial three years
- c. Ask economic development, environmental health and other relevant teams to adopt a targeted approach to supporting local food businesses and food systems work, for example exploring opportunities to run **training and support programmes**.
- d. Support the further development of **community supported agriculture** by embedding the principles of prioritising community beneficial land use into the Greater Brighton Food Plan and relevant local policies, including considering potential use of land for food into planning and decision making.
- e. Highlight and celebrate the innovative **community composting** work already happening across the region, and support waste management teams to embed local and sustainable principles into compliance with the upcoming legislation on food waste, recognising the value that 'waste' can generate economically and environmentally.

2. Greater Brighton: The Future of Food

Unlocking Greater Brighton's potential to become a world-leading local food economy

Why Greater Brighton: Asset-Based Approaches

The Greater Brighton region has many pre-existing assets that set it up to become a world leader in local food economy development, including:

1) An economy and geography with food already at its heart

The Greater Brighton region has 223,000 hectares of farmed area, much of it already publicly owned, over 50 miles of coastline, and protected and maintained areas such as the South Downs National Park and High Weald.

The food economy is of particular importance to the Greater Brighton economy, with a particularly high amount of food SMEs. For example, almost 3 in 10 of all people employed in East Sussex are employed in the food sector. They are employed across 6,705 registered food businesses in East Sussex – the county has double the amount of food businesses per head as Oxfordshire, and five times the amount per head of East Anglia.²

Several particular industries are well developed and important for the region, including:

Horticulture: West Sussex is one of the leading horticulture areas across the UK, and is a particularly fast-growing industry.

Livestock and dairy farming: Livestock and dairy is particularly important to the Greater Brighton region due to the nature of the land, with more land dedicated to livestock on average than the rest of the UK.

Viticulture: As of 2016, when Sussex wine gained Protected Designation of Origin status, Sussex wine accounted for a quarter of the total wine produced in England, more than any other county in the UK, with over 50 vineyards.³

Fishing and marine economy: Greater Brighton is home to some of the UK's oldest fishing fleets, with a strong history in fishing and marine economy.

2) Proximity to valuable markets

With proximity and transport links both to London and Europe, as well as local areas of economic wealth, Greater Brighton is well positioned to capitalise on global trends towards buying food more locally and sustainably. The latest OnePoll research from 2021 showed that

² Recent Food Matters research across East Sussex

³ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/food-drink/vineyards-breweries-distilleries/>

73% of the public often or always look for British food when shopping, the highest since the annual research began in 2012.⁴

3) World class knowledge and resources already at its disposal

The Greater Brighton region has a number of world class education institutions with multidisciplinary expertise around food systems, particularly in the universities of Brighton, and Sussex. Of the 12 land-based colleges in England⁵, two are based in Greater Brighton – Plumpton College and Brinsbury College (partially located).

The Greater Brighton region also already has a well-established ecosystem looking to build a local and sustainable food system. Brighton & Hove was the first area to receive Sustainable Food Places' prestigious Gold Award in 2020, and is one of the few councils across the country that has a dedicated Food Policy Coordinator. All Local Authority areas have some form of cross-sector food network or partnership across Greater Brighton.

4) Local complementary assets to facilitate a local and sustainable food system

The region also has a variety of local complementary assets to be utilised for food systems work – the growing horticulture industry in Arun; the logistics infrastructure and expertise in Crawley, which has the largest number of people employed in transportation and storage across the UK; the creative nature of communities across the region; the tourism hotspots of areas such as Brighton & Hove, South Downs National Park and High Weald; to name just a few.

Why A Systems Approach: Building A Local and Sustainable Food System

The project team have particular expertise and experience in food systems work, and are experts in building local and sustainable food system. The following outlines why we believe food systems transformation is something we should all be prioritising, both in where we decide to prioritise public and private sector financial investment, and embedding food systems principles into policy, practice and at the heart of our communities.

At a basic level, a food system is all the activities to take food from farm to flush. This can be visualised in the diagram below, first outlined by the Global Food Security Programme⁶.

⁴ <https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/new-survey-shows-british-public-wants-government-to-champion-and-protect-british-food-in-trade-deals/>

⁵ <https://www.aoc.co.uk/about/land-based-colleges>

⁶ <https://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/uk-food-mapping/>



A systems approach means looking at all elements of the system and how they work together, tackling root causes rather than symptoms. It also recognises that all outcomes are also interlinked – we can't reduce the need for food banks without building a more environment friendly system, we can't do that without allowing local SMEs to thrive, and we can't do that without building community power and wealth, and so on. We define the goal as building a local and sustainable food system.

Food is at the centre of our health, our wellbeing, our economic circumstances, our communities and places and how we come together, and how equal or unequal we are as a society.

Because food is so integral to so many elements of our lives, investing in food systems approaches has a broad and long-term impact across many areas, including:

- Reducing inequality and tackling the cost-of-living crisis in the long-term, by creating resilient food systems for everyone, not just funding food banks
- Increasing wellbeing and social outcomes through bringing people together and community development
- Improving public health through better access to nutritious food
- Supporting both the rural and urban economy through supporting SMEs
- Tackling the climate crisis and the carbon emissions produced within our food system
- Increasing the quality of the places we live and spend time in
- Ensuring public sector stability through income generation and local economic growth

Done right, food systems work is about identifying the key leverage points for change, bringing about a snowball effect that combines micro level activities into macro level outcomes.

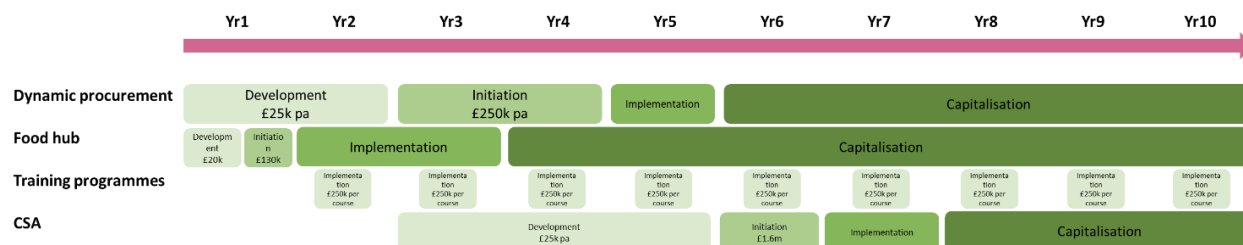
Modelling

The objective of this costings project was to cost and develop investment plans for the city region food system, researching and shortlisting a list of potential investment projects.

The context and existing assets of the Greater Brighton region show that a systems approach to investment could have significantly positive outcomes, developing it as a world leader in local food economy systems.

It is therefore recommended that the potential areas of investment in food systems infrastructure be developed as a single project, capitalising on the complementary nature of the projects to bring about a snowball effect. This means utilising the income generation and wide impact potential of the dynamic food procurement system and food hub (depot) as initial catalyst projects, whilst laying the foundations for other projects to develop over a 10-year period. Much of the investment needed from the Greater Brighton Economic Board is not monetary, but instead supporting in embedding the principles of building local and sustainable food systems, to allow projects to self-develop through communities and partnership work.

The following diagram outlines one potential approach to a timescale for the project.



The following are a suggested set of strategic objectives for the Greater Brighton: The Future of Food:

1) Systems approaches to economic growth

- Maximising the value to the local economy for every £1 spent on food locally
- Direct revenue generation through systems projects investment
- Increasing revenue generation for SMEs
- Job and entrepreneurship creation

2) Local food to local markets

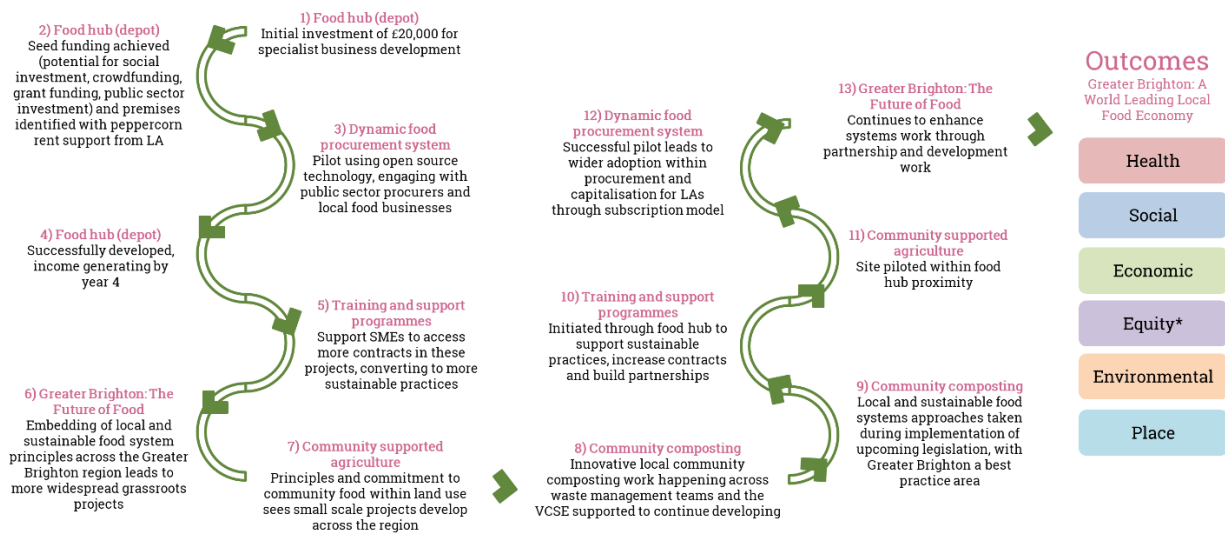
- Increasing local revenue generation through a circular investment approach
- Filling the missing infrastructure gaps - tech, facilities and equipment
- Increasing partnerships and collaboration

- Increasing resilience
- 3) Minimum waste, maximum efficiency**
- Recycling “waste” products back into the system, improving environmental outcomes and reducing LA waste management burden
 - Utilising existing resources and opportunities to add value without additional cost, e.g. return trips in supply chains
- 4) World-leading experts and skilled communities**
- Upskilling businesses and workforce
 - Attract potential entrepreneurs and workforce
 - Behaviour change amongst local populations
 - Connected communities
- 5) Maximised social, health, environmental, equity⁷ and place outcomes for every £1 spent**
- Reduce carbon production
 - Improve soil and ecosystem health
 - Build the resilience of our local food system to prevent shocks and inequality
 - Increase amount of healthy food being eaten, leading to reductions in diet-related disease

Potential success scenario

The following diagram outlines one potential success scenario for how a small amount of just £20,000 investment, alongside non-monetary commitments to influence change across the region, could produce a snowball effect of systems change and wide benefits for Greater Brighton.

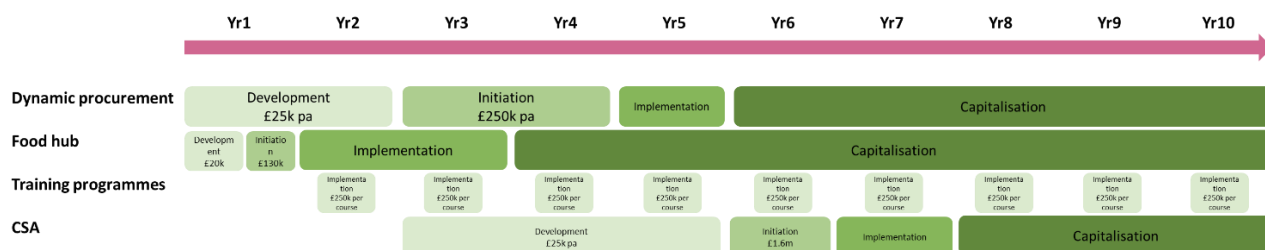
⁷ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.



Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

Bringing together the indicative costings provided for each project in the section below, and prioritising the catalyst projects dynamic procurement and food hub, gives the following suggested timeline and outline of costings.



Potential funding sources

The above model shows the potential to begin investment in the project immediately, potentially an initial development grant of £20,000 to conduct further business development (including fund generation) for the food hub, as well as explore opportunities for piloting open source food procurement. The model also align projects so that the capitalisation of initial projects can support the development of future projects.

Some potential funding sources that could be leveraged with further development work include:

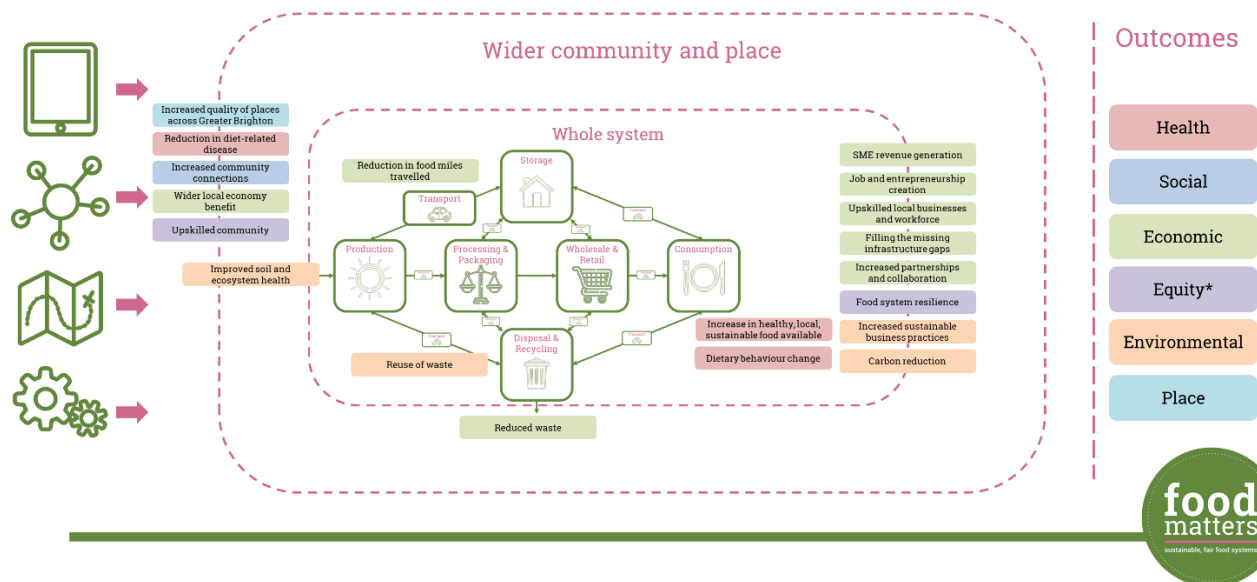
- Large public funds - there would be potential to bring together a large bid across multiple projects utilising Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund, or future expected central government funding pots.

- Grant funding – applying to large grant funders, for example The National Lottery Community Fund, to initially fund the work.
- Portfolio planning – exploring bringing together multiple smaller pots of funding and budgets from across the region to fund different elements of the project.
- Social investment – identifying a social investor who can invest in the food hub (depot) model as a social business.
- Crowdfunding – as was successfully used to launch HISBE sustainable supermarket in the region (HISBE are willing to be a front facing partner for this).

Return on investment

The following table and diagram summarise the key returns on investment for the project, across economic, health, social, environmental, equity⁸ and place outcomes.

Interconnectedness of systems investment



⁸ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Project element	Indicative costing	Economic return on investment		Health, social, environmental, equity and place return on investment
<p>Dynamic food procurement system <i>A dynamic food procurement system streamlines the procurement process for local food businesses by connecting them with local suppliers and providing real-time information on availability and pricing.</i></p>	<p>Initial investment of £550,000 across 4 years Income generating from Yr5, with breakeven at Yr9 Opportunity to run low cost pilot using open source software</p>	<p>Increasing local SME revenue generation</p>	<p>% of £40 million annual public sector spend</p>	<p>SMEs converting to sustainable practices Improved employee engagement Improved consumer satisfaction Improved soil and ecosystem health Reduction in food miles travelled Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices Increase in healthy food being eaten in public sector institutions Reduction in diet-related disease Behaviour change impact on dietary choices Increased partnerships and collaboration Improved resilience of the local food system, to prevent shocks</p>
<p>Food hub (depot) <i>This project is modelling a food depot, whose primary aim is to give local producers a route to local markets, increasing the accessibility of local food, and the sustainability of the food supply in the region. It is modelled as a purpose-led commercial business.</i></p>	<p>Initial investment of £150,000 in year one Projected income generating from year 4</p>	<p>Increasing local SME revenue generation</p>	<p>Modelled £1.69 million fresh produce purchased over 5 years</p>	<p>SMEs converting to sustainable practices Improved employee engagement Improved soil and ecosystem health Reduction in food miles travelled Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices Increase in healthy, local, sustainable food available Reduction in diet-related disease Behaviour change impact on dietary choices Community development and increase in connections Increased partnerships and collaboration Improved resilience of the local food system, to prevent shocks</p>
		<p>Job and entrepreneurship creation</p>	<p>4 FTE roles, plus apprentices Wider job creation through contracted SMEs</p>	
		<p>Additional investment in local economy</p>	<p>£3 return on every £1 spent</p>	
		<p>Multiple potential sources of revenue generation</p>	<p>Dependent on model – strong evidence for self-sustainability, with potential moderate profits</p>	
		<p>Multiple potential additional economic benefits</p>	<p>Dependent on model, for example reduction in food costs, increasing</p>	

			entrants into land based sector roles	
Training and support programmes <i>This modelling looks at potential training and support programmes for businesses around circular economy practices.</i>	£245,305 per 6 month circular economy training programme – variable dependent on grant level Minimum £45,305 for operational costs only	Reduction in LA waste collection	336kg of waste saved per business = £336 per training cohort	SMEs converting to sustainable practices Upskilling of workforce Increased partnerships and collaboration Improved employee engagement Improved consumer satisfaction Improved soil and ecosystem health Behaviour change impact on dietary choices
		Increase in local SME revenue generation	Islington case study ⁹ , 95% reported commercial benefits	
		Job and entrepreneurship creation	Islington case study, 1.1 jobs created or safeguarded per business	
Community supported agriculture <i>A partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, financial and other risks are shared.</i>	£4,400 annual cost for small scale local veg box scheme for 35 households £2.58 million for large scale site, projected £800k income at Yr5	Increasing local SME revenue generation		Improved soil and ecosystem health Reduction in food miles travelled Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices Reduction in waste
		Job and entrepreneurship creation		
		Additional investment in local food economy	£3.70 return on every £1 spent, Growing Communities data	
Large scale community composting <i>Community composting diverts household and/or business food waste to produce compost for use locally.</i>	£32,000 annually per 1,000 households	Reduction in LA waste collection	10% reduction estimated at £147,000pa	Increase in “waste” diversion back into food system Carbon reduction, estimated 250kg of CO2 saved per 1,000 households Reduction in waste and local, circular economy behaviour change Community development and connections Increase in community volunteering and related positive outcomes Improved soil and ecosystem health
		Revenue generation – compost, subscription fees		

⁹ <https://relondon.gov.uk/business/islington-circular-economy-grants/>

3. Project by Project Costings Overview

a. Dynamic Food Procurement System

A dynamic food procurement system streamlines the procurement process for local food businesses by connecting them with local suppliers and providing real-time information on availability and pricing.

The overall aim is to open up previously inaccessible contract opportunities to SMEs, and shortening supply chains, making them more transparent, to maximise local economic and wider benefits.

The problem

The total amount of food and catering procured in the public sector is £2.4bn annually. Currently, 95% of public sector food in the UK is bought from just 5 companies. The vast majority of sustainable British producers can't get a foothold into the public sector food supply and are getting a rough deal from the global suppliers.

Alongside this, less than half of public sector institutions meet the government's minimum food standards, and buyers don't know where much of the food they are buying comes from - mostly anonymous produce from overseas.

The climate crisis, food security, fragile Just in Time (JIT) supply chains etc. are increasing issues that could be helped by shorter, more transparent supply chains. Buying from local producers can help solve environmental issues while boosting the local economy and possibly reduce costs in the longer term. It also meets requirements in the Social Value Act through maximising wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

Modelling

A dynamic procurement system is a platform open to all primary producers that meet the standards set, secondary suppliers and logistics providers, and procurers to register and contract.

The main variables in the model, with associated assumptions in the costings, are:

- 1) The tech system used
- 2) The target users, and the associated time required for the development phase

[DP UK](#) is the main organisation currently driving a lot of the pilot work across the UK, and on whom our costings are based. However, there are also options to explore other systems, for example the open source [Open Food Network](#).

At a time when SMEs across Greater Brighton have minimal cash reserves and insecure futures, accessing public sector contracts provides an invaluable route to secure contracts and cash flow.

A dynamic procurement system can be accessed by any users allowed by the owner of the system, so can also provide a route to further local B2B commerce, alongside connecting the public sector with local SMEs.

DEFRA is consulting on getting 50% public sector procurement from local producers. Dynamic Food Procurement doesn't mean you stop using large suppliers, it opens up to small ones too, both producers, suppliers and logistics companies. The system prevents larger suppliers from doing loss leader pricing on certain items to win bigger contracts. It will force them to win on that item and nothing else so smaller companies have a better chance.

Context and evidence

The public sector procurement model has only been piloted once in the UK in a food context, in Bath and North East Somerset. It showed promising results, including, crucially, that local sourcing can be more cost-effective. However, the pilot was postponed and has not since progressed, because of the need to redeploy Government resources to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰

There are examples of dynamic food procurement being successfully implemented globally, for example in San Francisco, where a shift to local food procurement resulted in a \$45 million increase in economic activity and the creation of 239 jobs.

Several regions across the UK are currently setting up new pilots, including:

- North East – coordinated by NESFA (North East Sustainable Food Alliance)
- Scotland – coordinated by Argyll & Bute and Nourish Scotland
- The Marches – a consortium of local authorities in the border between Wales and England (Monmouthshire Powys, Herefordshire, Telford and Wrekin)

Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

Investment is needed in two main areas:

10

https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/research/microsites/centrefor_ruralpolicyresearch/pdfs/researchreports/Public_Procurement_of_Food_in_the_South_West.pdf

- 1) Staffing costs - including a development role, building the partnerships that need to be in place to implement the system and overseeing initiation phase, and an ongoing logistics management role to ensure compliance within depots
- 2) Technology implementation costs - commissioning a technology and managing agent, and legal fees

Initial indicative costs are as follows, with the expectation that a discount could be sought from the tech provider. Initial investment of £550,000 would be required, over the initial four-year development and initiation phase, with only staffing and related resource costs required after this.

These costs include the ongoing maintenance of the tech system through ongoing fees to the tech provider.

	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6	Yr7	Yr8	Yr9	Yr10	Total
Investment	£25,000	£25,000	£250,000	£250,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£550,000
Revenue	£0	£0	£0	£0	£30,000	£45,000	£90,000	£165,000	£165,000	£165,000	£660,000
Expenditure	£24,384	£25,026	£164,453	£105,750	£26,523	£27,318	£28,138	£28,982	£29,851	£30,747	£491,171
Total Profit / Loss	-£24,384	-£25,026	-£164,453	-£105,750	£3,478	£17,682	£61,862	£136,018	£135,149	£134,253	£168,829
Cumulative Profit / Loss	-£24,384	-£49,410	-£213,862	-£319,612	-£316,135	-£298,453	-£236,591	-£100,572	£34,576	£168,829	

Potential funding sources

A £100,000 loan is currently available from the Dixon Foundation for contracting [DP UK](#). One loan is available on a first come first served basis.

The [National Food Strategy](#) calls for £3 million national funding to be put towards developing dynamic food procurement systems. Of all these costed food systems projects, dynamic food procurement is the one with the most national momentum behind it, and we can reasonably expect that grant funding will be available in future to implement the system.

We can also expect that 2-3 years of a development phase will be needed before moving to initiation of the system, due to the significant partnership work needed to lay the foundations for a new, locally led procurement tech system.

Economic return on investment

The key economic returns on investment would include:

<p>Increasing local SME revenue generation through opening up access to previously inaccessible contracts</p>	<p>An estimated £40 million annually is spent in the public sector on food and catering in Greater Brighton. Taking DEFRA's policy consideration of introducing a 50% spend with local producers, this could lead to an additional £20 million invested in the local economy.</p>
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Reduction in public sector food and catering procurement costs	The Bath and North East Somerset pilot demonstrated 6% cost savings in its first year, which would equate to £2.4 million across Greater Brighton annually. ¹¹
Linked job and entrepreneurship creation	
Circular benefit of additional money invested in local economy	Research shows that for every £1 spent with a local producer, there is a £3 return to the local economy; so extrapolating a potential £60 million annual wider return on investment.
Capitalisation through licensing of the system may be possible should Greater Brighton become an early adopter. Further exploration is needed to look at viability of this income stream	Initial projections suggest breakeven at Year 9, with £135,000 annual profit thereafter.

Social return on investment

The introduction of a dynamic food procurement system would have a wide range of additional health, social, environmental, equity¹² and place benefits, with the secondary economic benefits that these provide. These include:

- SMEs converting to sustainable practices in line with system requirements
- Improved employee engagement
- Improved consumer satisfaction
- Improved soil and ecosystem health
- Reduction in food miles travelled
- Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices
- Increase in healthy food being eaten in public sector institutions
- Reduction in diet-related disease
- Behaviour change impact on dietary choices
- Improved resilience of the local food system, to prevent shocks

Recommendations and next steps

¹¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/19431/default/>

¹² We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Any initial stage of the introduction of a dynamic food procurement system would need an extended development and feasibility role, which could be achieved with a relatively small amount of funding.

This could also include the opportunity to run a pilot using an open source system such as the Open Food Network with a select set of procurers and producers.

b. Food Hub (Depot)

Food hubs are community-based organisations that bring together local producers, processors and consumers to create a more sustainable and resilient food system. There are many potential models for a food hub, with examples of both commercial businesses and not-for-profit models across the UK.

Focusing on the specific context, needs and opportunities in Greater Brighton, this project is modelling a food depot, whose primary aim is to give local producers a route to local markets, increasing the accessibility of local food, and the sustainability of the food supply in the region. It is modelled as a purpose-led commercial business.

The problem

In the Greater Brighton region, over the past 5 years there have already been cross-sector discussions and collaborations on the need for a central food depot. Local purpose-led businesses see clear missing logistics links that prevent local food reaching local markets, and have already been developing models to fill these gaps.

A Greater Brighton food depot would provide transportation, storage and tech systems to connect local suppliers and retailers, whilst preventing waste and reducing transport emissions.

Modelling




The core business model of the food depot is:

- Provide transportation services to collect from producers and deliver to retailers
- Provide storage to facilitate the effective transport of this produce
- Provide a tech system to enable the efficient supply and demand across local food businesses

Whilst it is recommended that the food depot focus on a streamlined business model, especially in initial years, there are also a number of other potential services and revenue streams, for example venue space and kitchen hire, vehicle sharing, class and activity sales, processing and catering services, retail unit expansion, and consultancy.

The main variable in the model is the identified premises for the food depot - its rental rates, pre-existing facilities and location. As has been seen in other successful food depot models across the UK, the modelling projects a peppercorn rental rate for the initial 3 years, after which point the business would be established enough to be income generating whilst pay market rental value.

Below are three current industrial spaces available on the market for demonstration purposes.

	Crawley	Newhaven	Worthing
			
Size	4,826ft ²	3,365ft ²	5,234ft ²
Cost	£49,514/pa £10.26/ft ² /pa	£28,603/pa £8.50/ft ² /pa	£47,525/pa £9.08/ft ² /pa
Road travel miles to: Brighton & Hove (e.g. HISBE Foods retailer) Lewes District (e.g. Barcombe Nurseries producer) Bognor Regis (e.g. EcoSwap retailer)	26.6 miles 34.3 miles 40.1 miles	9.9 miles 12.3 miles 42.1 miles	13.3 miles 22 miles 17.3 miles
EPC rating	A	C	D
Additional facilities	Significant office space	Within retail park, with storefront	Kitchen Significant office space Within retail park

It is important to note that surplus food redistribution is not recommended as a primary objective of a Greater Brighton food hub model, as this can distract from the need for the project to be financially sustainable. It could be explored as a secondary and longer term objective, but only once the food depot is financially secure. There could however be opportunity to develop viable partnerships with surplus food organisations to maximise use of resources, for example FareShare and its pre-existing fleet of warehouses and vans.

Context and evidence

As part of this project, a number of existing successful food hubs were engaged, and costing estimations have been based on their provided models, alongside local modelling for the Greater Brighton region. These include:

[Better Food Shed, Barking, London](#)

The Better Food Shed was developed in 2019 by a consortium of 10 fruit and veg box suppliers

across London, who recognised the need for a central distribution centre and collective purchasing power to be able to directly buy from local farmers, rather than using wholesalers

The largest veg box supplier in the consortium, Growing Communities, spent £15k on initial feasibility and scoping to identify a premises and develop the business model. A location in Barking & Dagenham was provided by the Council at peppercorn rent for an initial three years, and they now operate on a self-sustaining model, with full market rental of £45,000/pa.

They now have £12-15k a week in sales, serving 3,500 families a week, or about 10-15 tonnes of produce a week. They have 23 suppliers, some of which are based in the Greater Brighton region. They add a 12-13% margin to breakeven - much lower than most commercial wholesalers. They also have developed contracts with London Borough Local Authorities and public sector venues such as schools.

[Organic North, Manchester](#)

Organic North operate on a similar model to the Better Food Shed, but at a larger scale. They have around 100 suppliers and turnover £7 million a year. They add a flat margin of 15%, still much less than a conventional wholesaler would do. Their tech and logistics systems allow them to operate on a buy to order model, eliminating all speculative purchasing and therefore waste. Organic North is a successful commercial income generating model, led as a co-operative with sustainable principles.

[Lancashire Food Futures](#)

Lancashire Food Futures developed a successful bid to Lancashire County Council for £630,000 of investment in a mixed food systems infrastructure project, which includes a food hub, community supported agriculture and local training and employability programmes.

They spent an initial two years on feasibility and scoping, identifying demand from local businesses and communities, as well as land, and now have a 2 acre lease on an organic dairy farm. They grow and process food on site, as well as working with local suppliers. They offer a veg box scheme, crop share programme, and a retail unit.

They now have accessed Shared Prosperity Funding to further develop a larger distribution centre as part of their work, with an initial year's feasibility currently underway.

[Food Depot Consortium, Brighton & Hove](#)

From 2018, a cross sector consortium of Brighton & Hove organisations began developing a new Brighton & Hove food depot concept. This consortium included Brighton Food Factory (now defunct), HISBE Food CIC, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, One Church - Rock Farm and Florence Road Market, and the Brighton Gleaning Network.

The pandemic and the closing of the Brighton Food Factory prevented the project from progressing further, however conversations are now restarting, and the remaining partners are committed to continuing to explore accessing seed funding for the depot.

Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

The indicative costings are explored further in the attached financial model, but mainly include:

- 1) Staffing costs - including an initial development role for a commercial business manager to initiate the model, and an operations manager or consultant to develop the tech system. Once trading commences, additional warehouse staff and drivers will be added, with the possibility of utilising apprentices and providing employability training as part of roles.
- 2) Capital costs - including sourcing a premises, any associated fitting costs, tech system implementation costs
- 3) Operational costs - including rent and bills, van hire, running and maintenance costs, and business overheads, including business rates, insurance, legal and accountancy, marketing and PR.

	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Total
Revenue	£74,750	£330,250	£504,000	£732,000	£918,000	£2,559,000
Expenditure	£144,383	£373,863	£572,792	£723,159	£847,436	£2,661,633
Net Profit / Loss	-£69,633	-£43,613	-£68,792	£8,841	£70,564	
Cumulative Profit / Loss	-£69,633	-£113,246	-£182,038	-£173,197	-£102,633	
Investment Required	£150,000					

Initial investment is needed to develop the infrastructure around the food depot to enable its success, as well as have a viable cash flow.

Potential funding sources

Capital investment for a Greater Brighton food depot could be sought through the Shared Prosperity Fund, perhaps alongside other food systems infrastructure projects.

There are calls for DEFRA to provide £5-10 million of national funding to support the development of local food hubs, as is already [happening in Wales](#).

There may also be potential to apply to grant funding, for example with the National Lottery Community Fund, who have previously provided feasibility funding for local food hub projects.

Economic return on investment

The key economic returns on investment would include:

Increasing local SME revenue generation	Modelled £1.69 million fresh produce purchased over 5 years
Job and entrepreneurship creation	4 FTE roles, plus apprentices Wider job creation through contracted SMEs
Additional investment in local economy	Research shows that for every £1 spent with a local producer, there is a £3 return to the local economy; so extrapolating a potential £2.5 million annual wider return on investment.
Multiple potential sources of revenue generation	Dependent on model – strong evidence for self-sustainability, with potential moderate profits Multiple potential additional economic benefits
Multiple potential additional economic benefits	Dependent on model, for example reduction in food costs, increasing entrants into land based sector roles

Social return on investment

The introduction of a Greater Brighton food depot would have a wide range of additional health, social, environmental, equity¹³ and place benefits, with the secondary economic benefits that these provide. These include:

- SMEs converting to sustainable practices
- Improved employee engagement
- Improved soil and ecosystem health
- Reduction in food miles travelled
- Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices
- Increase in healthy, local, sustainable food available
- Reduction in diet-related disease
- Behaviour change impact on dietary choices
- Community development and increase in connections
- Increased partnerships and collaboration
- Improved resilience of the local food system, to prevent shocks

¹³ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Recommendations and next steps

The Greater Brighton Food Depot is the most commercially viable of the food systems infrastructure projects explored in this project, and so it is recommended that further investment be put into scoping and modelling. Key to this is the sourcing of a premises with potential peppercorn rent, alongside initial capital investment.

c. Training and Support Programmes

The following modelling looks at potential training and support programmes for businesses, with some initial assumptions on approaches, but with the intention that the programme would include an element of flexible co-design with participants.

There are a number of potential models for training and support programmes either looking at cost of living or circular economy outcomes for businesses, and there are a number of potential primary and secondary audiences, e.g:

- Jobseekers
- Current workforce
- Entrepreneurs
- Existing producers
- Existing retailers
- Other existing actors in the food system (manufacturers, logistics providers etc.)
- Policy makers

The problem

Some of the key priority outcomes identified by the initial research in this project include:

- Reducing waste (both economic and environmental) through circular economy approaches
- Support existing sustainable businesses to continue and build on successes
- Support businesses to transition to more sustainable practices
- Increasing food sector workforce numbers through employability programmes and related marketing campaigns
- Upskilling existing food sector workforce for economic and social outcomes
- Creating connections and partnerships to allow for further sustainable food business collaboration (e.g. wholesale group purchasing)
- Creating a network of sustainable food businesses to co-design further systems change interventions for the Greater Brighton region

Modelling

The suggested model is a circular economy based training, utilising the upcoming ban on single use plastics as an entry point, and taking participant food businesses through a co-produced leadership programme, which could be either segmented or mixed business types.

The programme is presented as a grant programme with integrated training and leadership. There are three tiers of audience - entrepreneurs, transitional businesses who are wishing to move to more agroecological / circular economy practices, and anchor businesses, who are already demonstrating effective practice in these areas, but may not have the long-term financial sustainability needed to maintain it.

The content of the programme would be co-produced by the participants, who are given the opportunity to receive grants and connect with decision makers through their participation. They would also have the opportunity to co-design further systems change projects for the region, utilising their own expertise and insights.

This project has chosen not to focus in on more employability focused programmes, because it is recognised that this would need to be delivered alongside broader marketing campaigns for the land based sector, somewhat outside the scope of this project. The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are also particularly focusing on this area currently, and so partnership rather than duplication is the key focus.

Context and evidence

The model and costing for this project are partially based on Re:London's [Islington Circular Economy Grant Programme](#). Following a structured engagement and selection process, a diverse portfolio of 23 Islington-based businesses were chosen to receive grants of up to £10,000 to implement or scale circular economy activities. Over a 6-month period, businesses were also supported with 235 hours of expert advice and 5 networking and learning events.

This programme has helped demonstrate that businesses implementing circular business models can deliver multiple benefits to a local area – in this case, helping create or safeguard 25 jobs, tackle 7,724kg of waste and 9,140 pieces of single use packaging and reach 16,000 customers locally with sustainable choices. 85% of grantees agreed that circular economy activities made possible by the grant had benefited their business commercially; and all grantees agreed that the environmental impact of their business improved by their circular economy activities.

Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

The indicative costings are outlined below, assuming a 25 business cohort taking part in a 6 month training programme, with monthly group workshops and up to 10 hours of 121 support for each business. The total overheads per business is estimated at £1,812, not including the grant award.

The indicative costings assume in-kind venue or online workshop space provided, minimising the operational costs. The main cost areas are:

- 1) Grants to businesses - variable to the target audience and budget available.
- 2) Staffing costs - including 0.2FTE Project Manager, 0.5FTE Facilitator and Coach, and 0.6FTE Project Assistant.

- 3) Operational costs - including equipment, materials, travel, administration, marketing materials and a small budget for paid external speakers.

25 businesses taking part in 6 month programme, with monthly workshops and up to 10 hours of 121 support			
Grants - small	10	£5,000	£50,000
Grants - medium	15	£10,000	£150,000
Staffing costs			£42,055
Operational costs			£3,250
Total overheads per business			£1,812
Total cost per training course			£245,305

Although the grants to businesses are an important element in recruitment and achieving positive outcomes, this forms 82% of the modelled budget, and there is opportunity to run a programme at significantly reduced cost if needed.

Potential funding sources

The LSIPs will have funding allocated to their delivery, led by the Sussex Chamber of Commerce, through which there may be collaboration opportunities. Separately, there will be a Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) which will be commissioned by DfE. This funding is to enable collaborations of providers to respond to the skills priorities identified in the LSIP for their area.

As in the Islington case study, there may be opportunity to pool Local Authority budgets across departments related to economic, environmental and inclusivity goals.

Economic return on investment

The key economic returns on investment would include:

Reduction in Local Authority waste collection	336kg of waste saved per business = £336 per training cohort
Increase in local SME revenue generation	Islington case study, 95% reported commercial benefits
Job and entrepreneurship creation	Islington case study, 1.1 jobs created or safeguarded per business

Social return on investment

Training and support programmes would have a range of additional health, social, environmental, equity¹⁴ and place benefits for their local community and customer base, with the secondary economic benefits that these provide. These include:

¹⁴ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that

- SMEs converting to sustainable practices
- Upskilling of workforce
- Increased partnerships and collaboration
- Improved employee engagement
- Improved consumer satisfaction
- Improved soil and ecosystem health
- Behaviour change impact on dietary choices

Recommendations and next steps

This project was not taken forward into full costing, because it is possible to now seek funding to begin project design and outreach, to allow for co-design from beneficiary businesses.

This project represents a bottom up approach to systems change, with higher costs per direct beneficiary than other projects. However, proven models exist to learn from, and it is relatively simple to implement.

each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

d. Community Supported Agriculture

Fundamentally, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, financial and other risks are shared.

The CSA approach to farming helps to address increasing concerns about the lack of transparency, sustainability and resilience of the current global food system. The main principle being that the community supports the farmer/s through a direct connection, what is produced on the farm goes directly to the consumer. This results in shorter supply chains, higher welfare and lower environmental impact foods being available to local communities at potentially more affordable prices.

The CSA model in the UK does vary. Consumers, often described as CSA members, are closely linked to the farm and the production of their food. They provide support that goes beyond a straightforward marketplace exchange of money for goods. Customer-business involvement may be through ownership or investment in the farm or business, sharing the costs of production, accepting a share in the harvest or providing labour.

The most common produce for CSA farms is vegetables, but there are also CSAs producing eggs, poultry, bread, fruit, pork, lamb, beef and dairy produce. CSA farms are also beginning to develop around woodlands for firewood and there are some examples of fish CSAs.

The CSA model supports the growth of small scale producers, increasing the economic viability of agroecological farming, securing income and better jobs for farmers and horticulturalists, increasing supplies of locally produced foods into the local economy at more affordable prices, and bringing farmers and consumers closer and boosting the local food economy.

The problem

We know that agriculture, forestry and land use sectors contribute between 13% and 21% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside this diminishing food security in the UK and the cost of living crisis means taking steps towards creating a more sustainable, low impact food system is central to the GBEB pledge to supply affordable and healthy food, cut waste and grow more locally across the Greater Brighton City Region.

However land across the Greater Brighton region is in short supply. A densely populated area surrounded by the South Downs national park and the south coast with all local authorities in the region under pressure to maximise income from existing land based assets, and to build more homes and retail space for growing populations, making land use and land allocation contentious. Maximising low impact food production on pockets of peri urban land utilising community assets can be a low input way to support the local food economy, increase access to affordable foods and increase soil health.

From our research we know that:

- CSA projects require initial in-kind investment almost always involving farm and / or growing land at low or no rent.
- Income generation is marginal unless supplemented by other activities i.e. training, education, corporate days
- Significant development work between 2-10 years is needed
- Long term there is limited income from CSA farming model, as they are based on a high level of volunteer input, with an underlying principle that the model provides greater security of the grower/s whilst providing the customer more affordable access to locally grown / harvested high welfare / agriecological produce.

Modelling

As suggested above, CSAs come in an array of models from meat share CSAs such as Sheepshare in Brighton and Hove - a share of the lamb, sheep grazed on the urban fringes of the City as part of a funded grazing programme to Camel CSA, a veg growing enterprise in Cornwall to Growing Communities a 20+ years experienced veg share and wholesale scheme in East London, to the Kindling Trust, a large scale CSA farm in Manchester.

The modelling we have used here aims to illustrate the vast difference in CSA enterprises, both in terms of scale, reach, cost and investment needs and development time scale.

The key issues to consider with CSA cost modelling

- access to and availability of affordable land,
- accurate development time costing - finding and securing land and building a supporter base (narrative) and market etc,
- Are there ways to plug gaps in existing supply chains that would make CSA models more viable, with particular reference to meat share schemes, and
- how to unlock investment.

Context and evidence

Landworkers Alliance research suggests that environmentally-friendly farming is attracting greater numbers of new entrants to farming than ever before, as well as appealing to young people from conventional farming backgrounds.

However a number of key barriers exist including lack of access to land; lack of access to affordable housing; limited access to capital; a lack of connections with people and networks to support a journey into landwork; and a dearth of supportive markets.

Investing in routes into sustainable (agroecological) farming jobs for new entrants will help rejuvenate and diversify the farming and food production sector. Given the average age of a UK farmer is 59 this is urgently needed.

CSA projects around the UK and across the world demonstrate that farmers receive a more stable and secure income, community ties are crucial to ensuring stability of income and labour support and a market. Consumers benefit by eating fresh, healthy local food, connections to nature and learning new skills. For while also helping local governments to meet their food, climate and green recovery commitments.

Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

The indicative costings are outlined below. The small scale model is based on a veg bag share scheme based on the peri urban fringe of a small city. Based on 40 veg bag shares delivered over 48 weeks a year grown on a 2 acre site.

The second model is based on the Kindling Trust Farm using the publicly accessible business plan. A 77 acres farm on the outskirts of greater Manchester with a flat aspect growing vegetables and arable production. Recently purchased through share capital, loans and grants, plans developed over a number of years and costs and income based on 5 year projections.

The main cost areas are:

- 1) Land and development investment
- 2) Staffing
- 3) Capital infrastructure costs

Example small scale local veg bag scheme - annual projected income and expenditure			
based on 35 bag shares for 40 weeks per annum, with one member of staff working part time			
Income from sales (bags charged at £13.55 pw)		21,303	
Expenditure		25,700	
Additional fundraising / income to break even		4,400	
Kindling Trust Farm - community owned farm Manchester			
Based on approximately 1,000 customers at year 5 (veg bag equivalent) with 5 employees by year 5			
Farm purchase investment - communityshare offer raised £1,000,000		1,800,000	
Farm infrastructure investment		780,000	
projected income at year 5		800,000	

Potential funding sources

- Various funding opportunities available for environmental land management, climate and biodiversity, training and skills etc.
- Potential for local authorities to provide access to land at low / peppercorn rent through Community Asset Transfer CAT or county farms etc

- Raise capital through community share offers ([Tablehurst Farm](#) and [Kindling Trust Farm, Fordhall Farm](#)).
- Commercial agricultural loans

Economic return on investment

The key economic returns on investment would include:

Increase in local SME revenue generation	In 2021, the New Economics Foundation evaluated the social, environmental and economic contributions of Growing Communities . From 24 farmer interviews, 85% described increased turnover due to growing sales by an average of 87%.
Job and entrepreneurship creation	24 farmer interviews, employment was an added benefit with farmers describing how they have managed to employ, on average, four more employees since supplying Growing Communities. NEF 2021
Additional investment in local food economy	£3.70 return on every £1 spent, according to Growing Communities data

Social return on investment

A community supported agriculture project would have a range of additional health, social, environmental, equity¹⁵ and place benefits, with the secondary economic benefits that these provide. These include:

- Improved soil and ecosystem health
- Reduction in food miles travelled
- Carbon reduction through shorter supply chains, consolidated deliveries, and a shift in production practices
- Improvements in mental and physical wellbeing, particularly for volunteers and stakeholders.
- Behaviour change impact on dietary choices through increased awareness of and access to nature and biodiversity
- Reduction in food waste

Recommendations and next steps

- Initial in-kind investment almost always involves farm / growing land at low rent

¹⁵ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

- Income generation is marginal unless supplemented by other activities i.e. training, education, corporate days
- Significant development work needed 2-10 years
- Limited income from CSA model farming
- Heavy reliance on volunteer labour
- Recommended not taken forward into full costing
- Already innovation work going on in this area across several of the Greater Brighton LAs (including Brighton and Hove Food Partnership's [Land Use Plus project](#), Adur and Worthing District Council's New Salts Farm community food growing zones project etc)
- Integrate into food hub, looking at meat sharing

Footnotes

Skill in the hort and agriculture sector (Tiah)

https://tiah.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FINAL_SUMMARY-REPORT.Labour-and-skills-in-the-horticulture-and-agriculture-sectors-in-England-2022..pdf

The Attraction of Agroecology report (LWA)

<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Landworkers-Alliance-The-Attraction-of-AgroecologyFINAL.pdf>

e. Large Scale Community Composting

There are currently a number of community composting projects across the Greater Brighton region at local levels. These vary in model, and are co-delivered by Local Authorities and third sector and/or purpose-led business partners.

This project explores the opportunity of scaling up community composting at a regional level, for wider and systems change outcomes.

The problem

Legislation delays from central government have led to variety of different food waste services for households and businesses across the country. Some LAs have progressed with implementing food waste doorstep collection schemes, others are waiting until legislation is confirmed, so they can understand the requirements of the service they will need to provide. It is currently unknown when this legislation will come; it has already been in discussion for a number of years.

This varied context also plays out at a Greater Brighton region, with districts such as Lewes having a weekly food collection service; Brighton & Hove having pockets of community-led composting schemes; innovative pilot schemes running in areas of West Sussex diverting surplus food and waste back into the food system; and some areas having no community composting or food waste services at all.

Overall, Greater Brighton LAs are demonstrating leadership in this area, with plans being put in place for food waste to be effectively processed, with an in-vessel composter in Ringmer, East Sussex that can process up to 15,000 tonnes of food waste - all the expected local food waste that would be collected through curbside collection.

Modelling

The modelling presented is based on the Brighton & Hove Community Composting project, which has the potential to be scaled up and rolled up across Greater Brighton regions. There would also be the potential to generate revenue through the sales of compost.

This involves installing a series of community compost bins accessible by local communities, and providing household caddies. There is a lead organisation providing project, volunteer and equipment management to run locally. A small amount of LA support is provided in the set up phase to garner landowner permission and exemption registration with the Environment Agency.

It is recognised that some partners involved in this project, for example Plumpton College and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, are interested in being part of developing a larger scale community composting model for the region.

Targeted approaches to behaviour change and marketing the project would be needed to ensure success, and this could also be complementary to encourage more home composting, as well as community composting, and the utilising of food waste collection schemes, where they exist.

Context and evidence

There are two local models drawn upon for this project.

Compost Club

Currently offered in Lewes, this is a subscription scheme that allows residents to sign up to a three-weekly food waste collection subscription package, in return receiving a certain amount of compost per year. For £12 per month they can receive £60 worth of compost each year, or £180 worth per year for £16 per month.

Brighton & Hove Community Composting

There are 50 community composting sites set up across the city, with infrastructure funding provided by the City Council, and training and support provided by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. The model is largely volunteer-led, and supports 980 households. An estimated 250 tonnes of waste are diverted from the waste stream annually, saving 250 kg of CO₂.

Indicative costings

Please note: these indicative costings have been formulated on high-level research only, and based on a number of assumptions, explored in more detail in accompanying modelling documents provided separately.

The indicative costings are outlined below, provided as annual costs per 50 community compost schemes, serving approximately 1,000 households. Economies of scale can be achieved on the capital and running costs.

Annual cost per 50 schemes, serving 1,000 households	
Staffing	£28,000
Equipment and maintenance	£4,000
Total running costs	£32,000
Total per scheme	£640
Total per household	£32
Annual cost per additional 50 schemes	
Capital costs	£75,000
Running costs	£32,000
Total	£107,000

It is assumed that LAs would lead on the behaviour change and marketing of the schemes, so are not included as a direct cost, but are an important element of running as a large scale project.

Potential funding sources

Can we negotiate an amount through contracts to give high quality compost for the region.

Economic return on investment

The key economic returns on investment would include:

Reduction in Local Authority waste collection	East Sussex estimate 15,000-22,000t of food waste at the kerbside, 560,000 population. Greater Brighton population ~1,000,000 - estimate 30,000-44,000t. The single price range with the most gate fees is £40 to £45/tonne. ¹⁶ Taking mid figure and conservative 10% rate of composting, saving would be £147,000pa.
Revenue generation – compost, subscription fees	Variable depending on pricing structure

Social return on investment

Community composting schemes in the Greater Brighton region would have a range of additional health, social, environmental, equity¹⁷ and place benefits for their local community and customer base, with the secondary economic benefits that these provide. These include:

- Increase in “waste” diversion back into food system
- Carbon reduction, estimated 250 kg of CO2 saved per 1,000 households
- Reduction in waste and local, circular economy behaviour change
- Community development and connections
- Increase in community volunteering and related positive outcomes
- Improved soil and ecosystem health

Recommendations and next steps

Although this project should be relatively easy to implement and scale, the delay in government legislation is preventing Waste Management teams from implementing widespread change.

¹⁶ <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/gate-fees-report-2020>

¹⁷ We intentionally use the term *equity* instead of *equality*. *Equality* means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. *Equity* recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Without complementary projects, large scale community composting wouldn't have the systems level impact of some of the other projects explored, although there are many economic and wider benefits to its introduction. More importantly however, there is already excellent partnership and innovation working happening and district and borough levels across sectors, and the focus should be on enabling this grassroots work to continue, rather than implementing top-down approaches.

Appendix

List of Contributors

Project Team

Food Matters
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership
Alex Britten-Zondani, Food Systems Consultant

Task and Finish Group

Angela Blair, Food Policy Coordinator, Brighton & Hove City Council
Dan Karlsson, Head of Business Services, Plumpton College
Nigel James, Countryside and Policy Manager, SDNPA / SDNPA representative
Victoria Williams, Director, Food Matters representing Food Partnerships
Shova Thapa Karki, University of Sussex Business School
Andre Viljoen, University of Brighton, School of Architecture
Denise Vine, Group Head of Economy, Arun District Council
Shrikant Ramakrishnan, Plantagon International AB
Andy Hill, GBEB Business Manager

Greater Brighton region

Chloe Clarke, Nature Based Solutions Manager, Strategic Sustainability, Adur & Worthing Councils
Angela Crane, Economy and Skills Officer, Place & Economy, Adur & Worthing Councils
Romy Gue, Sussex and Surrey County Adviser, National Farmers Union
Sussex Food Partnerships
Barcombe Nurseries
Anthony Pope, Waste Senior Technical Officer, Communities, Economy & Transport, East Sussex County Council
Emma Attwell, Fundraiser, Ecological Land Cooperative
Kelly Heller, Partnership & Programme Manager, Recycling and Wastes Management, West Sussex County Council
Jim Mayor, Consultant
Emily O'Brien, Cabinet member for climate, nature and food systems, Lewes District Council
Ruth Anslow, Founder, HISBE
Ben Szobody, One Church Brighton

National / outside Greater Brighton

James Woodward, Sustain - A Tale of Two Counties co-author
Rich Osborn, Director, Equilibrium Markets Ltd
Danny Fisher, Head of Better Food Shed

Ellen Pearce, The Plot, FarmStart and Northern Real Farming Conference coordinator, LESS (Lancaster District)

Tom Morphew, Founder, The Garden Army CIC

Graeme English, Circular Economy Advisor, Re:London

Other Project and Related Documents

- Food System Infrastructure Consultancy Brief Dec 2022 GB Food Plan
- [Miro Board Overview of Longlist Projects and Research Findings](#)
- GBEB Food Systems Infrastructure Apr23 – Interim Task and Finish Group Presentation
- GBEB Food Systems Infrastructure May23 – Interim Task and Finish Group Presentation
- GBEB Food Systems Infrastructure Final Presentation to Board Jul23
- GBEB Food Systems Infrastructure Costing Excel
- [Food Economy Resilience: Greater Brighton Food Scoping](#) – scoping report produced as a pre-cursor to this project

Project Methodology

From March to June 2023, Food Matters, Alex Britten-Zondani, Food Systems Consultant, and Brighton & Hove Food Partnership were commissioned by the Greater Brighton Economic Board to cost and develop investment plans for the city region food system.

The project team began with the following longlist of potential food infrastructure investment opportunities:

- 1) Tech systems
 - a. Dynamic food procurement system
 - b. Food waste AI systems
- 2) Training & support programmes
 - a. Agroecological training programme and/or support
 - b. Circular economy and/or cost of living business support programme
- 3) Energy & water systems
 - a. Alternative energy system
 - b. Water catchment system
- 4) Land use
 - a. Community agriculture site
 - b. Large scale community composting model
- 5) Local supply chain infrastructure & equipment
 - a. On-farm milk vending machines
 - b. Mobile abattoir
 - c. Food hub model

- d. Mobile retail units
- 6) Combination
 - a. Food business carbon reduction tools

The project team developed a list of assessment criteria and conducted an initial research and effective practice review to conduct this initial assessment. The assessment categories were:

- 1) Alignment
 - a. Alignment of project with Greater Brighton existing assets
 - b. Strategic priorities and evidence
- 2) Costing
 - a. Potential for accurate costing
 - b. Time required for costing
 - c. Potential next steps
- 3) Funding
 - a. Overall cost level for project
 - b. Potential and likelihood of funding sources
 - c. Potential for long-term financial sustainability
- 4) Development
 - a. Viability of model
 - b. Potential lead
 - c. Barriers to entry
 - d. Potential risks and conflicts of interest
- 5) Delivery and impact
 - a. Potential overall impact
 - b. Potential beneficiaries
 - c. Cost benefit analysis
 - d. Economic development impact
 - e. Circular economy impact
 - f. Visibility
 - g. Longevity
 - h. Risks
 - i. Impact if not invested in

The initial assessment findings were summarised as follows:

Project	1. Alignment	2. Costing	3. Funding	4. Development	5. Delivery and Impact
Tech systems					
Dynamic food procurement system					
Food waste AI system					
Local supply chain infrastructure and equipment					
On-farm milk vending machines					
Mobile abattoir					
Food hub model					
Mobile retail units					
Training and support programmes					
Agroecological training support programme and/or support					
Circular economy and/or cost of living business support programme					
Energy and water systems					
Alternative energy system					
Water catchment system					
Land use					
Community agriculture site					
Large scale community composting model					
Combination					
Food business carbon reduction tools					

Project	High Level Cost Estimate	Potential Identified Funding	Financial Sustainability	Main Beneficiaries	Recommendations on Priority Projects for this Project Costing
Tech systems					
Dynamic food procurement system	£200k (across region), plus £100k per additional 2-3 Councils	Dixon Foundation	Needs ongoing investment	Local suppliers, large procuring institutions, wider community	High priority – current moment, modelling and funding, needs significant collaboration and ongoing investment
Food waste AI system	£10-50k		Potential for ongoing sustainability after startup investment	Food businesses	Medium priority - potential as a pilot carbon reduction project, utilising AI systems movement
Local supply chain infrastructure and equipment					
On-farm milk vending machines	£10-50k p unit		Capital investment only, depending on ownership model	Local producers and consumers	High priority - evidence based intervention, supporting local businesses, circular economy
Mobile abattoir	£100-500k		Assumed need for ongoing investment	Local producers and consumers	High priority - evidence based intervention, supporting local businesses, circular economy
Food hub model	£50-100k	Govt funding?	Potential for ongoing sustainability after startup investment	Local producers and consumers, local community	High priority - evidence based intervention, supporting local businesses, circular economy
Mobile retail units	£10-50k p unit		Potential for ongoing sustainability after startup investment	Local producers and consumers	Low priority – unproved model
Training and support programmes					

Agroecological training support programme and/or support	£10-100k		Needs ongoing investment, but long-term wider impact	Local producers, wider community	High priority – needs further modelling
Circular economy and/or cost of living business support programme	£50-500k		Needs ongoing investment, but long-term wider impact	Local producers, wider community	High priority – needs further modelling
Energy and water systems					
Alternative energy system	£100k-1m		Needs ongoing investment	Local producers	Low priority - significant investment and modelling required, doesn't address more pressing community needs, longer term national momentum
Water catchment system	£50-500k		Needs ongoing investment	Local producers	Low priority - significant investment and modelling required, doesn't address more pressing community needs, longer term national momentum
Land use					
Community agriculture site	£10-100k		Capital investment only, depending on ownership model	Local community	Low priority - complexity around access to land
Large scale community composting model	£10-100k		Needs ongoing investment	Local community	Medium priority – already bottom up momentum
Combination					
Food business carbon reduction tools	Variable		Variable	Food businesses	Medium priority - need to explore levels and areas for potential investment

From this assessment the Task and Finish Group agreed the following projects to be taken forward into partial costing:

- 1) Tech systems
 - a. Dynamic food procurement system
- 2) Training and support programmes
 - a. Agroecological training programme and/or support
 - b. Circular economy and/or cost of living business support programme
- 3) Land use
 - a. Community agriculture site
 - b. Large scale community composting model
- 4) Local supply chain infrastructure and equipment
 - a. Food hub model

The following parameters were also considered in this decision-making process:

- Which projects make the most sense to be taken forward in this costings project specifically?
- What projects will be viable in 5/10/15 years' time?
- Which projects have dependencies on each other?
- If not us, who? Or will it happen anyway?

The project team then conducted further research across the shortlisted projects, including identification and consultation with relevant experts, relationship development with potential delivery partners, market scoping and financial modelling. This research has been outlined in the project-by-project costings overview section.

Following the presentation of the next stage of research and costing, the Task and Finish Group agreed that the projects should be seen together as a whole systems change approach project, which we are calling Greater Brighton: The Future of Food. It was recognised that these projects are interlinked and complementary, and they need each other to deliver maximum impact.

Two particular projects were identified as 'catalyst projects' to be focused on first, beginning a snowball effect towards change. These were the dynamic food procurement system and the food hub (depot).