Community Economic Development Plan

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1: Executive Summary

Project: Engage the community within Lancaster District in solutions to make local and sustainable produce more accessible and convenient to buy, with a specific focus on identifying and establishing practical initiatives that increase the accessibility of local produce.

Contextual Conditions: University city with pockets of deprivation and active local and community food sector.

Key policy conditions: County Council and local health trust making progress on procuring more local and sustainable foods. However, this is not a priority for the City Council at present.

Objectives: Work with a broad range of stakeholders to identify barriers to purchasing local produce. Trial practical solutions that improve access to local produce; develop an understanding of where local produce is available, and improve perceptions of its affordability.

Rationale: Increased local and sustainable food purchases will lead to reduced impacts on the environment; improved local resilience to climate change; greater wealth circulated locally leading to increased trading for local businesses and more local job opportunities.

Inputs

GOLFE Project Staff time

Local business staff time

Funding and knowledge of funding environment

Supporting organisations

Local Food Directory

Activities

Continued community engagement and research

Trials of practical solutions

Promote Local Food Directory

Monitor local food spending

Seasonal markets and other events

Develop resource sharing platform

Encourage development of new delivery scheme

Outputs

Publication of this CED plan and all engagement outcomes

Local food collective and resource sharing platform

Milk float network delivers more local produce

Continuing programme of seasonal events

Bids for further funding

Short Term outcomes

- Local community aware of where to buy local produce, can identify it more easily, and have greater understanding of what 'local' food is.
- Better understanding of the barriers to existing local food distribution schemes, the potential role of a new one and how it can support existing schemes.
- Better understanding of options and barriers for distributing local produce via corner shops and milk float network.
- A core group of local producers interested in a local food distribution venture
- Better understanding of options for creating a resource sharing platform
- Increased understanding amongst local food businesses and consumers about the need to collaborate in order to increase access to sustainable and healthy local food.
- Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy.

Medium Term Outcomes

- Opportunities for the local community to access local produce outside '9-5' hours are increased.
- Increased trust and improved relationships between local food businesses.
- Establish a local food distribution scheme that involves local food producers, distributors and retailers.
- Establish a local resource-sharing platform that enables further involvement of smallholders in a local food delivery scheme.

Long Term Outcomes

- Healthier and more sustainable food accessible to the community of Lancaster District via increased methods of accessing local produce.
- Lancaster District has a successful (profitable, environmentally and socially sound, and widely supported) local food delivery scheme that offers a single route to market for multiple local food businesses.
- Increased training and employment opportunities in the local produce sector.
- Buy-in from local authorities and tourist board to promote local food in Lancaster District.

2: Introduction

Lancaster is a small University City in the North West of England, with a diverse community and a variety of urban and rural landscapes.

LESS is a small CIC focussed on sustainability (main project work around food-growing, local food and energy efficiency) and has been operating in Lancaster District for over seven years. Consequently we have good ties and contacts with local community organisations, the local authority, local schools, the local Universities and colleges, and local businesses.

In particular, our Growing Our Local Food Economy (GOLFE) project has worked hard since September 2014 to establish relationships with local food producers, processors, distributors and retailers operating within a 20 mile radius of Lancaster City Centre. GOLFE also sits on the steering group of the Sustainable Food Cities Lancaster group, a cross-sector initiative that is committed to making healthy and sustainable food a defining characteristic of the local area.

Lancaster District has a large number of independent local food businesses, including producers, processors and retailers, plus a number of food-related community ventures. There is a widespread interest in local produce within the local community, but also many people see it as more expensive, limited in range and inconvenient to buy, resulting in high use of supermarkets. Increasing use of food banks locally also presents an additional challenge to make local food accessible and affordable to all. Many local food producers and businesses are also finding it increasingly difficult to make a living, especially when trying to balance food ethics with profits.

The purpose of our local Community Economic Development (CED) plan is to engage the community within Lancaster District in solutions to make local and sustainable produce more accessible and convenient to buy, with a specific focus on identifying and establishing practical initiatives that increase the accessibility of local produce.

3: Partnership

LESS will deliver this CED plan as part of the Growing Our Local Food Economy (GOLFE) project, with support from key partners within the local community (listed below). Most of these partners are part of the Sustainable Food City Lancaster network that is strategically involved in promoting a vital local produce economy and identifying and reducing food poverty.

- Sustainable Food City Lancaster – an umbrella group that includes a variety of local organisations that are strategically focussed on sustainable food matters in the District, including trying to influence local policy on sustainable food, including procurement policy for large local organisations.
- Transition City Lancaster - this local group is part of a national network of Transition organisations that support communities to build resilience and reduce CO2 emissions.
- Claver Hill Community Food Project – a food-growing initiative at the edge of an area of Lancaster experiencing deprivation and in a 'food desert'. Held in trust for the community, this six acre site is dedicated to providing local residents with the opportunity to grow their own food and access affordable food, in addition to offering education opportunities and the chance to trial business ideas. Distribution of surplus produce to the community is an important factor in their involvement in this project.
- Dr. Rebecca Whittle, Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University – one of Dr. Whittle's key research interests is researching and developing local and alternative food systems which combine environmental sustainability with social and community benefits. Dr. Whittle is instrumental in supporting our stakeholder events and engaging Lancaster University students and staff with our work.
- Mike Hallam, Small Green Consultancy & ESTA – Mike currently runs the 'Food Loop Game' which tracks how local food spending is re-circulated within the local food economy. This addresses a key outcome of LESS's GOLFE project. He also coordinates the local Ethical Small Traders Association, some members of which are also local food businesses, and has previously worked in the sustainable food industry.
- Incredible Edible Lancaster – similar to other Incredible Edible groups, this group focuses on growing food in community spaces in the District. Support in setting up food growing projects in public spaces and distribution of surplus produce to the community is an important factor in their involvement in this project.
- Lancaster District CVS – local voluntary sector infrastructure body.

The governance of the work outlined in this plan currently lies with LESS, as the organisation that identified and instigated the work, as it aligns with our current Growing Our Local Food Economy project.

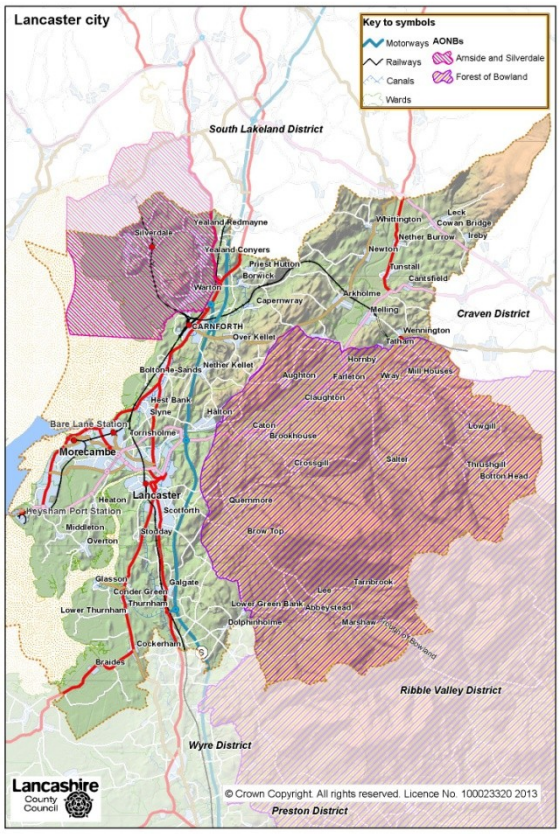
We regularly liaise with key partners listed above via the Sustainable Food City Lancaster group and via regular engagement with key stakeholders.

4: Context

4:1 Socio-economic context

Location

Lancaster District is located in the county of Lancashire, in the North West of England, and covers an area of 576 square kilometres. The District includes the city of Lancaster, the towns of Morecambe, Heysham and Carnforth, and the surrounding rural villages.



Economic profile

Lancaster's economic profile indicates a high score for business and enterprise (91.44) that appears to be primarily made up of micro businesses (employ up to nine employees).[1] The District has several economic assets of national economic importance: Lancaster University, Heysham Power Station and Heysham Port.[2] The Port of Heysham operates both commercial and passenger transport and is also a supply base for offshore gas fields and wind farms. Lancaster has been identified as a key area in the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's 'arc of prosperity'.[3]

Environment

Lancaster is largely an affordable area of the country to live in with high levels of access to the natural environment - the predominant land use being 'green space'[4]. Urban areas include open and green spaces and the hinterland includes large parts of the AONBs of Arnside & Silverdale and the Forest of Bowland. Agricultural land in Lancaster District is mainly classified under grades three to five, with dairy and livestock grazing in less favoured areas and lowland livestock grazing being the most common farm types. Carbon dioxide emissions in Lancaster District are below the national average, but emissions from transport are particularly high.[5]

Demographics

[1] My Community Lancaster District Profile
[2] p.51, Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan 2014 - http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/media/8856/LEP-strategic-economic-plan.pdf
[3] http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/media/8856/LEP-strategic-economic-plan.pdf
[4] OS (2015); Generalised Land Use Database (2005)
[5] Ibid.

Lancaster's ethnic cohort is predominantly white (95%)[6], which is higher than both the county and national average. Approximately half of the population are dependent on others, which is significantly higher than the average for the county, but in line with national figures. Lancaster District hosts two universities, and includes several popular coastal retirement destinations. The proportions of residents in the 15-24 and 65+ age groups are therefore higher than the national average.[7] Population density is the second lowest in the county – and significantly below both the county and national averages.[8]

The District has a relatively high Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), particularly in regard to inequality, health, environment and employment. The 2015 Indices of Deprivation ranked Lancaster as the 125th most deprived area out of 326 districts and unitary authorities in England.[9]

4:2 Local Plans

Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan 2014 - Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

This document provides the framework for drawing down resources from the European Structural Investment Fund within Lancashire as a whole.

The partnership's strategic outcomes (up to 2025) are to deliver:

- 50,000 new jobs;
- 40,000 new houses; and
- £3 billion additional economic activity, above the local trend rate.[10]

The strategy recognises the strategic economic importance of Lancaster District (as part of its 'arc of prosperity'), and recognises the importance of food manufacturing as a key employment sector in Lancashire. The strategy focuses on large scale projects in strategic industrial, academic and economic areas that generate wealth and prosperity for the county as a whole, with particular focus on the 'arc of prosperity'. As we see later in this document, 'affordability' is a perceived barrier in terms of people purchasing more local produce, and presumably this will be less of a barrier in a county that is more prosperous overall. However, beyond this, this document doesn't specifically address Lancashire's food economy.

Neighbourhood Plans[11]

Presently, within Lancaster District, Neighbourhood Plans have largely been taken up by rural parishes: Wray with Botton, Caton with Littledale, Cockerham and Halton with Aughton. Morecambe Town Council and Slyne-with-Hest Parish Council have also submitted applications for Neighbourhood Plans which the Council is currently consulting on. The Neighbourhood Planning process is at too early a stage in all of these localities to foresee what impact it will have on our Community Economic Development Plan.

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[6] 2011 Census
[7] http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=6233&pageid=39632&e=e#Economy
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan 2014 - http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/media/8856/LEP-strategic-economic-plan.pdf, p. 31
[11] http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/

Morecambe's West End

Morecambe's West End is one of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK, ranked in the bottom 10% of communities nationally. The area is a regeneration priority for Lancaster City Council, which is working to the West End Master plan[12] following on from an Action Plan agreed in 2002. In 2012 the community was awarded £1 million to invest locally via Big Local, and the process is run by the 'West End Million' steering group, drawn from members of the local community.

A community profile document was published in May 2015, based on community consultation, and drawn up by Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions[13]. This document shows that – in terms of overlaps with our work - the local community would like to regenerate the West End of Morecambe, with some focus on local amenities, including shops which might provide employment opportunities. The current small independent shops in the area are highly valued, but there are a lot of empty, boarded up shop units and low quality shops that contribute to a poor perception of the area. The most visible businesses in the West End of Morecambe are guest houses and small shops. Both of these offer opportunities for engaging business owners to encourage buying locally produced food – either to serve to guests or to sell in local shops (provided it is relevant to their core business).

4:3 Local food initiatives

The vast majority of local sustainable food initiatives in Lancaster are community- based, and most of these initiatives are members of the partnership overseeing this plan.

Transition City Lancaster (TCL) – see description of group on page 5. TCL runs a range of food-related events locally, including Potato Day and a local food festival, and has a sub-group focussed on 'Food and Growing'. TCL also manages a community tree nursery based at Claver Hill, runs annual community grafting workshops and has partnered with Incredible Edible Lancaster to set up and run a seed library initiative.

Sustainable Food City Lancaster (SFCL) – see description of group on page 5. This group is linked with Sustainable Food Lancashire, an organisation that has developed a sustainable food charter. As of yet, the charter has had no buy in from the Local Authority.

Lancashire County Council – in 2015 the Council was awarded the Silver catering mark from the Soil Association. Meals served in primary and secondary schools, and Council-run care homes meet high standards regarding locally sourced, seasonal and organic ingredients.[14]

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay - Food and drink strategies are currently being developed by local hospitals. The Soil Association has supported initial workshops and has encouraged hospitals to work towards food for life catering marks.

Lancaster University - Green Lancaster, a sustainability initiative of Lancaster University Students Union, has pioneered growing food on campus as part of their Edible Campus project. Green Lancaster is now working with the University's Executive Head Chef to try and make sustainable and healthy food more accessible on campus. For example, a local

[12] http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/regeneration/morecambe-s-west-end
[13] http://westendmillion.co.uk/wem-comm-prof-v2.4.pdf
[14] http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/news/details.aspx?Id=PR15/0290

food box scheme is being developed, with hopes of it starting in September 2016. As of October 2015, the University's catering outlets were working with the Soil Association on the Food for Life partnership, and held two gold awards, one silver and four bronze awards.

Claver Hill Community Food Project – see description of group on page 5. In addition to creating community food growing opportunities through its 'spud club', Claver Hill welcomes local entrepreneurs and community groups to trial business ideas. The spud club is also starting to form links with Lancaster's People's café, with the hope that it will provide this 'touring' pay as you feel café with surplus produce in the future.

Incredible Edible Lancaster – see description of group on page 5. Incredible Edible Lancaster coordinates nine community food projects locally, including a seed library (based in Lancaster Central Library), a community orchard and apple day, a forest garden project and a community nursery. The nursery hopes to provide edible perennial plants for free to local guerilla gardeners.

Lancaster People's Café – this pop-up café tours local community centres and venues around Lancaster, sourcing food from Fare Share and selling it on a pay-as-you-feel basis.

Lancaster Food Assembly – this is a local branch of a national franchise organisation that enables people to order from local producers online, and collect from the producers at food 'assemblies'.[15] The Lancaster Food Assembly was established in the summer of 2014, just as the GOLFE project began, and has been working with a range of local producers.

Local food businesses
Lancaster District has a diversity of local food businesses, including producers, processors, retailers and distributors. The 210 businesses listed on LESS's local food directory www.lessuk.org/directory have been consulted as part of this work.

[15] The Food Assembly sources within a 150 mile radius, as opposed to the 20 mile radius used by GOLFE.

5: Engagement

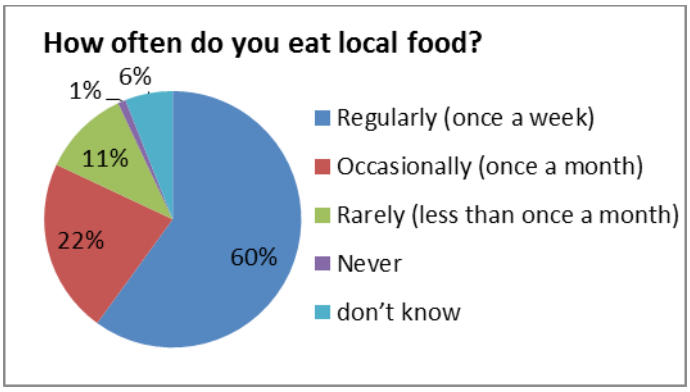
LESS, via its GOLFE project, has carried out a huge amount of engagement and research activities in order to produce this CED plan. The results of our research are shown below, and for ease of understanding are divided chronologically between the portion of engagement completed prior to our involvement with the CED programme, and that completed as a result of involvement with the CED programme.

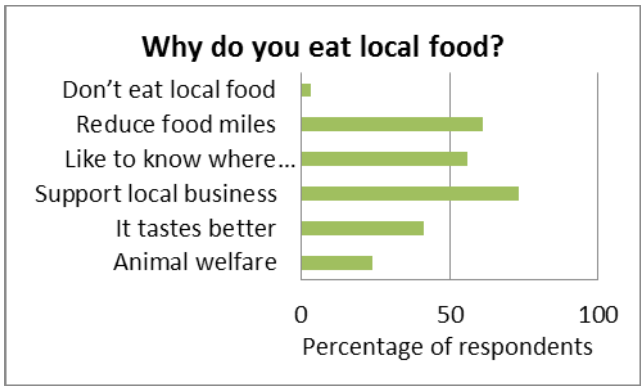
5:1 Pre-CED programme engagement

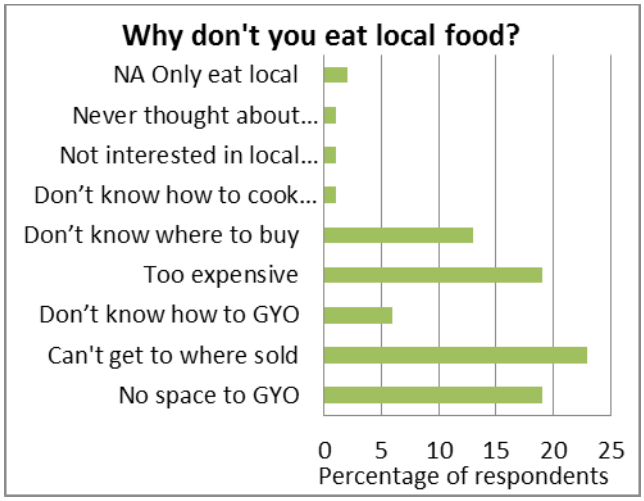
Since September 2014 the GOLFE project has worked hard to engage with different stakeholders in our local food economy to understand the barriers that local consumers, producers and retailers face in sourcing and selling sustainable local food. This work culminated in a stakeholder conference in July 2015, which set the stage for the work delivered as part of the CED programme.

5:1:1 Consumers

Online surveys, social media, market stalls and informal focus groups at community events in Lancaster District were used to gather information about the barriers local consumers face in accessing local food. A total of 566 completed consumer questionnaires were received and analysed. Key findings include:







Although 60% of respondents claimed to eat local food regularly, different definitions of 'local' were used and consideration to where local food was bought (supermarket compared to independent local shop) was not always considered important. Reasons for eating local food, in order of popularity, included: wanting to support local business; to reduce food miles; liking to know where food has come from; 'it tastes better'; to improve animal welfare. Reasons for not eating local food boiled down to ease of access and cost and correlated with suggested methods for increasing access to local food.

In order of importance solutions included:

1) More places need to sell local food, including out of 9-to-5 working hours.
2) Local food needs to be made more affordable, potentially by directly buying from producers, utilising food buying groups or exploring alternative pay schemes such as 'pay as you can' models.
3) The time taken to access local food needs to be reduced through better labelling, delivery schemes, more places selling local food, awareness raising food events & celebrations
4) The benefits of local spending need to be highlighted to motivate people to invest the time and money into buying local food, and access to growing space could be made easier
5) Training on how to 'Grow Your Own'

In addition, 40% of consumers stated they would be willing to pledge to source more local food; 22% said they might.

In response to these results, a Local Food Pledge was launched in April 2015 which asked pledgers to source at least 30% of their food shopping locally for 3 months. Participants were asked to record their experience in a diary – to allow for further learning regarding the barriers that motivated individuals face in sourcing local food. To date 54 people have taken the pledge and we expect this number to increase as we refine the initiative and generate broader publicity.

5:1:2 Lancaster University campus

Lancaster University has thousands of students living on a campus which is physically separate from other residential areas of the District. Many students use supermarket delivery services to order their shopping (food and otherwise) online and have it delivered to their door. This makes the University campus a focus for a separate area of engagement work and research.

Lancaster University's Green Lancaster project and researchers at Lancaster Environment Centre have been exploring the barriers students face in accessing sustainable and local food on campus. GOLFE has supported this work by co-supervising an undergraduate student in their analysis of three focus groups with students, an online survey and 20 students' reflective food journals. GOLFE also supported a design activity in which 31 students developed solutions for making sustainable and local food more accessible on campus.

Convenience, time, physical access and money were raised as key barriers to eating sustainably – similar to findings from consumers living in other areas of the District. However, several additional barriers were identified to students eating well, leading to increased consumption of convenience and processed foods: lack of cooking skills, boredom, hangovers and stress and other mental health problems.

Proposed solutions include:

- Establishing a local food box scheme (targeted at flats of students) that includes recipe cards and link to online cooking videos.
- Making healthy and local food easier to access through a centrally located and ethical takeaway on campus
- Existing retailers on campus offering a range of local and sustainable snacks, or raw ingredients packaged with a recipe card
- Expanding the range of produce offered at the University's weekly 'farmers market' to include a local fruit and veg stall – preferably linked to the town
- Creating cooking videos, recipes and 'cookalongs' to build and share cooking skills, recipe ideas and make cooking food a social event
- Creating physical time and space for food within the campus day e.g. picnic tables and a campaign for the return of the traditional lunch hour
- Offering bigger pan, freezer and cupboard space on campus to encourage cooking from scratch

5:1:3 Food Businesses

Engagement with food producers and retailers primarily occurred through online and postal surveys, the results from which fed into a stakeholder conference on the 20th July 2015. Engagement with these stakeholders has been difficult due to businesses being stretched for time and finances.

81 producers were sent a producer questionnaire in November 2014 and 15 producers (19%) responded. Of those who responded, 93% wanted to provide more of their products to local people and 47% of producers said there was scope to increase the amount of their produce sold locally.

Barriers to supplying more produce to local outlets included, in order of importance: lack of demand; lack of time to market businesses and it being unviable to do small deliveries or a market stall for a small selection of produce; unable to identify new customers; logistical problems (staff time) and distribution problems. Proposed solutions to these barriers included: more and better promotion for small producers and farmers markers; need to raise consumer awareness of what it means to be a local food producer; shared market stalls and retailing for small holders and producers.

LESS approached 108 retailers (including shops, cafés and restaurants) with our retailer questionnaire in November 2014. Of this number, only 9 retailers (8%) responded. All respondents, except one (who sourced 100% of their ingredients locally), sourced between 30-50% of their ingredients locally and wanted to source more local produce if feasible.

78% of respondents stated they wanted to provide more of their food products to local people.

Retailers identified logistics (38% of respondents) as being the key barrier to sourcing and selling more local food. 'Other' barriers identified included time, cost, certain food items being unavailable locally (due to climate or lack of local production), issues of scale, and a lack of publicity and consumer awareness. Proposed solutions included raising awareness of the value of buying local food, making it more mainstream and assisting local producers to reach customers; encouraging the council and the local tourism board take an active interest and role in promoting local food and business; general promotion about schemes such as the Food Assembly so that people can see where local food is on offer; a network of local suppliers and producers working together to create a great working enterprise; creating more markets and whole food stores.

A stakeholder conference held on the 20th July 2015 as part of our CED work, expanded on survey data with 24 local businesses and representatives of the local economy attending. Potential solutions to growing our local sustainable food economy were identified and developed.

Ideas for overcoming identified barriers were shared, and grouped into themes by participants. Seven key themes emerged:

1) Collaboration and sharing of resources
2) Bringing producers and consumers closer together
3) Understanding the local food market
4) Marketing
5) Education
6) Awareness raising
7) Further research and relationship building.

Themes were then prioritized by participants using a voting system. Those thought to have the highest potential to make a difference were discussed in breakout groups who developed rough action plans for taking the following ideas forward:

Collaboration and sharing of resources

Bringing producers and consumers closer together

Further research & relationship building

5:2 Engagement and market research for CED plan

Following the stakeholder conference in July 2015, LESS conducted further engagement work via the GOLFE project using interviews, focus groups and 'community researchers'. Much of the research focussed on the detailed ideas that the conference identified under the priority of 'Bringing producers and consumers closer together'.

We carried out scoping work with milk delivery businesses, convenience stores and potential food collection points in Lancaster District to assess the feasibility of different methods of increasing access to local produce for consumers, who we also consulted about 'local food branding'.

Work with local producers included a focus group to explore the idea of developing a food collective, plus a business networking event. We also carried out market research with local consumers to better understand what customers want from a food delivery scheme.

Following the July conference LESS was presented with an opportunity to purchase a local fruit and veg box scheme as a going concern, and we included this in our original submission to the CED programme as a means of developing a local food delivery scheme. However, an analysis of the cost of running the business identified that LESS wouldn't be able to make it profitable, and so we declined the opportunity.

5:2:1 Local food collective: yes or no?

A focus group was held with local food producers in January 2016 to discuss the possibility of establishing a local food delivery scheme, and what governance structure would be most appropriate for this. The event was poorly attended and it became clear that attendees had limited capacity to engage with such an organisation, other than as a supplier of produce.

Following the focus group, 121 businesses listed on the LESS local food directory were surveyed to scope capacity and interest in a producer collective. A poor response rate of 3% suggested that interest was not there. The four businesses that did respond stated that they would prefer to sell food direct to a delivery service (so long as the cost was right), as they had limited time to give to a new initiative. Respondents stated that the preferred role of any new organisation would be the marketing of local food to attract more customers.

> *"I believe that the barrier to uptake of local food in Lancaster is more marketing than distribution. The existing distribution channels have capacity to expand. Marketing would help those channels to succeed".*
>
> Cara, Growing with Grace

Gaining more customers was considered by all to be a key factor in engaging businesses.

The discussion at the January meeting was fruitful in highlighting that our work is at an early stage of development. However, good connections were made between a free-range milk distributor and food growers, with the result of further **exploratory work being done to find out if the existing milk-float network in Lancaster District could expand its offerings to include locally grown vegetables and other local products such as bread and cheese**. Attendees also supported the idea of **regular seasonal outdoor markets** where they could both sell their produce and promote their business to a wider audience.

In order to further engage with food producers we know to be interested in supporting and selling to a local food delivery scheme, or setting up a resource sharing platform, we will have to make individual visits to places of work, rather than invite people to an evening meeting. It is clear that local food producers are time and resource poor and just need

more custom. The best means for achieving more custom may be through high profile and better marketing of local food, and **regular local food events**.

5:2:2 Business networking events

In January 2016 we held a business 'speed-dating' event. Unfortunately we also experienced low attendance at this, and conversations with key stakeholders since have emphasised the need for networking events to be useful for potential attendees, and for event venues to be rotated around the District.

We were constrained in terms of the timing of this event by the deadlines set out by the funders of our CED plan – we would have preferred to hold this later in the year, and certainly not so close to the focus group considering the collective.

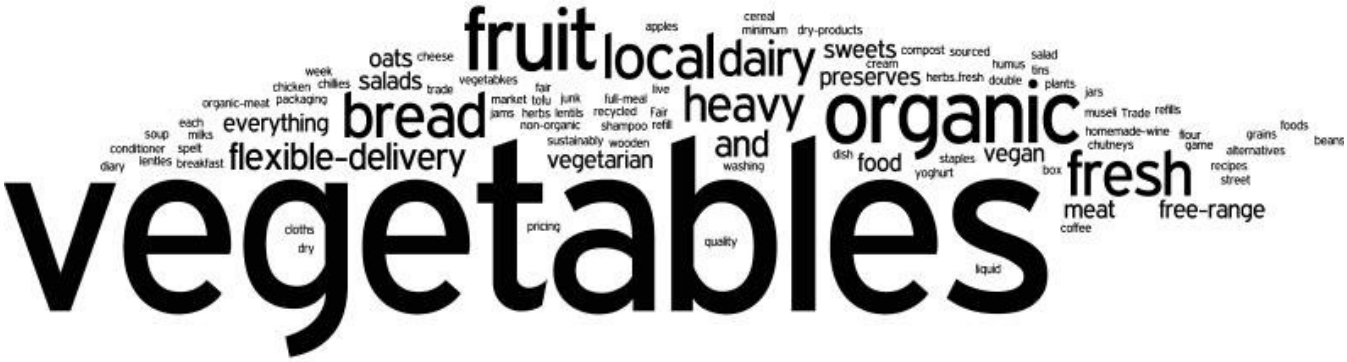
We will be carrying out further networking events in 2016 that aim to build relationships and trust and awareness amongst businesses and consumers, including a mid-summers market, a harvest market and a local food meal and awards event (see Section 7 Future Engagement & Activities).

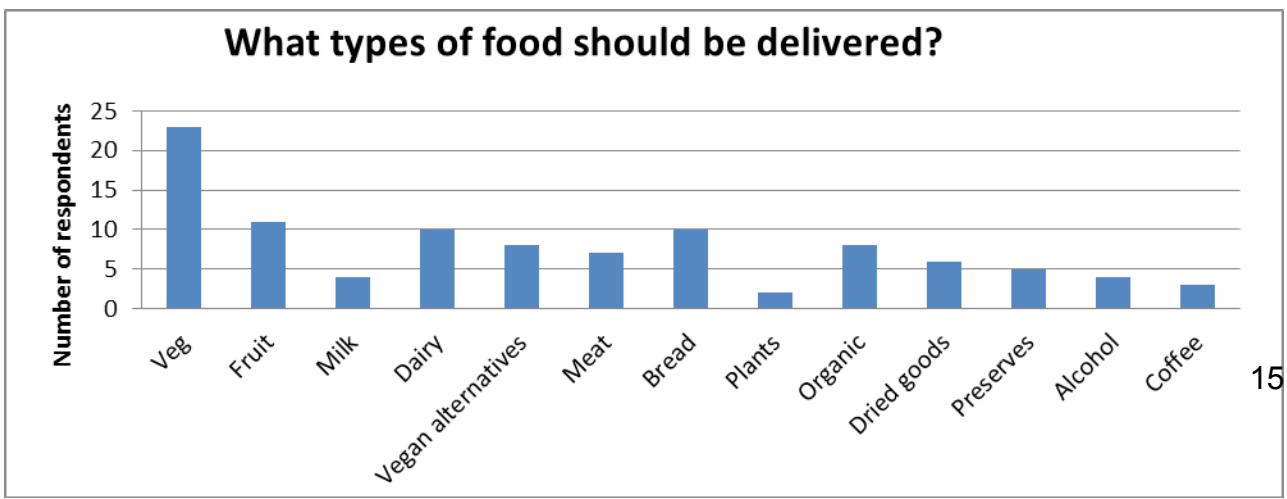
5:2:3 Local food delivery scheme

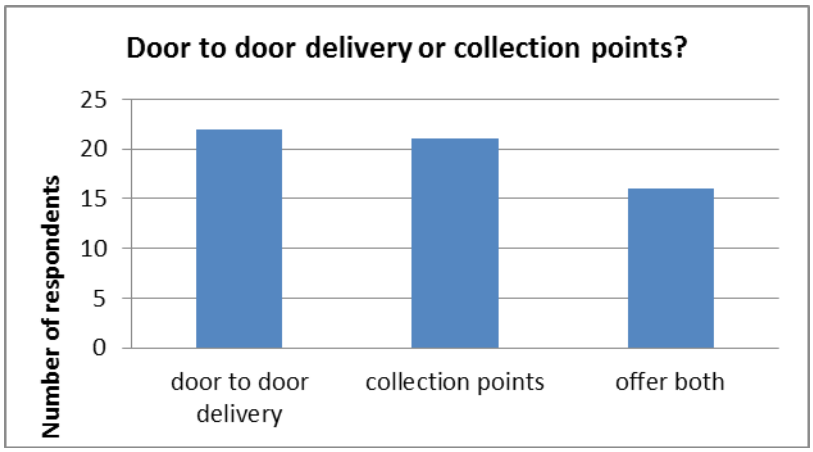
Consumers were surveyed at a Potato Day event in January 2016; a focus group was held with students at Lancaster University in March 2016, and an online survey was conducted to gauge thoughts about a local food delivery scheme and what it would need to offer to encourage custom. In total 62 people engaged with the process, the majority of which already had an interest in sourcing sustainable and ethical food.

Key findings are as follows:

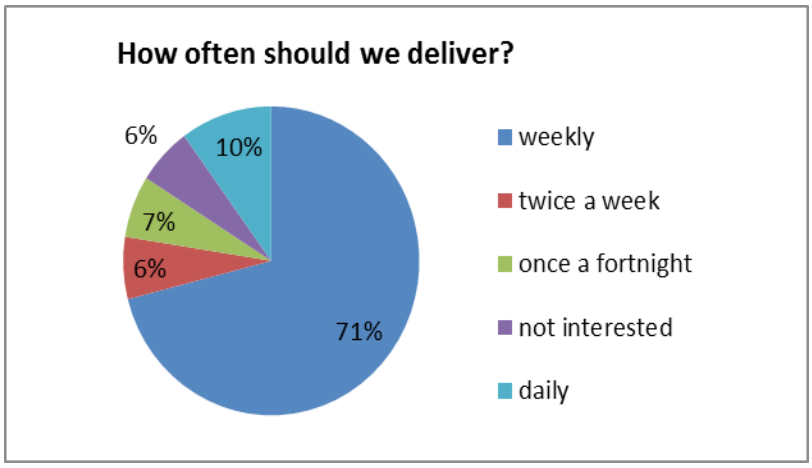
What would a local food delivery scheme have to offer for you to use it?







Diversity of produce, affordability, ethics and flexibility in terms of how and when boxes are delivered were key themes that emerged from the market research. However, it should be noted that this work failed to engage with the 'unconverted'. In terms of **cost,** suggestions for delivery costs ranged from £0 to £10, with an average suggested amount of £1.75.



Those who lived alone suggested more frequent deliveries in order to reduce food waste. However, weekly deliveries were suggested by 71% of respondents.

In terms of engaging with students, deliveries should be accompanied by recipe cards, which should be fairly quick and easy to make and should be realistic about what cooking equipment students can access. Using a local food box to also promote communal cooking with flat mates was a common student suggestion and could be built on in marketing.

5:2:3 Collection points

Informal interviews were conducted with three local food delivery schemes (including two vegetable box schemes and Lancaster's Local Food Assembly), to scope interest in establishing a network of local food collection points. Interest was shown by all initially as collection points have the potential to reduce delivery costs.

However, one vegetable box scheme has raised concerns about collection points only being attractive to 'deep greens' (as it is less convenient than home deliveries but potentially better for the environment and local producer), resulting in a potentially small market.

Growing with Nature[16] and the Food Assembly continue to be interested in trialling collection points provided that a sufficient number be dotted around Lancaster District and that any collection point is made sustainable in the long term (i.e. doesn't come to rely on one key individual).

[16] Veg growers and veg box delivery scheme based in Pilling, Lancashire - http://www.growing-with-nature.co.uk/

> *Folk do not mind paying the true delivery costs for high value one off purchases but for a regular vegetable delivery of let's say £10-£12 it is difficult to get the true delivery cost from them without making us seem very expensive. I estimate the cost of each delivery to be £3 cost to us based on 40+ deliveries per day. Drop points would work better for us and allow us to prevent some of these cost but would have to be within walking distance ideally so considering that we deliver all over the Lancaster and Morecambe areas for them to work there would have to be a fair few of them evenly spaced.* Growing With Nature

Two potential collection points (The Radish[17] and The Cornerstone Café[18]) were interviewed to scope practicalities and barriers to participating.

Key findings include:

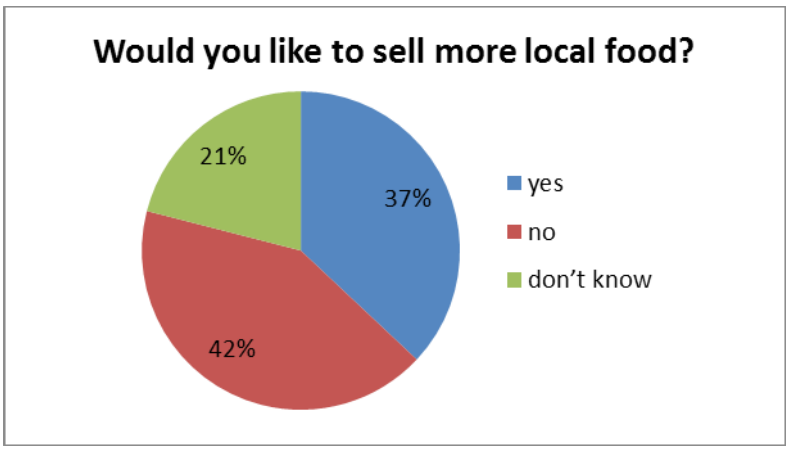
- Fruit and vegetables, dried goods and preserves will be easiest to deliver to multiple collection points. As soon as you offer dairy or meat, storage becomes an issue and will limit potential collection points.
- Deliveries in bags are preferable as they can be taken away and moved easily.
- All deliveries will need to be pre-sorted and will need to be delivered and placed in the correct place by the distributor. The less time needed from collection point hosts the better as they will have limited capacity to do any sorting and deal with customer enquiries.
- Deliveries and pick-ups will have to work around different collection point opening and closing times. Both interviewees stated this would have to occur during the day otherwise it would be tricky. Pubs and community centres may therefore be better options if we want to offer collection outside 9-5 hours.
- Storage space, time, affordability and temperatures/ conditions of storage space will act as potential barriers to successful collection points.
- To incentivise people to become collection points, we should offer a financial incentive, free or discounted veg boxes or encourage trade at collection point locations by including their produce in deliveries.
- A symbiotic relationship should be fostered between collection points and producers: collection points should promote themselves as a collection point to all their customers and through social media channels, producers should also promote collection points and their trade.
- What would happen to un-collected orders? And how would this impact on food waste? Apparently this has been an issue at the Marsh Community Centre[19].

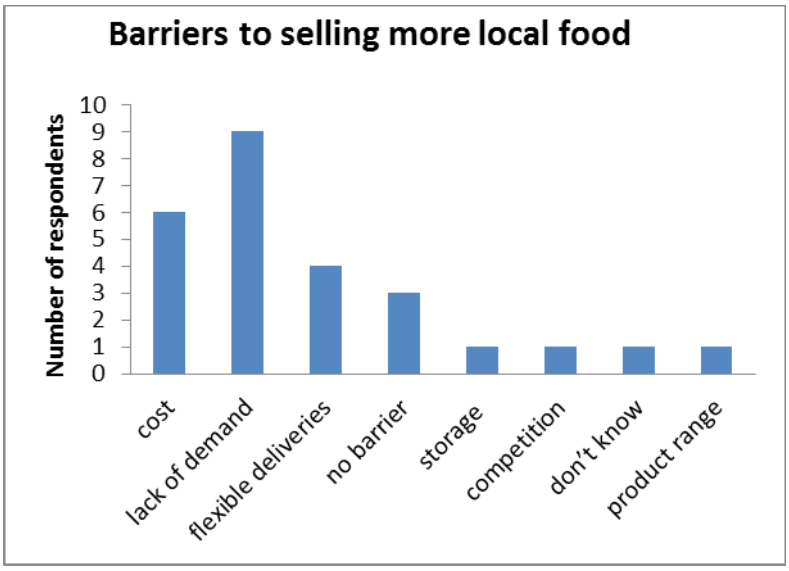
5:2:4 Convenience stores

Interviews were conducted at 20 convenience stores around Lancaster District. An additional four stores were visited but staff refused to be interviewed or stated they were not interested in the project. An additional eight villages and areas of Lancaster were visited but were found to have no convenience store and/or the local convenience store had closed and/or the local food outlet was a Spar or Premier branch whose food procurement was managed outside of Lancaster District.

[17] Deli / caterers based in Lancaster - http://www.radishcatering.co.uk/
[18] Café running as part of a third sector partnership in Lancaster - http://www.thecornerstonelancaster.org.uk/
[19] Community centre in Lancaster which unsuccessfully tried to facilitate a food-buying co-op - http://www.mcccc.org.uk/

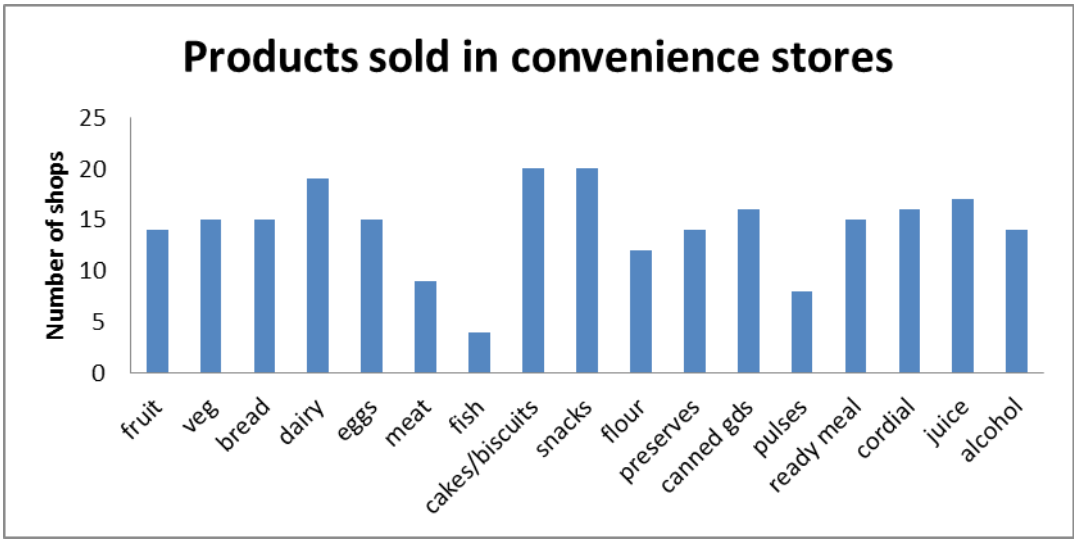
Key findings include:





Convenience stores can potentially sell more local food, especially milk and eggs (half of the interviewed shops already source their milk and/or eggs locally). However, due to limited storage space, deliveries would have to be fairly flexible and in small quantities, with milk and baked goods being delivered daily, eggs twice a week or more, vegetables weekly and other food items such as preserves and drinks less frequently. Cost and flexibility in terms of amount and frequency of deliveries would be key.

In addition, convenience stores currently take advantage of 'sale and return' offers, whereby out-of-date items are taken away and are replaced by new deliveries. A similar service would be needed for local food, or an alternative service that reduces food waste would need to be developed.



Convenience stores visited showed huge variation in terms of produce offered and appeared to respond to customer requests and needs – which appeared to vary in different locations due to changing demographics. For example, convenience stores in the West End of Morecambe and on the Ridge estate – both of which are relatively 'deprived areas' - emphasised the importance of well-known brands and affordable food. By contrast, corner shops in the Freehold area of Lancaster, where many residents are

relatively well-off, stated that their customers showed an interest in where their food came from and how it was produced and were therefore willing to trial increasing their local food offerings, so long as the cost and quality of products was good. Over half of the stores visited also sold alcohol and/or cigarettes which they reported were key to their survival.

5:2:5 Local food logo

Local food branding has been raised as important by all stakeholder groups surveyed. The marketing of local food was also suggested as the preferred role of any new organisation or local food collective.

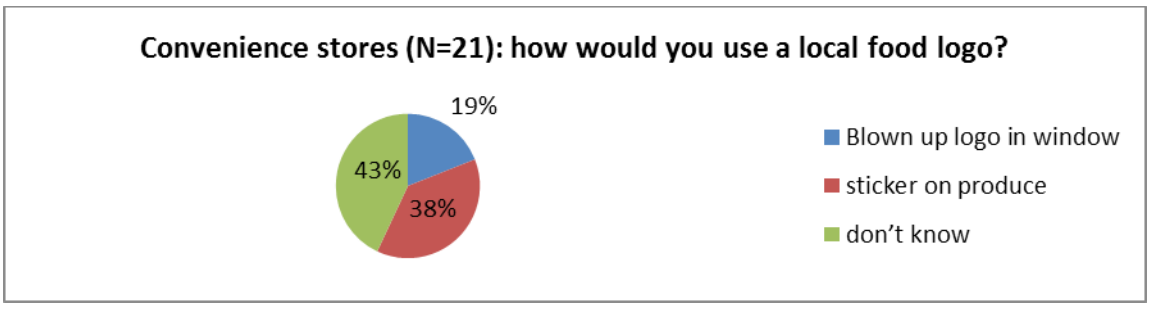
Producers, retailers and convenience stores have been surveyed for thoughts on what Lancaster's local food logo could include, and how it could be used.

Producer suggestions regarding a local food logo included the following: an image of a red rose, the Ashton Memorial, Lancaster Castle and a witch's broomstick. General comments emphasised the need for a logo to be simple and clear.

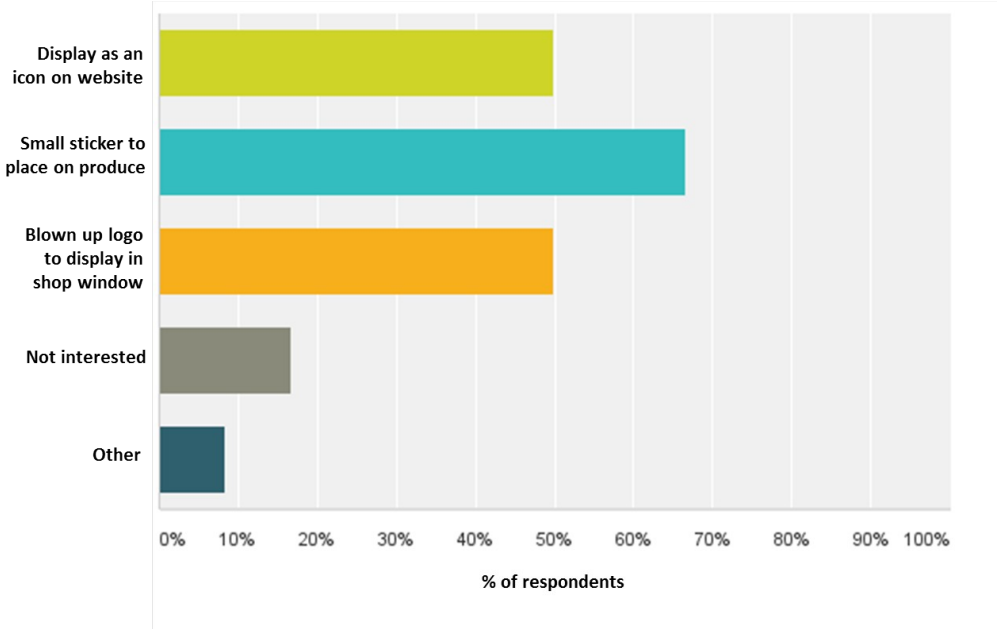
Retailer suggestions for a logo included an image of Lancaster Castle, the Ashton Memorial and a small picture of vegetables or fruit surrounding an iconic landmark. General comments stated a logo needed to be simple and clear. Other comments noted the level 'of noise' within the logo market and that another logo may get lost. There may also be a cost issue if using stickers on produce? Menu advertising and street board advertising were suggested as alternatives.

In regard to displaying a blackboard in shops that details where produce comes from, 44% of respondents said they would be interested in doing this and 33% of respondents stated that they already did this. 11% were not sure and 11% said this would not be possible for them.

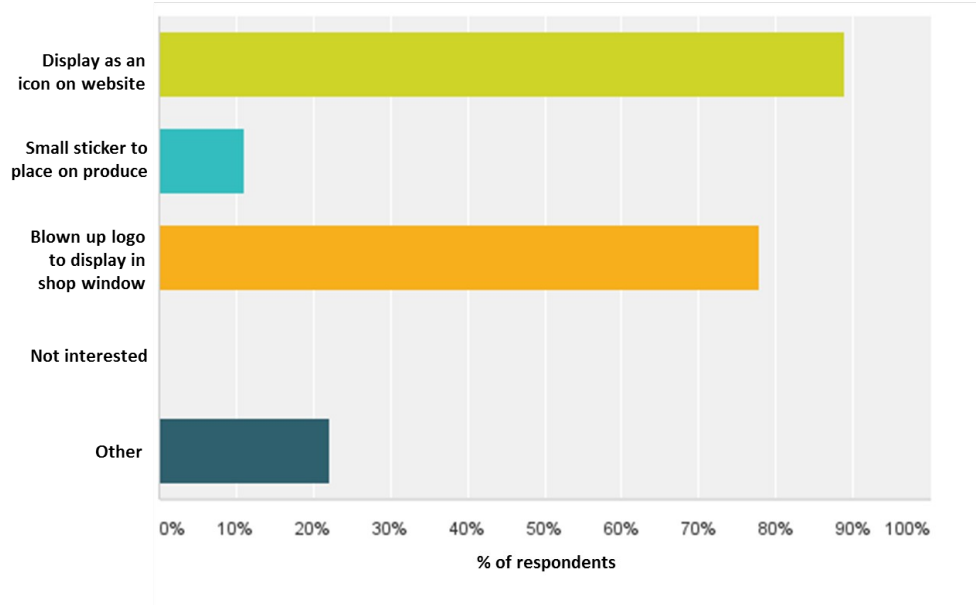
Convenience stores suggested that a logo needed to be simple and easily identifiable. Suggestions for a logo included the wording "locally sourced from…" or "Produced locally" and naming the cow from which milk was sourced.



Producers (N=15): Would you be interested in using a local food logo? What would you use it for?



Retailers (N=9): Would you be interested in a local food logo? What would you use it for?



LESS's online Local Food Directory (http://www.lessuk.org/directory.php) presents a useful tool for raising awareness of where local and sustainable food can be accessed. A window sticker has therefore been created in consultation with LESS staff and selected businesses and businesses listed on the local food directory will be asked to display it in their shop or business windows.

The GOLFE project will seek to evaluate the success of the window stickers, and other marketing used, in driving traffic to the online directory and increasing sales at local food businesses.

5:3 Conclusion

The following conclusions are the result of our engagement and market research from September 2014 to date, and have been used to identify the outcomes of this plan (see section 6: Outcomes below).

It has become apparent that local food businesses are time and resource poor and will not engage with any initiative, whether a meeting or new business venture, unless it will generate new custom or business opportunities.

A producer collective does not appear to be a suitable option for Lancaster District at present, unless it took on the role of marketing local food businesses, and businesses could be involved without having to commit a lot of time.

Based on the market research for this plan, methods for overcoming and sourcing sustainable and local food that could be trialled in Lancaster District include:

- Better and more strategic marketing of local food businesses and their food, that builds on LESS's online local food directory www.lessuk.org/directory
- Promoting and expanding the range of local food items offered by the existing milk float delivery network in Lancaster District.
- Scoping and establishing a network of local food collection points that can be used by current local food delivery schemes- including vegetable box schemes. Collection points should be created in residential areas- University Campuses included.
- Increasing the range of local food items offered by convenience stores
- Developing a new local food delivery scheme that multiple local food businesses can sell too.
- Coordinating seasonal outdoor markets and events that promote and celebrate the variety of local produce available in Lancaster District; that can also be used for business-business and consumer-business networking.

6: Outcomes

The outcomes identified in the table below have been identified as a result of our existing engagement work with the local produce sector and wider customer base (see section 5: Engagement).

Key: ◆ social / ◆ economic / ◆ environmental

Before March 2017	Before January 2018	2018 & Beyond
• Local community more aware of where to buy local produce and can identify it more easily ◆◆◆		
• Local community have greater understanding of what 'local' food is. ◆		
• Better understanding of the barriers to existing local food distribution schemes, the potential role of a new one and how it can support existing schemes. ◆◆◆	• Opportunities for the local community to access local produce outside '9-5' hours are increased. ◆◆	
• Better understanding of options and barriers for selling local produce via corner shops ◆◆	• Increased trust and improved relationships between local food businesses ◆◆	
• Better understanding of options and barriers for distributing local produce via milk float network ◆◆		• Buy-in from local authorities and tourist board to promote local food within Lancaster District ◆◆◆
• A core group of local producers interested in a local food distribution venture ◆◆	• Establish a local food distribution scheme that involves local food producers, distributors and retailers. ◆◆	• Healthier and more sustainable food accessible to the community of Lancaster District via increased methods of accessing local produce. ◆◆◆
• Better understanding of options for creating a resource sharing platform ◆◆	• Establish a local resource-sharing platform to enable further involvement of smallholders in the delivery scheme. ◆◆◆	• Lancaster District has a successful (profitable, environmentally and socially sound, and widely supported) local food delivery scheme that offers a single route to market for multiple local food businesses. ◆◆◆
• Increased understanding amongst local food businesses and consumers about the need to collaborate in order to increase access to sustainable and healthy local food. ◆◆		• Training and employment opportunities in the local produce sector have increased ◆◆
• Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy ◆◆◆		

7: Future Engagement & Activities

Below is a summary of future engagement work and activities planned to achieve outcomes over the next 12 months and beyond.

Via its GOLFE project, LESS will:

- Continue to engage local food businesses, consumers and other key stakeholders to gather further intelligence to contribute to developing all of our activities. The information will be shared publicly in order to facilitate as many other local community or commercial ventures participating in growing our local food economy.
- Publish this CED plan and the results of our market research to kick-start local dialogue about how we follow through with identified activities. It is expected that LESS will have limited capacity to set up new ventures or enterprises but is happy to share our knowledge and experience with local entrepreneurs and / or community organisations that do.
- Promote the online Local Food Directory (www.lessuk.org/directory.php). Window stickers have been developed for businesses listed on the directory to display in shop windows. These will both promote the directory and the business's sale of local food. We have also developed a marketing plan for the Local Food Directory with support from a local consultant (see Appendix).
- Develop GOLFE's local food marketing strategy, and scope the potential of supporting an independent local food marketing organisation- potentially funded by local food businesses and other key stakeholders within the local food economy. The local food directory marketing plan can initiate this process and be built on in the future.
- Continue research into local food schemes in the UK (delivery services, food collectives and resource sharing platforms), in order to continue refining our understanding of experienced barriers and successes.
- Coordinate a series of seasonal market events. Two are currently planned: a mid-summers market in June 2016 and a harvest market in September 2016. Both events will promote and celebrate local food in the Lancaster District, and aim to make local food producers visible to their potential market in addition to fostering connections between the producers themselves. The events will also be used to promote the Local Food Directory, and continue community engagement. The long-term intention is to have a regular programme of market events in the District that focus on seasonal and local produce only.
- Local Food Awards – to be held in November 2016 – this high-profile event will both raise awareness of what local food is available and where it can be accessed, as well as celebrating local food businesses and organisations. Again, we are seeking funding for this event, and see it as a marketing opportunity both for nominated businesses and the wider local food sector, and to promote the Local Food Directory

- Conduct collection point trial(s) – we are in the process of developing a trial for at least two collection points in Lancaster District. This would offer us the opportunity to assess whether this system might be successful if rolled out more widely across the District, and will identify barriers to making it work. We are seeking additional funding to support this pilot work. We will also continue to map potential collection points that can offer access outside 9-5 hours. Trials will be evaluated, and results will be shared publicly, via the LESS website and GOLFE blog, to enable other local food entrepreneurs to learn from and continue the work. We will also continue mapping potential collection points that can offer pick up times outside 9-5 hours.
- Conduct corner shop trial(s) – support corner shops to increase their stock of local produce or stock local produce for the first time. Barriers and opportunities for scaling this work up will be assessed.
- Support and encourage the ongoing dialogue between a local milk distribution network and local food producers, with the aim of trialling at least two milk rounds that offer an extended local food range to their customers.
- Develop a resource sharing platform – there is quite a wide range of possibilities for what might be shared, from surplus produce to tools and materials. At the moment something relatively simple (e.g. a private Facebook group) may meet the needs of most local businesses we have already engaged with, but we will carry out ongoing consultation via our other planned activities in order to develop this idea further.
- Continue to research feasibility of a local food delivery / distribution venture.
    - Scoping interest in a local food delivery scheme amongst the 'broader public' and users of supermarket delivery schemes.
    - Lancaster's Food Assembly has shown an interest in moving away from the Food Assembly Model and towards delivery. The GOLFE project will seek to support this transition, with the current Food Assembly host potentially taking on the role of delivering local food but under a different name and model.
- Continue to engage with the Local Authority, Tourist Board and other strategic organisations via Sustainable Food City Lancaster and other networks.
- Continue to monitor local food spending via the Food Loop Game and work with the Small Green Consultancy to develop this work in the future.
- Scope interest and develop a local food marketing initiative or collective.

See Section 10 for a more detailed timetable of activities and outcomes

8: Resources available to deliver activities

This section considers the resources available to the partnership in terms of delivering the planned activities and outcomes.

LESS is a small third-sector organisation with limited resources and capacity. Our GOLFE project is currently funded until March 2017, and we are engaging in raising funds to enable this to continue beyond that point. Understanding of LESS's resources to deliver the activities below should be understood in that context.

Work of this nature is collaborative and as Lancaster has a bustling local food sector we hope that many of the recommendations or planned activities in this plan will be taken up by local food entrepreneurs or community organisations who can access their own funding assets. We anticipate that LESS and the partnership may only have a supportive or facilitative role, rather than directly delivering some of the work.

Human

- LESS staff time via the GOLFE project: to organise events, focus groups, conduct research, develop ideas, and support existing businesses in collaborating.
- Staff time and good will of local food businesses and key stakeholder organisations.

Organisational

- LESS is a functioning organisation that is able to support development work.
- From our research and networking activities we have started creating a network of local food businesses and stakeholders that can potentially provide further resources for the delivery of this plan, e.g. a network of food collection points.
- There are various organisations that would be able to help the growth and support of local businesses and enterprises relevant to this plan:
    - The Hive support programme is the UK's only cross-sectoral programme of support for co-ops and community businesses - www.thehive.coop
    - Shared Future supports the development of social enterprises - http://www.sharedfuturecic.org.uk/

Assets

- LESS's online Local Food Directory (www.lessuk.org/directory.php) will be a key resource for delivering much of this plan. It has been revamped to make searches more accurate and useful, making it easier for both customers and businesses to access information about where to source local and sustainable food. The directory currently lists 210 local food producers, processors, retailers and other outlets (such as cafés and restaurants) that stock or serve local produce within a 20 mile radius of Lancaster's Town Hall. This directory will continue to be hosted and implemented by LESS as part of its GOLFE project.

We aim to grow the number of listed businesses to at least 500 over the next 12 months. The aim is that the directory will be at least partly monetised in the future by charging businesses for a premium listing, but we are currently at the stage of demonstrating the value of being listed on the site.

Financial

- Ongoing delivery of activities that are relevant to the plan will be carried out via the LESS GOLFE project, which is mainly funded via the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation at present. We anticipate that this will continue until the end of March 2017, provided additional funding can be found for various elements of the work.
- Sources of grant funding for delivering some of the planned events and activities for this plan include:
    - Lancaster Business Improvement District Special Projects Fund
    - The Joy Welch Educational Charitable Trust
- Potential local food ventures could be funded via application to the following large funding streams:
    - Awards for All: Big Lottery programme for grants below £10,000 – open to funding for community food initiatives.
    - Power to Change: this is Big Lottery initiative that supports community businesses. Details of new funding rounds will be available from April 2016 onwards.
    - Big Potential: Initiative to support VCFS organisations via grant funding / social investment to deliver greater social impact
    - EAFRD: This European funding stream is developing a food co-operation call, but do not expect it to be open until early 2017. This would be a potential funding stream for a local food collective or delivery scheme.

Environmental

- Reliable growing seasons (although risk posed by climate change and poor harvests).

9: Risk Management

Risk	Potential impact	Probability	Severity	Mitigation Strategy
Long term staff absence or staff leave LESS	Work couldn't be delivered in expected time-scales	Medium	High	We don't expect staff to leave LESS before the end of the funded GOLFE project (March 2017), however there is always the chance of sickness absence. Due to the size / structure of LESS we would not have the capacity to 'replace' a sick member of staff, and so project activity would have to be reduced during a period of sickness.
Local businesses don't have capacity to engage with trials (collection points, corner shops, markets)	We would struggle to carry out successful trials	Low	High	We have good contacts with a range of interested local food businesses and would try to time and adapt events and trials in a way that meets these businesses' needs. We also plan to alter our research and trial methodologies and proposed governance structures e.g. visiting businesses in situ rather than asking them to attend events; consulting interested businesses over the phone rather than in one-to-one meetings; ensuring that trials have direct benefits e.g. increased custom or promotion; ensuring any proposed businesses have a governance structure that allows for the flexible engagement of local businesses.
Local businesses don't have capacity to engage with future engagement work	We would not be able to carry out future engagement work	Medium	Medium	
One or more key partners drops out	Lack of robust involvement from a wide range of partners in delivery of the work	Low	Low	Our pool of stakeholders and key partners is relatively large compared to the size of the project, and is growing! No barriers are anticipated to continuing to work minus one or two partners, or to recruiting new ones if needed.
We are unsuccessful in securing match funding for proposed trials, events and/or engagement work	Events and trials would have to run on reduced budgets, limiting their scope in terms of reach and size, and limiting promotion to low cost or free methods. Some events may have to be cancelled.	Medium	High	LESS's current budget for the GOLFE project provides limited amounts for running a number of small scale, low cost events / engagement. We have also identified a number of other potential funding streams from a range of different funders that we could approach to support events/trials, some of which we have established good relationships with through partners.
LESS are unable to continue involvement beyond end of currently funded work (March 2017)	LESS wouldn't be able to continue supporting the planned work	Medium	Medium	If it becomes clear that LESS's involvement couldn't continue after March 2017, the GOLFE team will ensure that the project's exit strategy includes handing over key elements of the CED plan to other local partners or organisations with a focus on growing Lancaster District's local food economy.

10: Timetable for activities following publication of CED plan

Who	Resources	Activity	Output	Outcome
Before March 2017				
LESS GOLFE project staff	LESS staff time Project funding via Esmée Fairbairn (and others tbc)	Promotion and marketing of Local Food Directory	Increased use of online Local Food Directory	Increased understanding amongst the local community of where local and sustainable produce can be bought (and to some extent starts to work towards outcome in 'Before Jan 2018' of Local community have greater understanding of what 'local' food is.)
			Midsummers Market – June 2016	
			Harvest Market – Sep 2016	
			Local Food Awards – Nov 2016	
		Market research and community engagement via a series of events, including seasonal markets and Local Food Awards.	Publication of market research and community engagement to date as part of this plan. With promotional event to encourage discussions and project development	Better understanding of the barriers to existing local food distribution schemes and resource sharing platforms, the potential role of a new one and how it can support existing schemes.
LESS GOLFE project staff, collection point organisation and staff, delivery scheme	LESS staff time plus time and good will of collection point organisation and staff and delivery scheme. Project funding via Joy Welch (tbc)	Collection point trial(s)	Evaluation of collection point trial activity	
LESS GOLFE project staff plus corner shop and staff and local food producers	LESS staff time plus time and good will of corner shop staff and local food producers	Corner shop trial(s)	Evaluation of corner shop trial activity	Better understanding of options and barriers for selling local produce via corner shops
LESS GOLFE project staff, Stephenson's Dairy, local food producers	LESS staff time to encourage discussions / local food business staff time	Expanded milk delivery service to include a range of local produce (trial)	Evaluation of local food milk float trial	Better understanding of options and barriers for selling local produce via existing milk float network
LESS GOLFE project staff / local food businesses	LESS staff time / local food business staff time	Ongoing engagement and research re local food distribution / delivery venture	Evaluation of market research on food delivery/distribution venture	A core group of local producers interested in a local food distribution venture- whether in capacity as suppliers or part of management structure.

Who	Resources	Activity	Output	Outcome
LESS GOLFE project staff / local food businesses	LESS staff time / local food business staff time	Ongoing engagement and research re. local resource sharing platform	Share results of research with local food businesses	Better understanding of options for creating a resource sharing platform
LESS GOLFE staff and Small Green Consultancy	LESS Staff time, Small Green Consultancy Staff Time	Food Loop game	Increased local spending by players and increased evidence of benefits of local spending	Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy
All of the above contributes to this outcome				Increased understanding amongst local food businesses and consumers about the need to collaborate in order to increase access to sustainable and healthy local food
The remainder of this timetable assumes that LESS is able to secure continuation funding to deliver ongoing work beyond March 2017 via the GOLFE project. If this does not happen, the project's exit strategy will identify potential local partners who could fulfil the role identified for GOLFE from this point on.				
Before January 2018				
LESS GOLFE project staff	LESS staff time Project funding tbc	Promotion and marketing of Local Food Directory	Increased use of online Local Food Directory	Local community more aware of where to buy local produce and can identify it more easily Local community have greater understanding of what 'local' food is.
			Continuing programme of seasonal local produce markets	
LESS GOLFE Project staff plus staff of local corner shops & collection points	LESS staff time plus time and good will of collection point and corner shop staff	Supporting participating businesses to stock local produce / act as collection points	Corner shops continuing to stock local produce	Opportunities for local community to access local produce outside '9-5' are increased.
			Collection points for local delivery schemes continue to operate	
LESS GOLFE Project staff (likely to be facilitation role) plus local milk floats and food producers	LESS staff time / local food business staff time	Supporting local milk delivery schemes to stock and deliver local produce	Milk float rounds continue to stock and deliver local produce	Opportunities for local community to access local produce outside '9-5' are increased.

Who	Resources	Activity	Output	Outcome
LESS GOLFE Project staff (likely to be a facilitation role), Food Assembly, local food businesses	LESS staff time / local food business staff time	Ongoing engagement and research re local food distribution / delivery venture and resource sharing platform	Evaluation of research on food delivery/distribution venture Establish a local resource-sharing platform.	Increased trust and improved relationships between local food businesses Establish a local resource sharing platform and food distribution scheme that involves local food producers, distributors and retailers
		Research funding / investment opportunities to support such a venture	Prepare bids / business plans	Establish a local food distribution scheme that involves local food producers, distributors and retailers
LESS GOLFE staff and Small Green Consultancy	LESS Staff time, Small Green Consultancy Staff Time	Food Loop game	Increased local spending by players and increased evidence of benefits of local spending	Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy
All of the above contribute to this outcome				Increased understanding amongst local food businesses and consumers about the need to collaborate in order to increase access to sustainable and healthy local food
2018 onwards				
LESS project staff, local food businesses	LESS staff time/ local food business staff time	Support and marketing of existing schemes and ongoing community engagement	Increased use of local food directory by businesses and consumers Annual calendar of seasonal local food events	Local community more aware of where to buy local produce and can identify it more easily. Local community have greater understanding of what 'local' food is. Increased trust and improved relationships between local food businesses
LESS GOLFE Project staff (likely to be a facilitation role), local food businesses	LESS staff time/ local food business staff time	Support and promote existing schemes	Milk float network continues to stock & delivery a range of local produce Corner shops continue to stock local produce A network of collection points continue to be used by local food delivery schemes	Increased trust and improved relationships between local food businesses Opportunities for local community to access local produce outside '9-5' are increased. Local community more aware of where to buy local produce and can identify it more easily. Local community have greater understanding of what 'local' food is.

Who	Resources	Activity	Output	Outcome
			Local food delivery scheme continues to offer a single route to market for multiple local food businesses Active and inclusive resource sharing platform	Lancaster District has a successful (profitable, environmentally and socially sound, and widely supported) local food delivery scheme that offers a single route to market for multiple local food businesses **All of the above will result in:** Healthier and more sustainable food being more accessible to the community of Lancaster District via increased accessibility of local produce. Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy Training and employment opportunities in the local produce sector have increased
LESS GOLFE staff, local food businesses and community initiatives	LESS staff time/ local food business staff time/ community group volunteer time	Ongoing engagement with these organisations via Sustainable Food City Lancaster	Widespread promotion and marketing and sourcing of local food	Buy-in from local authorities and tourist board to promote and source local food within Lancaster District
LESS GOLFE staff and Small Green Consultancy	LESS Staff time, Small Green Consultancy Staff Time	Food Loop game	Increased local spending by players and increased evidence of benefits of local spending	Greater proportion of local spending on food remains in the local economy **As a result of the above**: Training and employment opportunities in the local produce sector have increased Healthier and more sustainable food being more accessible to the community of Lancaster District via increased accessibility of local produce.

Appendix – Local Food Directory Marketing Plan

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LESS Local Food Directory: Marketing Plan

The following outlines a proposed marketing plan for the development of the Local Food Directory.

It is recognised that LESS is experiencing limited capacity in terms of staff resources, so the following plan has been designed to be implemented with minimal resources. Should additional resource become available, the plan can be reviewed to take this into account and expand activities further.

Discussions have been held with LESS representatives to discuss the current status and future needs of the Directory and it is recommended that marketing activities should focus on the following four aims.

1. **To increase public traffic.** Public use of the Directory should be dramatically increased to allow its future sustainability. Businesses and organisations will be more willing to get involved if the reach of the Directory is increased as this will offer a good proposition for their own marketing strategies. Large scale public support will also provide an argument to introduce a registration fee to businesses at a later date.
2. **To increase corporate membership and participation.** Public support should be significantly increased before committing resources to recruiting corporate supporters. However, the support of businesses currently registered could be worked upon and 'formalised' to ensure they return the favour of the free marketing they currently receive. At the very least, each business registered should help to promote the Directory to their customers and advertise their support.
3. **To create opportunities for future sustainability.** Once public support has been significantly increased, and visitors have been encouraged to register as members, there will be a strong argument to introduce a charge to businesses involved. Businesses will, by this time, be enjoying a significant amount of free advertising of their services. It is reasonable to expect these businesses to donate a small fee to support the continuation of the Directory beyond funding (with the understanding that this donation will allow it to continue).
4. **To consider and incorporate new aims and objectives.** The actions recommended in this plan can be expanded and adjusted to incorporate the new activities and priorities of LESS as they come online.
   The plan suggests the introduction of membership registration for members of the public. Registered members could be offered additional benefits which would encourage them to read any newsletters issued and visit the site more regularly. The introduction of discounts and special offers is one example of an incentive which would encourage members to recommend membership to their friends. This increase in attention from those engaged will allow targeted marketing to be carried out on any related topic in future. For example, seasonal markets are planned for June and September. The increased traffic to the site and increased readership of the newsletter will allow these markets to be promoted much more effectively. The use of Mailchimp, membership registration and Google Analytics will also allow LESS to anticipate attendance and interest in these events.

1. **Increasing public traffic**

The following table outlines some actions which could be taken to increase public traffic. These actions must be reviewed on a regular basis to assess their effectiveness, and all activities amended as appropriate.

Action	Measure effectiveness
Develop promotional brochure to be placed in outlets of businesses and organisations currently registered. Ensure an interactive & interesting design to appeal to adults and children and ask this to be displayed on counters and placed in customers' bags. Ask all participating businesses/organisations to also display posters and window stickers to promote the Directory	Stock take brochures in each location
	Site visit to check display of posters and stickers (and regularly change to refresh attention)
	Measure individual visitors to site via Google analytics
	Provide option to register as a member on site and ask 'where did you hear about us' in registration process
Ask businesses and organisations that are already registered if they would be willing to provide special offers and discounts to people that register as members on the Food Directory - this would provide a reason for public to register (so increased data about users can be collected) and would increase traffic. This would also increase the numbers of members reading the newsletter as they would want to know about new discounts available. Participating businesses could be provided with a list of registered names or customers could be issued with a membership number and card to administer this.	Number of visitors which register as members, number of new visitors to businesses (if they are able to collect this information)
	Number of people that read the newsletter and click through to included links (use Mailchimp to distribute newsletter to allow more data to be collected)
Direct customers to Food Directory in every Lancaster Guardian food column	Measure individual visitors to site via Google analytics
	Provide option to register as a member on site and ask 'where did you hear about us'
Include link to Food Directory in all email footers from organisation	Measure individual visitors to site via Google analytics
	Provide option to register as a member on site and ask 'where did you hear about us'
Include link to Food Directory in all LESS publications	Measure individual visitors to site via Google analytics
	Provide option to register as a member on site and ask 'where did you hear about us'
Use existing newsletters to promote Food Directory with stories of interest which will encourage visit to site - e.g. 'spotlight on' features about organisations or businesses that are included in the Directory, information about special offers and discounts	Use Mailchimp for all newsletters to allow data to be collected (e.g. how many click through to links, how many open the email etc.)
Increase traffic on social media to provide an alternative marketing platform. Provide reasons to visit Facebook page (such as stories about producers, interesting facts, events happening locally, recipes) and advertise how to find the page (e.g. use 'find us on Facebook' logo on posters and email footers). In order to use social media effectively, time must be committed to interacting with users on a regular basis and should use a more personal than corporate approach - both posting interesting topics and engaging in chat etc.	Number of people that 'like' page, compare numbers of 'likes' for different types of Facebook posts, number of 'shares', review 'reach' of posts (displayed within Facebook)

2. Increasing corporate membership

In order to present an attractive proposition to businesses and organisation (and in time encourage a small registration fee to be paid), the reach of the Directory must be increased.

The activities suggested in stage 1 should begin to increase public activity and it is vital that data is collected about this activity to demonstrate the value of the Directory to businesses and organisations.

As a minimum, the following actions must be taken to demonstrate public traffic:

- Use of Mailchimp for all newsletters and email publications. This will allow a comprehensive database of registered customers to be easily maintained and administered and data obtained about the effectiveness of each publication.
  Mailchimp will allow LESS to demonstrate the % of recipients that actually open and read publications, the number that click through to included links etc.
  This online platform will in time provide an effective option for targeted marketing (e.g. if a business agreed to pay a fee for registration then they could be offered additional benefits such as being featured as a 'spotlight on' business in a newsletter and an accompanying 'spotlight' on the website for a limited period).
- Facility for members of the public to register as members and receive a membership number and card to access special discounts (in partnership with participating businesses). This facility would allow LESS to demonstrate numbers of engaged users more effectively, target marketing of specific events or products, provide a platform for businesses to encourage visits to their outlets via discounts and special promotions. This would also allow LESS to measure data about type and location of customers for future targeting via registration questions (such as location of individual, any particular interests, where did you hear about us).
- Use of Google Analytics to measure numbers of unique and repeat visitors to the site, their activity whilst on the site and time spent engaged.

In addition, while stage 1 activities are carried out, it would be useful to gather data from existing registered business to find out why they got involved and what they could offer to help promote the Directory via a short consultation exercise. For example:

- How did you hear about the Directory?
- Why did you decide to register?
- What would you be willing/able to do to help us promote the Directory to members of the public?
- Would you be interested in offering special offers or discounts to members of the Directory to help promote your business and encourage use of the Directory?

The above actions will allow LESS to present a clear picture of the benefits businesses could receive from their involvement in the Directory.

In exchange for the (currently) free marketing they receive, it is recommended that LESS ask all registered businesses to display posters, window stickers and brochures to advertise the Directory to their customers.

3. **Opportunities for future sustainability**

As previously discussed, once public support has been significantly increased and this can be clearly demonstrated, there will be a strong argument to introduce a charge to businesses involved.

Businesses will, by this time, be enjoying a significant amount of free advertising of their services. It is reasonable to expect these businesses to donate a small fee to support the continuation of the Directory beyond funding. This fee should be reasonable, but set at a level which would ideally completely fund the running costs of the Directory.

4. **Consider and incorporate new aims and objectives**

As previously discussed, the above marketing actions and measures can be used to promote any new opportunities and priorities as they come online. The following platforms should become stronger via stages 1 and 2 and present an effective model to promote all activities of LESS:

- Social media (Facebook)
- Newsletters (via Mailchimp)
- Outlets of registered businesses
- Lancaster Guardian column
- Online blog
- All LESS events and publications (not already included)

As the dates and activities for future priorities have not yet been finalised, it is recommended that this plan be reviewed at the end of each quarter to allow any new objectives to be incorporated.

LESS have secured the support of an independent consultant to assist with this review process.

Implementation and review of the marketing plan

The following implementation is intended as a brief outline guide and the plan should be reviewed on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Quarter 1: April – June 2016

Implement stages 1 and 2, with focus on stage 1 in the first instance (public traffic must be increased first to present an enticing proposition for corporate members).

Whilst stage 1 activities are being carried out, issue a consultation questionnaire to participating businesses to gather data for stage 2 (as suggested).

Review activity each month to ensure effective.

Meet with independent consultant to discuss outcomes and priorities for Qtr. 2.

Carry out action based workshop at the end of Qtr. 1 to review progress and consider the integration of any new priorities.

Produce revised plan for Qtr. 2.

Quarter 2: July – September 2016

If public support has increased to an attractive level, begin work on stage 2 while continuing with stage 1 activities.

Review activity each month to ensure effective.

Meet with independent consultant to discuss Qtr. 2 outcomes and priorities for Qtr. 3.

Carry out action based workshop at the end of Qtr. 2 to review progress and consider the integration of any new priorities.

Produce revised plan for Qtr. 3.

Quarter 3: October – December 2016

Continue stage 1 and 2 activities and consider introduction of fee for corporate membership.

Review activity each month to ensure effective.

Meet with independent consultant to discuss Qtr. 3 outcomes and priorities for Qtr. 4.

Carry out action based workshop at the end of Qtr. 3 to review progress and consider the integration of any new priorities.

Produce revised plan for Qtr. 4.

Quarter 4: January – March 2017

Continue stage 1 and 2 activities and implement corporate fee.

Meet with independent consultant to discuss any future plans/needs for support.