

# Belfast

Sustainable Food Cities  
Award 2015

**BELFAST  
FOOD  
NETWORK**



**MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO FOOD PARTNERSHIP, ACTION PLAN AND POLICY:**

	<b>BRONZE</b>	<b>Achieved?</b>
<b>Partnership</b>	<p><b>Terms of reference for partnership in place with list of member names and organisations.</b></p> <p><b>Cross-sector (public sector, business, NGO, community group) membership of partnership.</b></p> <p><b>Partnership has met at least 4 times <u>spanning</u> the last 12 months and evidence that meetings are leading to implementation.</b></p>	<p><u>Yes/No</u></p> <p><u>Yes/No</u></p> <p><u>Yes/No</u></p>
<b>Belfast Food Network</b>	<p>The establishment of Belfast Food Network was the result of consultation and collaboration with some thirty organisations across all professional sectors. Many of those bodies have continued to play an active role in the network, either as <a href="#">members</a> of the Advisory Group or on one of the working groups.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Terms of Reference</a> for the Advisory Group set out the governance responsibilities; the group meets quarterly; in 2015 there were meetings in March, June, September and December. However, much of the Network's programme is driven by the six thematic working groups. Each group adopts responsibility for one of the six themes of the Sustainable Food Cities' awards structure and oversees a suite of activities to satisfy the SFC criteria. The six working groups consist of volunteers, mostly from organisations with a specific professional interest in the sectoral theme. Each group is led by a convener, who reports on progress to the quarterly meeting of the Advisory Group.</p> <p>Structurally, this has been very fruitful. Each working group has spawned its own web of contacts, adding fresh intelligence to our network knowledge and generating enthusiasm for the project, often through the engaged support of their own organisations. The membership of the partnership is listed <a href="#">here</a>. Representatives of around fifty groups attended a Network Development Day to sophisticate the planning of activities for the second half of the project's three-year cycle, reflecting the widespread interest in the project – all of those groups have contributed in some way to the achievements of the Network to date and most will be involved in future phases.</p>	
<b>Plan</b>	<p><b>Action plan outlining key objectives for at least one year ahead. It does not matter if the action plan is in draft form, but it should be available for interested parties to read and reflect the six key issues listed previously.</b></p>	<p><u>Yes/No</u></p>
	<p>The original action plan of the Belfast Food Network manifested the aspirations of those organisations that took the closest interest in its development. As the project has evolved, many of the original targets have been attained, some changes in emphasis have emerged as a result of ancillary funding and the enthusiasms of new Network members, some activities have been dropped. This reflects the dynamic nature of the project, in which innovative initiatives have been spawned within the context of the original project vision and staying close to the SFC criteria.</p> <p>A revised <a href="#">action plan</a>, covering the second phase of the project, was compiled as a result of the collaborative Development Day event.</p>	

Policy	Evidence that healthy and sustainable food is 'recognised/referred to' in city policies and strategies.	<u>Yes/No</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Public Health strategy 2013-2023, <a href="#">Making Life Better</a>, has a substantial healthy food component, with a specific emphasis on interventions to tackle food poverty in the city.</li> <li>• The over-arching city strategy to tackle overweight and obesity, <a href="#">A Fitter Future for All</a>, revised for 2015-2019, involves a wide range of public sector agencies in Belfast; each of them is mandated to undertake specific interventions to promote a healthy, nutritious diet among the city's residents. This strategy is detailed and referenced several times within this document.</li> <li>• The provision of school meals in Belfast is governed by the <a href="#">Food in Schools Policy – Healthy Food for Healthy Outcomes</a>, with clear nutritional and beneficial behavioural criteria.</li> <li>• Belfast City Council's waste management strategy embraces the reduction of food waste, through its education programmes, including the Love Food Hate Waste Ten Cities campaign. The waste management operations also include separate weekly food waste collections.</li> <li>• In relation to food, Belfast City Council's principal concern is to <a href="#">support interventions</a> designed to alleviate food poverty, including our own Enough is Enough initiative.</li> <li>• In Belfast's integrated <a href="#">tourism strategy</a>, food is identified as one of the city's most significant tourism assets. As articulated elsewhere in this document, the local provenance of restaurant food is one of the hospitality industry's key marketing devices, strongly supported by the Council.</li> <li>• Belfast Health &amp; Social Care Trust has a well-developed internal policy on food, fluids and nutrition, available only on its intranet.</li> </ul>	

## KEY ISSUES: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS & OUTCOMES

KEY ISSUE 1: PROMOTING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD TO THE PUBLIC		
1	<p><b>Healthy eating campaigns - such as breastfeeding, healthy weight, 5-a-day, Eatwell, cook from scratch, and sugar, salt and fat reduction - that aim to change public behaviour, particularly among hard to reach audiences, are being delivered.</b></p>	1 Point
	<p>Under the umbrella of a 2012 framework to address obesity, <a href="#">A Fitter Future for All</a>, overseen by the Department of Health, there has been an enormous amount of work undertaken by public sector and voluntary bodies to promote healthy eating in Belfast during the past three years, including many initiatives led by Belfast Food Network partners. The framework is specifically designed to prevent and address the epidemic levels of overweight and obesity affecting 61% of adults and 28% of children in Northern Ireland. The 10-year strategy includes a range of campaigns aimed at changing public behaviours and uses a combination of mass-market advertising reinforced by small group activity within communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b><a href="#">Breastfeeding Campaign</a>:</b> Support for best practice, following a UNICEF programme, is being delivered by the two main maternity hospitals and Belfast's Sure Start projects; a Breastfeeding Peer Support Co-ordinator is mentoring more than 20 volunteers in Belfast; there are 11 breastfeeding <a href="#">support groups</a> around the city and over 70 premises, including all Belfast City Council properties open to the public, have joined the Breastfeeding <a href="#">Welcome Here</a> scheme.</p> </li> <li> <p><b><a href="#">Choose to Live Better</a>:</b> This public information campaign helps people to recognise weight gain and its associated health risks and offers help to reduce weight. Its key aim is to increase public awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity by persuading people to make small practical lifestyle changes that will have a positive impact on their health. This consistent, co-ordinated and integrated Public Health Agency campaign has a dedicated website and print materials, backed by billboard, press, online and TV advertising. The campaign is supported by local community activities throughout the city. Evaluation of the first phase of the campaign shows increased levels of awareness, with the proportion of those correctly defining themselves as being overweight rising from 35% to 51%. A complementary campaign managed by Safefood, <a href="#">Stop the Spread</a>, also works to make people aware of their weight. Both campaigns use the FSA NI <a href="#">Eatwell</a> plate as the foundation of good dietary advice.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Community Initiatives:</b> The city's Community Health Partnerships organise community-based classes in which participants develop the skills and confidence to make small realistic changes to their eating habits and levels of physical activity. The <a href="#">Weigh to Health</a> groups use a balanced healthy eating approach to help people realise that they can lose weight but still enjoy their food.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Restaurant Campaigns:</b> Building on a 2012 pilot programme, the Food Standards Agency in NI has developed its <a href="#">Menucal</a> tool for catering businesses. The free online resource enables cafes and restaurants to meet new statutory duties around making their customers aware of possible allergens in their meals. However, the FSA supplemented this mandatory information with a calorie-counter in the tool and</p> </li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<p>encourages the food businesses to make this information available to their customers as another means of tackling obesity. Recognising the often high calorific content of Chinese takeaway food, Belfast City Council worked with Chinese restaurant chefs in the city to promote its <a href="#">Healthier Chinese Menu</a> project.</p>	
4	<p><b>An identity (brand/logo/strapline) for your city-wide initiative has been developed and is being promoted to the public as an umbrella for all the great work on healthy and sustainable food in your city.</b></p>	1 Point
	<div data-bbox="190 379 474 550" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>We recognised early on that the Belfast Sustainable Food City programme needed an identifiable brand. A design agency (<a href="#">Creativ3</a>) generously provided <i>pro bono</i> assistance to create the bold logo and our website. In 18 months, it has gained visibility and increasing recognition, especially among those working in the food sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Brand Communication:</b> Our brand was conceived at the outset of the project; our simple logo with its strapline of ‘Good Food for All’ is emblazoned across all of our communications platforms. The Belfast Food Network <a href="#">website</a> contains a suite of facilities to recruit supporters, contains our various reports and publications and has blog articles and other features. We also feature the brand across our rapidly growing social media platforms – the BFN <a href="#">Facebook</a> page has 605 followers, with a further 1801 on Twitter <a href="#">@belfastfoodnet</a>.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Brand Recognition:</b> The brand has real visibility among our partners and, increasingly, among sections of the public. We have created six working groups, one for each of the SFC awards themes. The many partners represented in these groups are disseminating the BFN brand within their own organisations so that, at our BFN Development Day in July 2015, some 60 different bodies took part in helping to devise the further evolution of the programme. A Google Search for Belfast Food Network produces several pages entirely devoted to our brand. We have not ignored print – the brand is highly visible on each of our publications – our reports on tackling food poverty, <i>Enough is Enough</i>; our <i>Restaurant Edible Gardening Toolkit</i>, our <i>Sustainable Food Directory</i> as well as on our leaflets and pop-up stands, always highly visible at our events.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>BFN Charter:</b> We have created a Belfast Food Network <a href="#">Charter</a> that also strongly promotes the BFN brand but we recognise that it needs further development, especially around the creation of ‘pledging’, to make it more fully effective as a communications tool; this will be addressed in the next year’s action plan.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>City Council recognition:</b> Importantly, our work has been highlighted in the <a href="#">official report</a> (August 2015) to Belfast City Council, where the lead operations officer wrote, “The diverse and comprehensive nature of the activities undertaken by the Belfast Food Network has substantially raised the profile of sustainable food-related issues in Belfast.”</p> </li> </ul>	<p><u>Yes/No</u></p>

5	<b>Public understanding of food, health and sustainability issues is being raised through a variety of communication tools including web sites, social media, magazines, film shows, radio and press pieces, talks and conferences.</b>	<b>1 Point</b>
	<p>In covering six broad themes, the SFC initiative presents significant communications challenges. BFN has endeavoured to represent all the SFC strands in its own communications and that of its partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Belfast Food Network Communications Tools:</b> Audiences for BFN’s communications platforms - our website and social media outlets - have grown steadily over the last year, both numerically and in the quality of engagement. We have sophisticated our use of each platform for specific purposes – Twitter primarily for dissemination of pertinent news articles and partners’ events, Facebook more usually for the promotion of BFN activities. We have distributed a first quarterly newsletter, which attracted some praise; it will become a regular feature. We have not ignored print communications – our restaurant toolkit, food directory and food poverty report – all had modest print runs as well as online versions. </li> <li> <b>Partners’ Communications Tools:</b> An abundance of information is available to the digital public through the web facilities of our many BFN partners, covering the full sweep of health and sustainability issues between them. Among the most prolific is the <a href="#">Public Health Agency</a> where many aspects of dietary health are comprehensively covered on its targeted microsites on food and nutrition, the <a href="#">Food Standards Agency</a> (NI) and <a href="#">Safefood</a> publish extensively on healthy eating. Environmental sustainability is covered by <a href="#">NI Environment Link</a> while <a href="#">Groundwork NI</a> and the <a href="#">FCFCG</a> provide information on their community growing. There is widespread promotion of our food economy with coverage at <a href="#">Food NI</a> (and its <a href="#">TV channel</a>). Food poverty work is featured by our partners at <a href="#">IPH</a>, (which also hosts a <a href="#">video recording</a> of our BFN conference). </li> <li> <b>Media Coverage:</b> The three Belfast daily newspapers have all covered aspects of sustainable food in the past year. Among many other articles, the Belfast Telegraph featured our <a href="#">food directory</a>, the Irish News wrote about <a href="#">‘meanwhile’ gardens</a>, the News Letter covered the <a href="#">Sustainable Fish Campaign</a>. BFN’s <i>Enough is Enough</i> food poverty summit and programme has generated a lot of coverage on <a href="#">food poverty</a>, including reportage of the FSA report on the cost of a <a href="#">healthy food basket</a>. Further reporting on our work appeared in the <a href="#">Belfast Times</a>. The magazine, <a href="#">View Digital</a> devoted a <a href="#">complete edition</a> to food; the BFN co-ordinator was its guest editor and BFN Advisory Group members wrote many of the articles. We also contributed a major feature on sustainable food to the first edition of the much-lauded <a href="#">Freckle</a> magazine. </li> <li> <b>Conferences &amp; Events:</b> BFN has initiated or participated in several high-profile events. At Belfast’s hugely successful Culture Night, we organised a Sustainable Gardeners’ <a href="#">Question Time</a>; over 600 people attended our <a href="#">Taste Adventure</a> in the Ulster Museum, our food poverty <a href="#">conferences</a> have been influential and the BFN Development Day was of real value to our future growth. Members of the BFN Advisory Group have spoken about our work at quite a few events, including the annual conferences of the UK Soil Association in London, the all-Ireland Environmental Health Institutes in Cork, the annual Scientific Conference of the Public Health Agencies of Ireland; the all-island Food Poverty Network and the annual gathering of Sustainable Food Cities in Bristol. </li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

KEY ISSUE 2: TACKLING FOOD POVERTY, DIET-RELATED ILL HEALTH AND ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHY FOOD

1	<p><b>A multi-agency partnership - involving key public and voluntary organisations - has been established to assess and tackle the full range of issues that contribute to food poverty in a joined-up strategic way.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Belfast has some of the highest levels of poverty and deprivation in NI; indeed, some city wards rank among the poorest places in the UK. The <a href="#">latest research</a> shows that household incomes, poverty rates and the labour market have all worsened in NI in the last five years. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the city has seen a marked increase in the use of food banks. In awarding initial funding to BFN, Belfast City Council acknowledged the role that the Network could play in stimulating action to tackle food poverty in the city and it is an area of work that has had a high priority from the outset. We subsequently secured additional funding from the Public Health Agency to pursue it, developing the <i>Enough is Enough</i> initiative. The BFN Working Group has galvanised and co-ordinated action by numerous agencies in a highly productive fashion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Partnership:</b> This work has been driven by the BFN Food Poverty Working Group. Chaired by Dr Liz Mitchell, formerly the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for NI, the group’s membership is demonstrably multi-agency, viz:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Belfast City Council (an officer working on health inequalities, including food poverty)</li> <li>○ Belfast Health &amp; Social Care Trust</li> <li>○ Public Health Agency</li> <li>○ Food Standards Agency</li> <li>○ NGOs operating Food Banks – Trussel Trust, Fareshare &amp; Storehouse</li> <li>○ Institute for Public Health</li> <li>○ Consumer Council (NI)</li> <li>○ Advice NI</li> <li>○ Ulster University</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Since its inception, the outputs of this group have become well recognised among people working on food poverty in the city; most of them have contributed to the group’s research and participated in its two major events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The <i>Enough is Enough</i> Project:</b> For its first phase, the working group commissioned a study to determine a baseline of the existing provision for tackling food poverty in the city. The research was published in the final <a href="#">report</a>, with a complementary <a href="#">summary booklet</a>, and launched at a <a href="#">conference</a> in March 2015. It attracted eighty delegates, attracting both <a href="#">press</a> and broadcast coverage. The second phase of the project, with further PHA funding under its <a href="#">Making Life Better</a> strategic objectives, is now underway. It aims to build a city-wide response to food poverty, identifying practical interventions and promoting effective collaboration among agencies. The project’s second conference, in October 2015, drew a public commitment of support from the NI Human Rights Commission and the refreshed support of the Council. BFN Group members discussed the project in a <a href="#">half-hour TV</a></li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<p><a href="#">programme</a>. BFN followed up this event with a linked initiative, a seminar considering the right to food, highlighting the Fabian Commission’s recent <a href="#">report</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Evason Report:</b> The NI Executive has commissioned a report on the mitigation of the impacts of welfare reform in Northern Ireland, a contentious political issue over the past year. The report, written by Professor Eileen Evason, was published in January 2016 and contains an appendix drafted by the BFN Food Poverty Working Group convener. The report calls for the establishment of a network of community food shops and social stores. In Appendix 5 of the report, Prof Evason has adopted all of <a href="#">BFN’s recommendations</a> with an associated budget of £1.65m for their implementation.</li> <li>• <b>Other food poverty initiatives:</b> BFN Group members are active in the all-island <a href="#">Food Poverty Network</a>. We contributed significantly to the FSA <a href="#">baseline research</a> on food poverty in NI and submitted evidence to the <a href="#">Feeding Britain</a> inquiry. <a href="#">Free school meals</a> are available to a wider age-range than that pursued by policy in Great Britain; the emphasis in NI has been on targeting children in disadvantage throughout full-time education, rather than all children below a certain age.</li> </ul>	
2	<p><b>The living wage is being promoted through Local Authority policy commitments and/or via campaigns to raise employer awareness of the impacts of paying low wages and the benefits of raising them.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Average wages in Northern Ireland are significantly lower than those in the UK. The 2014 <a href="#">Annual Survey</a> of Hours and Earnings suggested that a typical full time worker in NI earned about £24,000, the lowest of any UK region and £3,000 less than the average UK annual salary. While jobs in Belfast tend to offer higher salaries than in most other parts of the region, they are still below UK levels and many jobs, not least in the hospitality sector, are based on zero-hours contracts and pay minimum wage. It is fertile ground for proponents of a Living Wage campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Belfast City Council:</b> Belfast has become the first – and, so far, the only – NI council to make the Living Wage commitment. The motion was introduced at a Council Committee in February 2014 and <a href="#">adopted</a> by the full Council in May 2014 with unanimous support from all parties. The key components of the motion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A commitment to include the living wage in all new employment contracts</li> <li>○ Review the application of the policy to contracted-out services</li> <li>○ Encourage other employers in Belfast to adopt a similar anti low-pay policy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In September 2015, a fresh <a href="#">motion</a> was put to Council, exploring how it might offer rates discounts to employers who introduce the living wage for their employees and to investigate the use of procurement contracts to further the adoption of the living wage by contractors, suppliers, grant recipients and others. This motion has been referred to committee for consideration. One of the</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>



	<p>motion’s proposers, Cllr Julie-Anne Corr-Johnston, is an enthusiastic supporter of the Belfast Food Network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Living Wage Initiative:</b> In September 2014, the NI Council for Voluntary Action launched its initiative with a <a href="#">report</a> on estimating the economic impacts of introducing the living wage in Northern Ireland; the report concludes that the living wage could be implemented here without serious detriment to the economy. NICVA is lobbying the NI Executive to devise a plan to reduce the proportion of NI employees who are paid below the Living Wage; to that end, it presented its research to an Assembly committee in January 2015. The research was also presented at the annual NI Economic Conference in October 2015. This work is echoed in the <a href="#">Learning Charter</a> of the Belfast Strategic Partnership; one of its commitments is to be an advocate for the Living Wage.</li> <li>• <b>The Status Quo:</b> Recent <a href="#">research</a> for the NI Assembly has established that there are 45 living wage employers in NI, eight of them regional organisations; the rest are national or international employers. Most are based in Belfast.</li> </ul>	
5	<p><b>A range of healthy weight services and initiatives are being provided, from dieting and nutrition advice and support to exercise programmes and facilities.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>In the last decade, the headline statistics for overweight and obesity have remained stubbornly high. 24% of adults are obese; 37% are overweight - almost two-thirds of the NI population. The gradual recognition of the scale of this ‘epidemic’ has resulted in <a href="#">A Fitter Future for All</a>, a 10 year multi-agency framework to address the issue. This strategy, covering healthy eating and appropriate exercise, is being delivered in the city by public sector agencies and some NGOs, most of which are BFN partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Healthy Weight Initiatives:</b> Many of the City’s services to tackle overweight have been listed in Section 1 of this report – among them are the PHA’s <a href="#">Choose to Live Better</a> campaign, the Belfast Health &amp; Social Care Trust’s <a href="#">Weigh to Health</a> programme and the FSA’s <a href="#">Menucal</a> initiative for catering businesses. The focus of Section 1 was on healthy eating but, with the Framework’s outcomes grouped into three life stages, its first two-year <a href="#">progress report</a> captures the scope of the physical exercise activity that has also been undertaken.</li> </ul> <p>Some of the additional initiatives being offered in the city are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Ante-Natal &amp; Early Years:</b> The Chief Medical Officer introduced Physical Activity Guidelines; PHA has commissioned support &amp; training through the <a href="#">BHF Early Movers</a> programme to complement its training on mandatory minimum nutritional standards for Early Years care settings.</li> <li>○ <b>Children &amp; Young People:</b> In addition to the new school food policy, there is guidance on other aspects of eating in school, the <a href="#">Healthy Breaks</a> publication. Sport NI runs a comprehensive programme, <a href="#">Activ8</a>, for young people to help promote the CMO Guidelines; it has an integral ‘healthy eating’ resource component for teachers. The <a href="#">Belfast Community Sports Development Network</a> delivers a range of physical activity programmes, reaching 15,000 young people in 300 coaching sessions a week throughout the city. Other opportunities are provided through the <a href="#">Active Communities</a></li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<p>Network. Active Travel initiatives also reach young people, through <a href="#">Walk to School week</a> and similar promotional activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Adults &amp; the General Population:</b> Belfast City Council is involved in the city-wide <a href="#">Healthwise</a> programme, under which GPs refer clients to a local leisure centre for free membership and advice on physical activity. The City has quite a few neighbourhood projects; one of the most successful is <a href="#">Healthy Hearts in the West</a> – it has developed a resource toolbox for other community organisations to use. Already three-quarters complete, a major new £40m project in the east of the city, the <a href="#">Connswater Greenway</a>, is creating a 9km linear park with 16km of walking and cycle paths to promote more regular physical activity among its 40,000 residents. Belfast’s <a href="#">Active Travel plan</a> is also really developing momentum, fostered by new cycle paths (and a new cycle hire scheme), pedestrian areas and other beneficial changes to the city’s streets. Other initiatives include the Conservation Volunteers’ <a href="#">Green Gym</a> programme; Business in the Community’s <a href="#">£ for lb weight loss</a> programme – in 2015, 1700 employees took part, losing a cumulative 711 stone.</li> <li>● <a href="#">Belfast Healthy City</a>, a BFN partner and part of the WHO network, has a major theme of work on the role of spatial planning to foster increased physical exercise. Through its involvement with BFN, the organisation is beginning to develop a heightened interest in sustainable food and, in fact, two of its prestigious annual awards in 2014 were for BFN members’ food-related projects in the city.</li> </ul>	
--	--	--

**KEY ISSUE 3: BUILDING COMMUNITY FOOD KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, RESOURCES AND PROJECTS**

4	<p><b>Community food growing is increasing through increased allotment provision and/or the development of edible landscapes in parks, borders and verges and through city-wide food growing initiatives such as <i>The Big Dig</i> and <i>Incredible Edible</i>.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Belfast Food Network members have been key actors in the enhancement of community food growing in Belfast in recent years. In 2011, Belfast City Council commissioned Sustainable NI to undertake some baseline research on existing provision and to make recommendations for expansion. That report led to the publication of a new council strategy; its ongoing implementation, together with additional NGO and private sector initiatives, has transformed the availability of growing sites and resulted in a significant increase in Grow-It-Yourself engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Belfast City Council:</b> The Council has provided allotments for decades but demand has often exceeded supply and, following an extensive consultation process with local stakeholders, the council published its new <a href="#">Growing Communities</a> strategy 2012-2022. Starting in 2012, funding was made available by the Council, PHA and others to establish 10 new community garden facilities, with a further three added in 2013. Many of the new facilities have been built in existing city parks. The Council’s investment is ongoing, with another derelict urban site transformed earlier this year into the <a href="#">Garden of Eatin’</a>. The Council has used the services of <a href="#">Conservation Volunteers</a> at some sites, providing encouragement, expertise and training.</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mapping Community Growing:</b> BFN member, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), used the SFC Awards scheme structure to secure competitive funding for a new mapping project. Working with other BFN members, they have now mapped all the community growing initiatives in NI, which includes 30 Belfast-based projects. These include the National Trust’s <a href="#">Minnowburn Allotments</a>, <a href="#">The Anarchist Plot</a>, <a href="#">Knockbracken Allotments</a>, which hosts The Big Dig every year, and <a href="#">Grow NI</a>, whose gardens “are as much about growing communities as growing food”. The map is now available <a href="#">on-line</a> and will be regularly updated. In a complementary initiative, an evaluation of the Belfast growing projects has just begun; the research is being conducted by a QUB Masters’ student, supervised by BFN. Although not in the city, <a href="#">Incredible Edible Cloughmills</a> has been an inspirational project for all those engaged in the community growing sector. Its leading figures have been generous with their experience, hosting visits and telling their story at many events in a way that has inspired and helped others to establish their own growing projects.</li> <li>• <b>Stormont Workplace Allotments:</b> One Belfast project worthy of special mention is the <a href="#">workplace facility</a> in the grounds of Stormont, home of the NI Assembly. At the instigation of the then-Finance Minister, himself an enthusiastic allotmenteer, 25 plots were established within the grounds and have been in active use ever since, with a waiting list of fresh enthusiasts. FCFCG led the campaign to establish this project, the first of its kind in NI.</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Tailored training opportunities on food buying, cooking, nutrition and hygiene skills and/or access to community kitchens are being provided for a variety of audiences including young adults, families and the vulnerable elderly.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Several public sector agencies and many more NGOs are actively engaged in providing training in various aspects of food buying and cooking, targeted specifically at people living in areas of deprivation, of which Belfast has many. The client groups cover single parents, people with disabilities, elderly people and others in need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Cookery Classes:</b> The Public Health Agency has supported the delivery of the <a href="#">Cook-It</a> community nutrition education programme, delivered by trained dietitians and community facilitators and targeted at hard-to-reach audiences, including men’s groups and those with learning disabilities; to date, the programme has reached around 4500 people in the city. East Belfast Mission runs a similar <a href="#">programme</a> with people who are homeless.</li> <li>• <b>Footprints Women’s Centre:</b> For over 10 years, Footprints has been delivering <a href="#">initiatives on healthy food</a>. It started with the provision of daily low-cost meals to 100 women and 70 children at its drop-in centre. That spawned an innovative social economy enterprise, providing an outside catering service to some 70 customers. The project teaches women in the community a new set of life-skills. By offering practical lessons on cooking, budgeting and shopping, food safety and nutrition, the Centre has responded to the needs of its target groups. It has added food-growing skills by transforming an overgrown, neglected space within their grounds to create raised beds, fruit trees and herb gardens. This year 25 women and 20 children learned new skills under the instruction of</li> </ul>	Yes/No

	<p>an experienced gardener. Their <a href="#">kitchen garden</a> then supplies fresh ingredients for the Centre’s catering. In addition, the kitchen uses produce diverted from landfill through the charity, Fareshare. Over the past five years, Footprints’ work on food, nutrition and physical activity has reached 2000 people in this deprived area of Belfast. This multi-dimensional approach has led to some recent national recognition – the best community and sustainability project in the UK’s <a href="#">Cultivation Street</a> competition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Healthy Living Centre:</b> The Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and Groundwork NI have used EU funding to transform shipping containers into a state-of-the-art <a href="#">eco-building</a> on a waste site in West Belfast. The social enterprise has installed a demonstration kitchen in which local groups can literally enjoy the fruits of their labours, using food grown in the allotments on the same site. With a biomass boiler and solar PV roof panels, its facilities are used by local residents for cookery courses and horticultural education, extending the community initiatives already established in the allotments.</li> <li>• <b>The <a href="#">NOW Project</a></b> is NI’s Social Enterprise of the Year 2015. It helps people with learning difficulties to acquire qualifications and gain work &amp; life experience, supporting them to move into jobs. Among the courses they offer are catering and food preparation at NVQ Levels 1&amp;2. Some of those trainees go on to work for NOW’s subsidiary catering operation, <a href="#">Loaf</a>, the profits from which are reinvested into the training programmes. Loaf also runs two cafes, one of which is for the Council inside <a href="#">Belfast City Hall</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Root Soup</b> is a social enterprise which grows and prepares vegetables to make soups and breads, directly involving people who have learning disabilities and people who are homeless, working together to learn and grow. A “field to fork” initiative, <a href="#">Root Soup</a> offers training and employment opportunities, running a successful event catering service. Another social enterprise, <a href="#">Solus</a>, works with autistic children and has a project growing chillies hydroponically and making chilli sauces.</li> </ul>	
7	<p><b>Local authorities are changing policy and practice to enable individuals and communities to get better access to resources that could be used for food enterprises or projects, for example through the introduction of meanwhile leases.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>In common with other cities, Belfast has many plots of vacant land, some of them neglected for decades and unlikely to attract private investment for some years. Many parcels of land are in public ownership, mostly by central government departments; some substantial areas have been gifted to government by the armed forces as they have left the city. While those larger areas are mostly earmarked for social development, some government agencies have been successfully persuaded by voluntary and community bodies, including BFN members, of the potential of ‘meanwhile’ uses for food enterprises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Groundwork NI</b>, a BFN member, has created four half-acre <a href="#">‘meanwhile’ organic food gardens</a> in partnership with local communities in the east and west quarters of the city. On land leased from the Department for Social Development until 2017 and with funding from the Public Health Agency, Groundwork has modelled its meanwhile gardens on the renowned <i>Prinzessinnengarten</i> in Berlin. Using damaged plastic kerbside recycling boxes to grow herbs, vegetables and fruit in compost made from domestic ‘green’waste,</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

it becomes a great model of closed-loop sustainability. Groundwork’s Community Gardener is facilitating and mentoring all those who want to be involved in the gardens and offering a range of workshops – from therapeutic horticulture, through ‘mindfulness’ sessions to healthy cooking, using the produce that has been grown on site.

- **The Housing Executive** is a major social landlord in NI, managing nearly 90,000 properties across numerous housing estates and with around 1,400 hectares of open space within these estates. It also engages directly with over 400 community groups. Its Community Involvement Strategy guides its work in supporting communities, with a focus on disadvantaged areas. One area of intervention that has accelerated since its first such [initiative](#) in 2012 is the Housing Executive’s establishment and management of community growing spaces. Recognising the multiple benefits of such projects, this policy shift within the organisation has been embedded in renewed [strategic commitments](#) and is underlined by the commitment of officer time given in ongoing support of local communities using the sites. The number of growing spaces around Belfast and beyond has mushroomed and the results of the initiative have been positive with users reporting the development of new skills, making friends and acquiring healthier eating habits. BFN is exploring with the Housing Executive the opportunity to introduce a scheme to make growing facilities a mandatory part of new Housing Association projects.
- **Community Asset Transfer** is considerably less well developed in NI than in the rest of the UK in terms of the number, size and impact of schemes. However, some public bodies are trying to break down the legal and institutional barriers to longer-term development. The Forum for Alternative Belfast has published a map of what they call [The Missing City](#). The map charts the vacant sites of the city, areas of dereliction or otherwise unused areas of land that could be used for a variety of purposes, including food production. One idea being explored is a replication of [The Biospheric Project](#) , a successful urban agriculture project developed in Salford but supervised by a Belfast-based academic, who is investigating the potential for similar work in this city.

**KEY ISSUE 4: PROMOTING A VIBRANT AND DIVERSE SUSTAINABLE FOOD ECONOMY**

**1 Retail, tourism, planning and economic development strategies, policies and services actively promote and support the development and long term success of healthy and sustainable food businesses.** **1 point**

Twenty-five years ago, Belfast was not a city that attracted visitors; not even its residents came into the centre at night for a meal. As ‘peace deals’ were brokered, one visionary restaurateur recognised the future appeal of one part of the city that was then a no-go area for most people. That area has been coaxed into vibrant life by that restaurant, which became, in effect, the birthplace of a new culinary identity for Belfast. The city is now building a glowing reputation as a food tourism destination; several aspects of the council’s economic development plans are based on food and regional tourism strategies are increasingly focused in that direction. One main marketing thrust is the ready availability of high-quality, fresh, local seasonal produce in the city’s eateries.

Yes/No

- **Belfast City Council** uses food as a key element of its economic development programmes. Among the initiatives are several projects, such as [Taste and Dine](#) and food demonstrations, focused on bringing to market new food products. A key objective of the Council's economic development strategy has been to encourage restaurants to buy local products and to showcase local ingredients on their menus. The Council organised a major conference in 2015, [Focus on Food](#), the aim of which was to maximise the economic benefit of food tourism in the city and explore its long-term potential. It also featured a 'Meet the Supplier' component. The Council organises a wide range of food-focussed events in support of its strategy (see below).
- **St George's Market:** Managed by Belfast City Council, [the market](#) has been in operation since the 1890s, rejuvenated by a £3.5m restoration of its red-brick, glass-roofed Victorian building in 1997. It has become a major tourist attraction, with 600,000 visitors a year to its weekend markets, generating £16m per annum for the city. With 250 stalls, it supports 385 jobs and has been a platform for a host of small businesses, many of whom have gone on to much larger successes – [Suki Tea](#), for example, and [Love Olive](#). It hosts regular events, from Slow Food cookery demonstrations to Twilight markets and has won a number of national awards, including its selection as a 2014 finalist in the BBC [Food & Farming Awards](#).
- **Year of Food and Drink 2016:** A major marketing drive is underway for 2016 to promote NI's local food, its producers and suppliers. With significant resources committed by [Tourism NI](#) and other agencies, the aim of the year-long initiative will be to promote Northern Ireland as a visitor destination through its high-quality food and drink. As the capital city of the region, Belfast will be at the centre of activity. In addition to publications, advertising and a specially designed 'toolkit' for providers, the tourism agency is offering a series of roadshow events at which hospitality providers get tailored training to enhance the campaign. The focus of the initiative is to demonstrate the provenance of restaurant food, its high quality and award-winning products. Each month will feature a series of events, many of which will be delivered by Food NI (qv). Other BFN partners will stage complementary activities: for example, Belfast City Council will establish a kitchen garden in its renowned Botanic Gardens; the FSA(NI) is publishing a themed calendar with healthy food messaging.

**3 Shops, restaurants and markets selling healthy and sustainable food are being promoted to the public using a range of communication tools, such as marketing and branding initiatives, directories, 'restaurants weeks' and food awards.**

**1 point**

The agri-food industry in NI is worth £4.5bn a year, some 5.2% of the GVA in the region, compared to 2.1% in the UK. Mostly, that locally-produced food is destined for export. However, local food – ‘grown here, not flown here’, in marketing-speak - is greatly valued among NI consumers and fresh local produce is heavily promoted by a host of different agencies:

- **Belfast City Council** organises an annual [Belfast Restaurant Week](#), which has been running since 2012. Belfast Food Network has contributed to these festivals, hosting a restaurant dinner, followed by a lively sustainable-food themed Q&A afterwards with food writer, Joanna Blythman. The Council also provides support for a significant number of cultural events, such as the [Out to Lunch](#) Festival and [Culture Night](#), in which a growing number of high-quality street food providers are to be found. The [Belfast Mela](#) features ethnic foods, while the annual Tesco [Taste Festival](#) features the best of local food. Shopping malls, too, such as Belfast’s [Forestsides](#), are organising food festivals. Visit Belfast promotes the city’s [culinary offerings](#) throughout the year.
- **Belfast Food Network** produced its own [Sustainable Food Directory](#), featuring suppliers of fresh, local, seasonal food. Funded by the NI carrier-bag levy, this directory serves as a promotional vehicle for BFN, introducing the six SFC themes as well as the BFN charter pledge. It also lists retailers, most of them small independent shops stocking fresh, local, sustainable food products. The pocket-sized print edition was widely distributed; its on-line equivalent can be updated as new information is gathered.
- BFN partner, [Food NI](#), which is a dynamic and high-profile organisation dedicated to the promotion of Northern Ireland’s food and drink products, runs a brilliant ongoing marketing campaign, based on the *Our Food, So Good* message, featured at the many well-attended [events](#) it runs each year, attracting tens of thousands of visitors. Its primary audience is consumers in Northern Ireland but it also works closely with other agencies to promote NI food and drink in international markets. Food NI’s remit is for the whole of the region but its Belfast-based [membership](#) is a veritable Who’s Who of high-quality food providers in the city. It publishes three annual [Taste of Ulster](#) guides – a restaurant guide with 59 entries for Belfast; a producers’ directory with over 160 entries, all of whose produce can be found in the city and a new drinks handbook. The booklets won a 2015 World Gourmand award and runs to 45,000 copies. With a large social media following and its own [TV channel](#), the brand recognition continues to grow.
- [The UK Great Taste Awards](#) have become more familiar to NI consumers over the past few years, thanks to the success of local companies, several of them featuring as ‘Supreme Champions’. In the 2015 awards, 148 different products from NI gained the accolade, all of them available in Belfast’s shops and many of them used extensively in the city’s restaurants. Many of the companies are based in Belfast – for example, Thompson’s Tea, Dale Farm and Blackthorn Foods.

7	<b>Local producers can connect directly with consumers and/or better access wholesale and retail markets through events, on-line tools and cooperative marketing and retailing initiatives.</b>	<b>1 point</b>
<p>In recent years, lots of local food producers have followed the lead of the multiples by marketing their food directly to consumers, through online sales, farm shops and delivery systems. With over 40 farmers' markets now established in the region, including 10 in and around the city, and several box schemes available, customers now have a variety of ways in which to source food directly from local producers. Small independent food retailers are also still very definitely a part of the scene in suburban Belfast, each with a steadfast local customer base. Belfast Food Network has been significantly involved in the establishment and development of several of these initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Box schemes:</b> The pioneer was <a href="#">Helen's Bay Organic Farm</a>, situated on the city's outskirts. It has been offering a <a href="#">box delivery scheme</a> for more than a decade, selling organic produce. While most of the vegetables are grown on the farm, additional produce, including raw milk, honey, fruit and preserves – all of it certified organic – is brought in from other local growers. Another innovative box scheme, <a href="#">Boxa</a>, established in 2013 and expanding ever since, has the overwhelming majority of its customers in Belfast. Boxa sources certified organic meat – beef, lamb, pork and venison, poultry from half-a-dozen different local producers – Lough Neagh fish, raw milk cheeses, vegetables and an expanding range of other organic produce, from biltong to honey. Importantly, this initiative has provided an outlet for micro-producers, helping them to get established and build a customer base. Boxa's owner is a founding member of the Belfast Food Network; many of its suppliers are part of our membership and BFN has supported their development. The corollary is also true – Belfast consumers are being offered small-scale, high-quality organic produce that might otherwise have been unknown to them. </li> <li> <b>City markets:</b> For more than a century, St George's Market (qv) held a unique position as the city's only permitted food market. A relaxation of regulations has recently allowed the establishment of a second <a href="#">weekly market</a> in the city centre which specialises in artisan foods. A lot of small producers are selling at occasional suburban markets, like <a href="#">Farmers Market at the Inns</a>, and a community-based market at <a href="#">Ballyhackamore</a>. Another original initiative for individual micro-producers, developed through BFN, is the <a href="#">Belfast Food Swop</a>. Belfast Food Network has been associated with the establishment or encouragement of most of these projects; we have used our own and shared social media platforms to promote their profile among consumers in the city. </li> <li> <b>Farm Shops:</b> Most on-farm shops exist to sell their own produce but the most successful carry a range of foods from other growers, facilitated by the strong social networks among the farming community. The marketing potency of 'local' food is especially pronounced among Belfast consumers, as the supermarkets' advertising campaigns will attest, but these farm shops sell the small scale produce of their neighbours that will never appear in a supermarket. Many new farm shops have been opened at sites in the past few years; among those that are within Greater Belfast are <a href="#">Ballylagan Organic Farm</a> (where the weekly blog-piece is worth a website visit by itself), <a href="#">McKee's Farm Store</a>, <a href="#">Pheasants Hill Farm</a> and <a href="#">Hillstown Farm</a>. None of these is any more than thirty minutes' drive from the city centre. </li> </ul>		<u>Yes/No</u>



- [Open Farm Weekend](#) celebrated its fourth year of operation in 2015. Over 21,000 people visited one or more of the 21 farms involved in the programme, which included several businesses near the city. Each farm organises its own events and, at most venues, farmers have provided an opportunity for visitors to taste and buy home-grown produce. The initiative has enabled thousands of Belfast consumers to engage with local producers. In turn, the event's success has grown on the back of a hugely popular local television series, [Rare Breed](#), charting the NI farming year.

#### KEY ISSUE 5: TRANSFORMING CATERING AND FOOD PROCUREMENT

**3 Individual public sector bodies have adopted healthy and sustainable food policies e.g. nutrition standards, healthy options in catering and vending, 'tap water only' policies and/or ethical standards such as cage-free eggs, sustainable fish and Fairtrade.** **1 point**

Northern Ireland's procurement policy and processes are highly centralised. Governed by the NI Executive's procurement policy, seven CoPEs (Centres of Procurement Expertise) undertake the procurement for all individual public sector bodies. So, for example, one CoPE services all sixteen agencies of the health and social care services in NI, influencing spending of half a billion pounds. While this system has, no doubt, great benefits by virtue of its scale and purchasing power, it does not favour small suppliers. It is also much more difficult to influence an aspect of procurement, such as introducing cage-free eggs or sustainable fish, than it might be at the level of an individual institution, like a single hospital. However, BFN has contributed to some notable successes in changing food procurement policies:

Yes/No

- **Food in Schools Policy:** Nutritional standards for school food have existed for over a decade but, following extensive research, a new policy for the provision of school food was introduced in 2013, taking the issue to a much higher level, driving transformational change on children's food in individual schools. The new policy requires schools to adopt a whole-school approach so that children receive a consistent message about healthy eating in the classroom, as well as having access to fresh, nutritional food in the canteen, in vending machines and in tuckshops within their schools. The Belfast School Meals Service, whose leader sits on BFN's Advisory Group, has marshalled a comprehensive suite of resources on its new [website](#), together with complementary early-years guidance. Each school is required to develop a whole-school food policy, a challenge being tackled in Belfast with the support of a Food in Schools Co-ordinator and a Food in Schools Forum. In addition, more funding has been made available for catering, so the provision of school food is being transformed to ensure that only healthier options are available in Belfast's schools. It is also worth noting that the school curriculum has a [mandatory Home Economics](#) component at Key Stage 3.
- **Central government procurement:** Compliance with the Executive's procurement policy is monitored by a Central Procurement Directorate, which advises the public sector of best practice through a suite of Procurement Guidance Notes (PGN). One such Note relates to food and following the horsemeat scandal in 2012, BFN successfully lobbied NI Ministers to re-appraise its guidance. The existing guidance was reviewed, with an invited submission from BFN and a new PGN [on Integrating Sustainable Development into](#)

	<p><a href="#">the Procurement of Food and Catering Services</a> was published in 2014. Among the objectives of this new advice are to promote the use of fresh, seasonal and traditional produce and to promote healthier food and drink choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Belfast Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b> has opened a dialogue with Belfast Food Network to adopt a sustainability code in its catering operations; we have been using the <a href="#">15 guidelines</a> for sustainable procurement, published by the Hospital Caterers Association, as the basis for developing the Trust’s practices. The Trust has newly established a Catering Marketing sub-group; it is extremely interested in learning from the parallel experiences of the Liverpool SFC hospitals initiative and we are arranging site visits. It is early in the process but there is a clear commitment from the senior management of the Trust to improving its sustainable procurement standards. The Trust has already initiated a <a href="#">campaign</a> aimed at its 17,000 staff to improve their own health and wellbeing. One element of the campaign is focused on the promotion of healthier eating; the programme has evolved as a direct result of BFN influencing. It has featured several promotional activities within the city’s hospitals’ canteens, such as their recent Hallowe’ en themed <i>Healthy isn’t Horrible</i> events.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Public sector organisations and large private caterers have achieved quality, healthy, sustainable and/or ethical food accreditation, such as Food for Life Catering Mark, Sustainable Fish, Good Egg and other awards.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Unlike government departments and agencies, the NI Assembly is not subject to the procurement rules described above. It therefore provided Belfast Food Network with an unusual opportunity to lobby for the accreditation of its catering services. Beyond the public sector, there are several private caterers, with significant government agency clients, who have secured quality awards. In Northern Ireland, the most prestigious catering award is unquestionably the <i>Taste of Ulster</i>, with significantly more public recognition than any UK-wide accreditation in the food sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Northern Ireland Assembly</b> outsources its catering services and, with its existing contract due for renewal in 2012, Belfast Food Network entered discussions with the Assembly to seek greater sustainability in its food offering. In anticipation of the introduction of such criteria, the existing caterer, Eurest, decided to pre-empt the tender and applied for Catering Mark accreditation through consultation with BFN. Following a successful application process, it became the first organisation in the region to achieve a Bronze <a href="#">Food for Life Catering Mark in 2012</a>. In so doing, the NI Assembly became the first legislative body in these islands to demonstrate the sustainability of the meals it serves to its Members, employees, visitors and the many dignitaries who dine there each year. The award was presented to the Speaker of the Assembly at a ceremony to launch the Belfast Food Network in Parliament Buildings. In 2016, with the Assembly’s catering contract now due for renewal, we have been asked to advise on the inclusion of sustainability criteria in the new tender, for which we will draw on the experience of some of our SFC city colleagues. The NI Assembly is also an accredited Fairtrade organisation; its All-Party Group on Fairtrade seeks to secure Fairtrade status for Northern Ireland as a devolved region. It organises events each year during Fairtrade Fortnight.</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Taste of Ulster</b> (qv) is the most widely recognised catering accreditation award in Northern Ireland. Its primary objective is to promote and celebrate the use of high-quality fresh local produce. Applicant establishments, mostly restaurants but also some specialist food retailers, must meet a set of criteria and subscribe to a Charter. Accreditation has also been secured by some large private catering organisations: <a href="#">Posh Nosh</a> regularly caters for events for Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Ulster Rugby, among others. <a href="#">Yellow Door</a> provides catering with a heavy emphasis on local produce for clients such as Tourism NI, Visit Belfast and several NI councils. The <a href="#">Academy Restaurant</a> at Ulster University is the ‘proving ground’ for aspiring chefs undertaking hospitality courses at the college; they also undertake external catering. As the ‘established’ quality mark for Northern Ireland, Taste of Ulster provides a ready vehicle for transforming catering and procurement in Belfast; so while BFN will continue to advocate uptake of other UK healthy and sustainable food marks by Belfast caterers, much of our future focus will be working with Food NI, which runs Taste of Ulster, to further increase the health and sustainability elements of this existing accreditation.</li> <li>• <b>Belfast City Council</b> has held formal <a href="#">Fairtrade City</a> accreditation since 2005. The Council purchases Fairtrade products for meetings and civic events, specifies its use in catering contracts at its public venues and actively promotes awareness among employees. It organises events each year during Fairtrade Fortnight and has marked its Fairtrade City status with the erection of commemorative road-signs. The Fairtrade Belfast group has noted a 25% increase in Fairtrade stock at St George’s Market in the last two years. The Group, with Council support, also organises annual business awards, has secured Fairtrade University accreditation for the three Belfast HE colleges and has helped churches and schools to organise events and fairs.</li> </ul>	
8	<b>Restaurants and other small scale catering businesses are sourcing more healthy, sustainable, ethical and locally produced ingredients.</b>	<b>1 point</b>
	<p>Belfast’s restaurateurs are well aware of their customers’ demand for fresh local produce and healthier eating. Owner of five city restaurants, Niall McKenna, explains, “People are focusing more and more on healthy eating and local produce; for me, if it wasn’t for local produce, I’d be out of business.” In the city’s keenly-contested hospitality business, the use of sustainable, ethical and local produce is becoming increasingly visible, with menus celebrating the provenance of their ingredients. Small scale caterers are also responding to customers’ requirements for healthy, local food.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Sustainable Fish Campaign</b> was actively promoted in Belfast by the Belfast Food Network and we achieved a <a href="#">first star</a> for the city by securing pledges to serve only sustainable fish from several prestigious city establishments, including Belfast’s leading fish restaurant, Mourne Seafood, as well as the city’s top tourist destination, Titanic Belfast.</li> <li>• <b>The NI Director of the Prison Service</b> invited Belfast Food Network to take part in an innovative scheme in one of its young offender centres. The food writer, Philip Dundas, worked with detainees to develop catering skills, with a strong emphasis on using fresh, local and seasonal ingredients. BFN then helped to promote a pop-up café on the prison campus, filling the café with our members</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

on its opening night. Subsequently, several of our network members have supplied locally-sourced produce to the project to supplement the vegetables grown by the team in the prison grounds; a BFN working group volunteer mentored the growing team and supplied compost. The trainees now serve weekly lunches to Belfast’s elderly and to prison staff, as the project has moved from its pilot phase into a permanent training facility. Its progress is tracked in this short film, [Cooking Behind Bars](#).

- **Hastings Hotels**, the region’s leading local hotelier, has made regional food provenance into a signature marketing strategy. With two customer-focused publications and a series of [short films](#), it illustrates the importance of its supply chain and the relationships it has established with some of NI’s finest producers. With the direct involvement of one of BFN’s working group leaders, Hastings has established roof gardens for salad leaves and herbs at all six of its hotels, including its Belfast flagship, the Europa – the initiative spawned the publication of our [Restaurant Toolkit](#). The hotels are also establishing partnerships with local schools, setting up edible gardens and teaching pupils about cooking.
- **Belfast’s Restaurants:** From a place where not even residents ventured out for a meal at night, Belfast has become a celebrated ‘food city’. It has a new generation of talent, its restaurants are buzzing. Belfast’s chefs have access to a wealth of fine ingredients from the region, with fresh Atlantic fish, grass-fed beef, beautiful cheese, milk, butter and vegetables all abundantly available within an hour’s drive of the city. Their commitment to the use of local produce is recognised by the Taste of Ulster [awards in 2015](#), secured by 78 Belfast establishments, including the Michelin-starred restaurants, [Ox](#) (“menus are designed around the best available seasonal produce”) and [Deanes](#) (“our dedication to sourcing the best local produce... is the only secret to our success”).

**KEY ISSUE 6: REDUCING WASTE AND THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT OF THE FOOD SYSTEM**

**1 City-wide campaigns to raise public awareness of food waste and how to reduce it are being delivered – such as *Love Food Hate Waste*, *Feeding the 5000*, *The Pig Idea* and *Disco Soup*.**

**1 point**

Effective behavioural change towards waste prevention and increased recycling requires a concerted strategic effort. Led by Belfast City Council’s dedicated Waste Management Education team, in co-operation with several NGOs and BFN partners, there has been a series of educational and awareness campaigns, primarily on waste reduction – at the top of the waste hierarchy – but including the promotion of home and community food composting for residual food waste.

**Yes/No**

- BFN partner, **Belfast City Council** has a dedicated Waste Management Education and Promotions Team. In 2014-15, it made 335 [education visits](#) to community groups and schools which included an element of food waste reduction and promoting the use of food waste collections. The team also piloted ‘Family Fun Days’ in areas with harder to reach residents. These had a light touch recycling message and included cookery demonstrations using up leftovers and other food items almost at the end of their shelf life. These events were deemed very successful so a further 12 will be held in 2015-16. Food is one of the waste streams being

	<p>specifically targeted in 2015-16 as recent work shows that around a quarter of the contents of general waste bins is still made up of food. The Council has also facilitated home composting by making domestic compost bins, and free compost, available to its ratepayers and promoting the necessary skills and interest during 'Compost Awareness Week' over the last few years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Love Food Hate Waste 10 Cities Campaign:</b> Belfast is one of the 10 cities in <a href="#">WRAP's UK-wide campaign</a> to reduce food waste. Funded in Belfast by Tesco and working in partnership with a wide range of organisations, including Belfast Food Network, the 18-month initiative was launched in September 2014. The campaign has been especially effective in delivering cascade training on food waste prevention, cooking and kitchen skills to community groups, businesses and individuals. By using the idea of 'Do one thing differently' and with excellent promotional support from Belfast City Council's waste management team, the campaign has reached over 45 groups, including some sizeable businesses like Allstate NI. The LFHW officer is a member of the BFN Waste Working Group.</li> <li>• <b>Foodcloud</b> (qv) organised a <a href="#">Disco Soup</a> in Belfast, well supported by the student population of the area; and BFN is developing plans, with the active support of Belfast City Council, to organise a <i>Feed the City</i> event inside St George's Market during 2016.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>A food waste collection scheme for homes and/or for restaurants and other catering, retail and manufacturing businesses has been established and is redirecting this waste for composting, energy recovery (AD) or animal feed (where permitted).</b></p>	1 point
	<p>European legislation has been the most significant influence on waste management policy in NI over the last decade. Its targets for reducing the amount of waste going to landfill has focused minds in order to avoid the punitive fines that the EU can impose on states that fail to meet its targets. Belfast's waste management strategy aims to use resources more efficiently, working towards a low-carbon, circular economy. In deploying a progressive series of interventions, based on its waste management hierarchy, the Council has diverted from landfill a rising tonnage of waste. Food waste makes up between a quarter and a third of overall domestic waste in Belfast, depending on the area, and since households are responsible for the largest percentage of food waste in the city, this has been the area of most attention for waste management services; commercial premises are also serviced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Belfast City Council</b> is responsible for the collection of waste from its 142,000 households, as well as commercial and other wastes in the city. It has implemented a progressive <a href="#">policy</a> of reducing the amount of waste going to landfill; among its targets is a specific emphasis on reducing food waste. 55,000 properties now have a weekly food waste collection, up from 9,000 in 2012; around 92,000 properties have a food and garden waste service once a fortnight. The few thousand domestic properties without a food waste collection should be covered by the end of 2015. In 2014, the extension of the food waste collections diverted an additional 13,500 tonnes of waste away from landfill. The Council also provides 106 food waste collections to commercial premises in the city. With the introduction of compulsory food waste separation for businesses coming into force in April 2016, this is likely to increase substantially over the coming year. All the materials collected are composted locally to produce high quality soil improver, used at several of the city's golf courses and available to residents and community gardens.</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bring Home Boxes:</b> The Council also runs this free food waste reduction scheme for restaurants. The scheme allows diners to take home their uneaten food. Restaurants receive information and promotional items such as menu inserts and their first 250 boxes. These are restocked on demand. There currently 55 venues participating in the programme and around 15,000 boxes have been distributed.</li> <li>• <b>Belfast City Council</b> <a href="#">passed a motion</a> in November 2015, under which it will urge NI's three MEPs to lobby for the introduction of legislation to make it illegal for supermarkets to destroy unsold food. The motion was proposed by Councillor Corr-Johnston; Belfast Food Network's pursuit of SFC status for the city was included in the formal text of her motion.</li> </ul>	
8	<p><b>Local charities and social enterprises are collecting consumable surplus food and redistributing it to organisations feeding people in need, while working to raise the nutritional standards of the food aid being offered.</b></p>	1 point
	<p>Over the past several years, food poverty has become an increasingly important issue. The higher visibility of fuel poverty has been the result of highly active campaigning on the issue. Now, the BFN <i>Enough is Enough</i> project has begun to raise the profile of food poverty. Several initiatives have been collecting surplus food for redistribution and BFN is helping to provide a new level of collaboration among these agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BFN partner, <a href="#">Fareshare</a> has operated in Belfast since 2011 under the management of Council for the Homeless (NI). It directly tackles food waste by collecting surplus food from industry and redistributing it to charities that are providing meals to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It connects the food industry, primarily major retailers (Tesco, Sainsburys, Asda, Lidl and 30 local producers) with over 70 charities, their 'Community Food Members'. It distributes the food from its Belfast warehouse, operated by four paid staff and 25 volunteers. Demand is increasing (beyond the traditional food poverty groups). In 2013, Fareshare diverted 138 tonnes of food from landfill amounting to some 330,000 meals provided to some 5,000 beneficiaries. In a commissioned Social Return on Investment <a href="#">study</a> assessing the Fareshare's work, it was found that, for every £1 invested, around £8 of social and economic value was returned.</li> <li>• <b>FoodCloud</b> is an <a href="#">app-based enterprise</a> connecting businesses with excess food to charities. Businesses use their app to upload details of their excess food, local charities receive a text message notifying them of this and then pick up the food, serving it to those in need in the local community. They concentrate on end of life and perishable items, and work closely with the South Belfast Food Bank. The initiative originated with BITC but has since been taken over by Fareshare, which will develop it further.</li> <li>• <b>Food banks in Belfast</b> have mushroomed in the past few years. There are currently nine food banks, with three more in development. The statistics are revealed in Belfast Food Network's <a href="#">Enough is Enough</a> report: from the 3 Trussell Trust operations alone, 11,697 people received emergency food in 2013-2014, a 489% increase on the previous year; 4,338 people were fed by five</li> </ul>	<u>Yes/No</u>

small independent food banks in 2014. In Belfast, there are 36 organisations distributing food parcels, 26 running courses on 'cooking on a budget', 19 regularly provide free cooked meals and six offer low-cost cooked meals. Our 2015 research in Belfast highlighted increases in the demand for emergency food, in the numbers of working people using food banks and in the demand for food from families with young children. Most of these foodbanks have arrangements with local supermarkets for the redistribution of surplus food; Storehouse has a specific arrangement with Marks & Spencer. The Belfast HSC Trust is developing a food parcel recipe book to be distributed at the city's food banks. The Trust is also providing new suggestions for food donations to address the improvement of nutritional quality, including specific references to a reduction in refined sugars.