



# Building the Durham Food Hub:

“We only know as we go”

(Chia & Holt, 2009, *Strategy without Design: The Silent Efficacy of Indirect Action*. p186)

Liz Charles & Keith Gill  
Sustainable Food Cities Conference 2018





# A Tale of Two Halves

- **Part 1: Setting the Scene**

- Food Durham background
- Food Hub background

- **Part 2: Food Hub Implementation: Achievements & Challenges**

- How does it work?
- What have we achieved & what is being planned?
- What have been the main challenges and barriers?
- What have we learnt?

# Food Durham: approach



- Participatory
- Listening
- Discovery
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Welcome
- Learning as we go –  
‘way finding’



# Food Durham: approach



## BENEFITS

- Builds ownership and involvement
- Draws on a breadth of experience & expertise
- Facilitates learning
- Strong Foundations

## DIFFICULTIES

- Hard to find funding
- Time consuming
- Complex mix of ideas & aspirations

# Food Durham: Strategy



- Focus on 'local food':  
"supporting a move towards a more localised food system in County Durham"



# Food Durham: Strategy



## Responding to local conditions:

- Low numbers of ALFNs and local food producers
- Regional Business Profile in 2016
  - UK average 1,040 Enterprises per 10,000 residents
  - London average 1,464 Enterprises per 10,000 residents (Index 141)
  - North East average 679 Enterprises per 10,000 residents (Index 65)
- Evidence of growing interest in local food; strong sense of local identity

# Public Sector Procurement



- ▶ Sub-group emerged from Phase 1: development of Strategy & Partnership
- ▶ Found willingness to engage, interest in sustainable procurement & examples of good practice esp. Durham University, & DCC
- ▶ E.g. **Durham University Sustainable Procurement Strategy** →
  - Development of 'hub' model in collaboration with local wholesale distributor for sourcing local fruit and veg
  - Broadened to include dairy, bread and eggs
  - Benefits included reduction of 42,000 kilos C from delivery, & cost savings
- ▶ Agreed common goals and aspirations for Strategy
- ▶ Enabled exchange of knowledge; assisted with negotiations with suppliers; collaborative problem solving

# Public Sector Procurement



## Key achievements:

- 5 Star Sustainable Fish City (Durham City)
- Buying Standards for Food (DCC)
- Healthy & Sustainable Food Policy (DCC)
- Engagement with Sugar Smart, and hopefully Veg Cities!
  
- Interest in purchasing via Food Hub





# Durham Food Hub



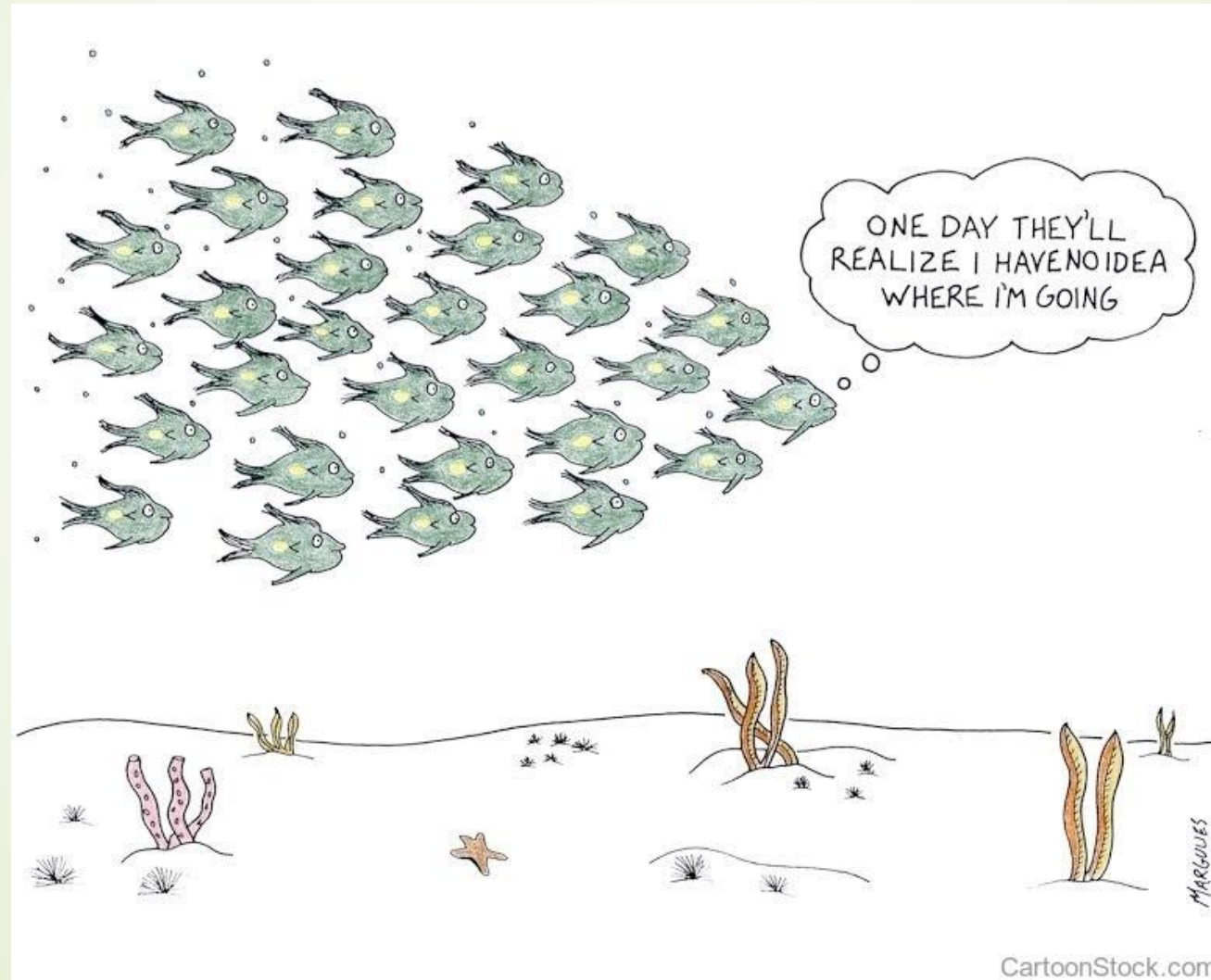
## Origins in Strategy:

- Strategic Aim Supporting the Local Economy

***“To support and develop a local ‘good food’ sector that is flourishing, competitive and contributing to the local economy of County Durham”***

- “Identify resources to research and test models for short supply chains in Co Durham..”
- Feasibility Study 2015 examined 2 options (geographical place based/virtual) concluded a B2B ‘virtual hub’ to be the most viable model, working with wholesale distributor J R Holland
- Builds on local strengths and assets – esp. local knowledge & TRUST

# Durham Food Hub





# Part 2 – Food Hub Implementation

Achievements and challenges

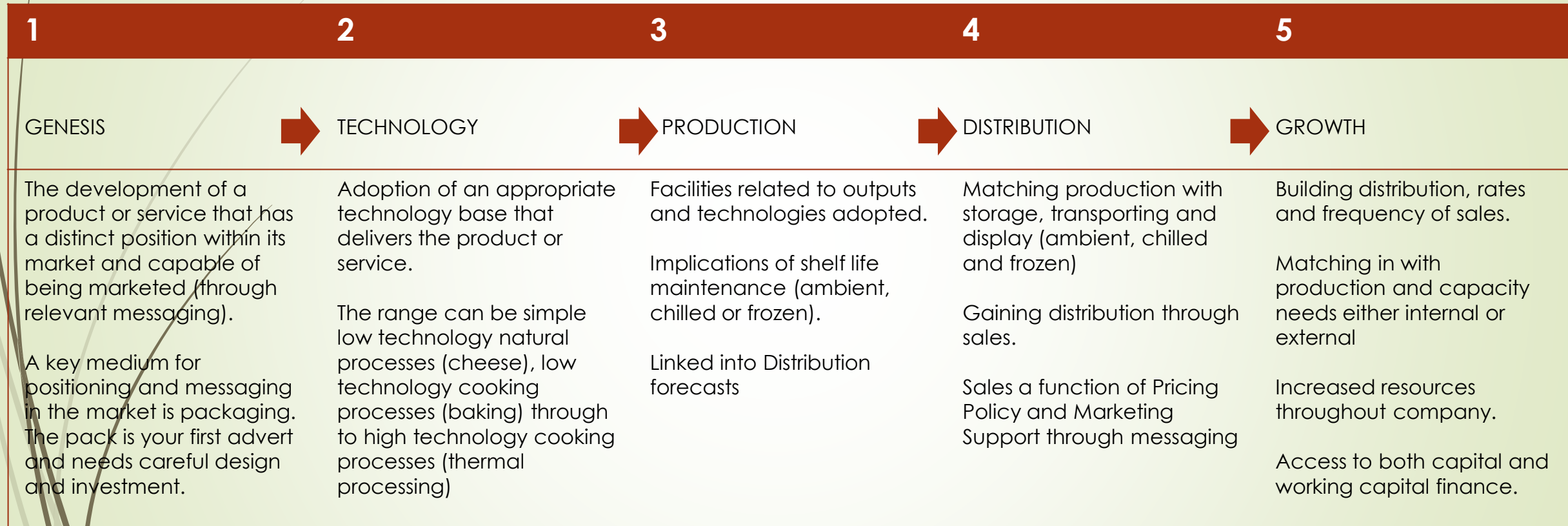
## How does it work?

### Key Salient Features:

- Hub – Is Not a Physical Place
- Brokerage Only
  - Support for Producers – commission on additional sales
  - Contracted Distributor – discount on additional sales
  - Create New Sales Channels – existing and innovated

# The Business Journey

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# Our Approach



- ▶ Food Durham support structures built around each element of that journey
- ▶ Support NPD, Product Development, Packaging Development, Commercial Assessment, Communications, Sales Development, Government Support, Funding and Compliance
- ▶ **Food Durham Business Strategy** – Build Distribution and Support Producers
  - ▶ Typical Regional Profile – Summary of products, pricing, positioning, product & suppliers stories
  - ▶ Different Sales Channels – Distributors, Major Retailers, Airlines, Public Procurement
- ▶ Target Local Sales to maximise the Economic Multiplier Effect = £10 spend creates £25 for local economy



# Achievements & Plans

## Achievements to Date

### Existing Distribution

- Local Hotels/Tourist Attractions – 15 Producers and 62 Products
- Through our Distributor Contract

### New Distribution

- Taste Durham Welcome Packs – +3 Producers and +6 Products
- Pick, Pack & Distribution through our Distributor Contract

Business ▸ Business News ▸ Durham City Centre

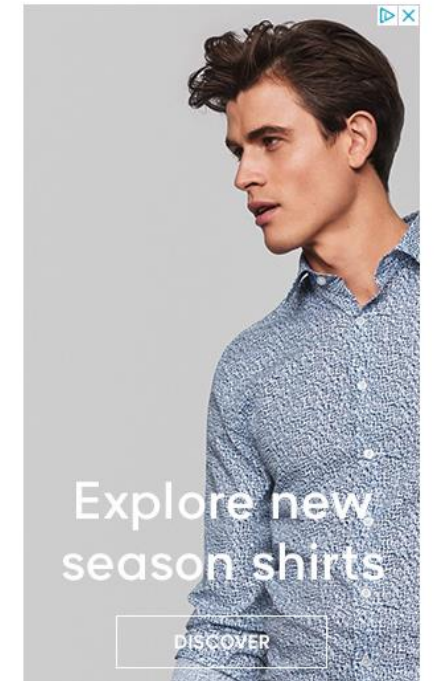
# New Hotel Indigo to serve local food after linking with seven Durham suppliers

Durham Food Hub arranged for food producers in the county to showcase their food to the new hotel



By **Graeme Whitfield** Business Editor  
17:13, 16 APR 2018

**BUSINESS**





# Taste Durham Welcome Pack



Aimed at Self Catering  
Accommodation in  
Co Durham



final taste durham hamper gif.mp4

Target 373 Enterprises



# Achievements & Plans

## Plans

- Working with +4 Producers across 4 Categories on National Distribution
- Distribution through existing Sales Channels (Dedicated, Carriers and Wholesale)
- Founding 'Core E-commerce' model for shared use
- More local distribution through existing and new channels from the achieved base



## Challenges & Barriers

- Ambition - but Inertia
- Packaging – a major issue
  - Design needs for messaging
  - Appropriate for Sales Channels
  - Investment
- Churn – Business folding and change of ownership
- Awareness of Food Durham

## What we have learnt

- Immense Opportunity – Locally and Nationally
- Need for Food Micro-business support structures
- Sustainability and Healthy have strong resonance with under 45 year olds
- Waste is an emerging 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar
- Our approach is starting to work

# Contact Details



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