

SPRING 2005 No10

London Food Link aims to help producers, consumers and retailers make a positive choice for sustainable, local food. This means better access to affordable, high quality and seasonal food, shorter supply chains and campaigning for policies which promote a thriving local food economy and culture.

London Food Link is:

- establishing a local food network for London
- promoting a sustainable local food economy
- supporting new and existing food projects
- advising local and regional authorities on supporting the growth of a local food sector in London
- celebrating London's food culture

School Dinners on a Knife-edge?



The interest in school meals generated by Jamie Oliver could lead to hasty decisions to the long-term detriment of many school catering services warns London Food Link (LFL). Through work funded by London Food, the London Development Agency's new food board, LFL has been looking at the state of school meals in Local Education Authority school catering throughout London.

Ben Reynolds LFL project officer explains: "Jamie Oliver's work has been fantastic in drawing parents' attention to the poor quality of many school meals. However, many parents are stopping their children buying school meals, providing them with packed lunches instead. LFL is keen to help Councils avoid this reaction by seizing the opportunities there are for providing healthier, sustainably produced food."

As part of the London Development Agency funded project, LFL is working with Camden Council to look into the options for their school meals service. Ian Patterson, Camden Council Education Dept, Head of Property and Contracts, emphasised the point. 'We are aware that the school meals we provide through Scolarest in Camden need to be improved. We are looking at various options for provision and are advocating an increase in school meal budgets. What we don't want is for the same thing to happen here as has happened in other Boroughs, where the central authority contract is done away with, and schools have to fend for themselves. This means that those smaller schools where catering is not commercially viable will really suffer. Once the central contract is removed, it is virtually impossible for it to be re-established.'

Ben Reynolds continues, 'It is very tempting for some schools to think that opting out is the best way to improve their service, and there are some great examples across the country of people doing this. But these changes are also possible on a larger scale with Boroughs like Kensington leading the way by using only organic fruit, vegetable and dairy products in their school catering. It is important that the larger catering providers adapt to be able to provide sustainable produce, because if they don't provide it, someone else will.'

The LFL work with Camden Council is part of a project that we and the Food Commission have been doing for the London Development Agency looking into food access and sustainable procurement to inform the forthcoming food strategy for the capital (see page 5). For more details on the food access project see page 9. And see page 10 for more on sustainable procurement.

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Food Across London

NORTH

Network Cafe Set To Open In Islington

The Mildmay Time Bank has recently received funding from Islington Council to organise a community-run cafe on Newington Green. The cafe will be a social enterprise offering nutritious and fairly traded refreshments at affordable prices. It will offer information about good food and about council, government and voluntary sector activities. The cafe will also provide training and personal development to everyone who is willing to join the project, supplying work experience and references. All profits will go back into the community and be invested in the many worthwhile community initiatives currently underway in the Newington Green area. Interested in getting involved? Contact Peter Roberts of the Mildmay Time Bank, Tel: 020 7249 5373, email: mildmaytimebank@btconnect.com

Islington Farmer's Market Celebrates Six Years

Help launch the London Sustainability Weeks with a bang at the Islington Farmer's Market on June 19th. The Market will be celebrating its 6th birthday and celebrations will take place at Essex Road opposite Islington Green from 10-2. For more information email info@lfm.org.uk or call 020 7704 9659.

Honey Tasting Event in Camden

Camden Council and Slowfood have teamed up to organize an event where interested Londoners can meet local beekeepers and taste honey while learning more about bees and honey making. Located at the Waterlow Centre in Waterlow Park, Dartmouth Park Hill, this event will take place on June 19th and begins at 11 am. To learn more call Ben Genovese at 020 7974 8817 or email ben.genovese@camden.gov.uk

CENTRAL

Bangla Cookery Classes: A Feast at Spitalfields City Farm

On June 19th from 10am to 3pm, come and beat the food miles and learn how to cook exotic tasting delicacies using ingredients that can be grown at home. A one-day workshop led by Spitalfields City Farm will involve picking herbs and vegetables at the farm and then learning how to transform them into a Bangladeshi feast in a cookery session at a local community centre. In between, there will be experts on hand to answer any questions about growing herbs and vegetables. A selection of plants will be available to buy for those inspired to grow their own at home. Places are limited so book early. For more information call 0207 247 8762 or email paul@spitalfieldscityfarm.org

Fruit and Veg Co-op Looking for Partners to Expand

The Westminster Primary Care Trust and The Westbourne Park Family Centre have worked together to open a fruit and veg food co-op which has been running since January 2004, going down to Borough Market to get supplies which are then sold fresh on the day at the family centre. They would like to expand, and are considering going to a bigger market. Newham is too far - all day would be spent negotiating the traffic! Would anyone in W2 like to share going to the wholesale market, or be interested in supplying a food co-op? If so, please contact: Sarah Martin, health visitor at Hallfield Clinic, Tel: 020 7723 5071 email: sarah.martin@westminster-pct.nhs.uk

Camden Green Fair and Bikefest

On 5th June in Regent's Park, come and participate in Central London's biggest Green Festival. This is an opportunity to celebrate all the work that is going on in Camden, in London and around the world to protect and improve our environment and quality of life, to provide information on what works and

what's new as well as enjoying music and activities with a low environmental impact. Activities and entertainment include green technology; recycling and energy conservation projects; electric vehicles; live music from a solar powered stage; bike trials and cycle maintenance workshops; environmental and community projects; children's activities including story telling, theatre workshops, willow weaving, climbing frame and trampolining; the teen tent; international cuisine, fair-trade tea & coffee and organic beer. Organised by Groundwork Camden & Islington, and Camden Council, for more informations contact Julian Jacobs, Tel: 020 7239 1283, email: jjacobs@groundwork.org.uk

WEST

Lunch at Launch of Local Food Street

The Friends of Bath along with London Farmers Markets have organised London's very first "Local Food Street". From 8th - 14th June pubs, cafes and restaurants on West End Lane in Hampstead will feature local food and drink. The event will be launched on June 8th with music, tastings, a cookery demonstration and mini-farmers market. For more information contact Cheryl Cohen of London Farmers Markets on 020 7704 9659.

Evening Picnic on Sandy Beach by the Thames

hfcyclists are organising an evening barbecue by the Thames, offering a great opportunity to explore a relaxing and unique spot in the heart of London. To reach the beach take the steps to the river beside the Festival pier, in front of the Royal Festival Hall. The event runs from 9pm - to midnight on 11th June. You are advised to bring something to sit on and warmer clothes, if it is chilly. For more information please contact John Griffiths, Tel: 020 7371 1290 or 07789 095 748, email: john@truefeelings.com

SOUTH EAST

Healthier Eating At Work in Newham

The Community Food Enterprise Limited (CFEL) has been testing an initiative with East Thames Group to promote healthy eating amongst their employees. The project has included:

- Promoting the 5 a day message amongst their staff
- Providing all employees with an alternative to vending machines by supplying them with a fresh piece of fruit each day

The initiative has proven a huge success and plans are under way to offer it to other employees in Newham. If you would like to learn more, contact Eric Samuels, Tel: 020 7511 9014 or email: eric@community-food-enterprise.org.uk

Newham Food and Nutrition Strategy

In early January the Newham Food Access Partnership (NFAP) launched a year long process to develop a Food and Nutrition Strategy for the Borough. Over the next six months the NFAP will be holding a series of public meetings that will help decide the future direction of food and nutrition issues in the borough. The strategy will be formulated through monthly meetings that will be open to all members of the public. The process is being coordinated by the NFAP on behalf of the Council and Newham Primary Care Trust and the hope is that many people will take the opportunity

to have their say on food issues. Cllr Neil Wilson in his capacity as Chair of the NFAP said at the launch that "Newham is the most diverse Borough in Britain and the Food and Nutrition Strategy must reflect the needs of all our community. Food affects many aspects of everyone's life from health to culture and this strategy will provide us with a way to serve the diverse food needs of all the people of Newham. We want to see people participating in the process of developing this strategy; we want to work with people rather than at them."

Meetings will take place on the second Tuesday of every month at venues located around the Borough. If you would like further information on how to get involved you can contact Jonathan Pauling, Tel: 020 7476 1505 Ext 117 or email: jonathan@nfap.org.uk

Queen's Market Still Set to Sell

Community opposition to the proposed sale of the Queen's Market in East Ham remains strong but more support is needed. The Friends of Queen's Market group encourages concerned Londoners to email the mayor of Newham to express their opposition to the proposed sale at: mayor@newham.org.uk. For more information about the status of the market please email: friendsofqueensmarket@yahoo.co.uk.

Come Put Down Some Roots! Organic Gardening in Hackney

As part of the London Sustainability Weeks, Growing Communities invites you join them on June 5th in their organic

garden for the launch of their new eco-classroom. This new facility features both a green sedum roof and a composting toilet. Tours of the site are available plus seasonal growing activities to inspire you to grow your own vegetables and fruit in the city. Instructions, tools and refreshments will be available, along with activities for children. For more information please email Kerry at grow.communities@btopenworld.com

SOUTH

Greenwich Initiative Combats Health Inequalities

Greenwich Community Food Initiative (GCFI) was established in 2002, builds on the success of the Ferrier Food Co-op and continues the successful partnership between Greenwich Health Development (Greenwich Primary Care Trust) and Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency. GCFI works in areas of Greenwich identified as having the highest health inequalities to establish local food initiatives that will improve local access to healthy, affordable food. In the long run GCFI looks to diversify into other types of local food initiative e.g. food growing and community cafes. For more information contact Claire Pritchard, Tel: 020 8269 4884 or email: claire@gcda.org.uk

Member Feature

Foodlink in Croydon

Foodlink, which is in its fifth year, provides better access to affordable, good quality fruits and vegetables. Cooking skills and eating healthily on a budget are also key elements of this project and Sue Orchard, the new Community Food Project's Officer, will be running food and cookery sessions to tempt the tastebuds of the estate's residents.

Sue also hopes to strengthen food work in the borough by making firm links with other food projects running in Croydon and other boroughs in the South West of London. She is based at the Foodlink site at the Fieldway Family Centre and will be the main contact for Foodlink which also runs on the Shrublands estate in Croydon and would be particularly interested to hear from anyone working in this area.

To contact Sue, Tel: 07767 441 61 email: susan.orchard@croydonpct.nhs.uk.



In and around London

Conference to Address Role of Public Markets

Making Markets, Creating Places is the first event of its kind. The conference will take place on Friday 17th June 2005 at the Glaziers Hall in London Bridge, SE1. Delegate prices are £250 for the public sector and £350 for private sector.

This event will focus on the key role markets can play in revitalising our towns and cities and also their potential for supporting the growing numbers of quality food producers looking to sell their products. Combined, these offer the potential to bring new life and investment into our towns and cities - large and small, as well as giving impetus to new farming and countryside management practices. The important role markets can play as a focus for developing local food initiatives will also be a feature of the event.

This conference brings together leaders in the urban regeneration and food policy fields alongside those who have been at the forefront of revitalising city centre markets in the UK. For further information, please call 020 7403 7745 or see www.marketsquared.co.uk.

Life on a Farm, Is It For You?

Commonwork runs a study centre and 500-acre organic farm at Bore Place, near Tonbridge, Kent. Thanks to funding from Kent County Council Rural Revival scheme, they are offering special opportunities to the public from now until July 2005.

Spend one or two weeks at Commonwork Organic Farm, an organic mixed dairy farm with a herd of 260 cows, 70 ewes and a mix of crop and grazing fields. Work will be alongside a team of five farm staff, as you help to milk cows, clean out sheds, feed calves and tend to lambs.

These opportunities are provided free of charge for residents of Kent over the age of 18. Self-catering accommodation is provided but participants are responsible for their own transport and meals.

For more information contact Mike,
Tel: 01732 463255 x226
email: mikec@commonwork.org

Grassroots Innovations for Sustainable Development

A one-day conference for researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the UK will take place Friday June 10th, 2005 at University College London. The conference will discuss the significance of grassroots innovations and identify how they may be supported and encouraged.

As well as providing an opportunity to network with others interested in this field, the conference will help participants reconsider grassroots innovation as part of a bigger picture, and thereby underscore its relevance to policies for sustainable development.

The conference is a collaboration between two research projects funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and conducted by CSERGE (University of East Anglia) and SPRU (University of Sussex). For further information, please visit the conference web site:
www.uea.ac.uk/~e175/grassroots.htm

Attendance, refreshments and lunch are free to participants, but places must be reserved in advance. Contact: Ann Dixon, Tel: 01603 593176 or email: m.a.dixon@uea.ac.uk

Celebrate Sustainability this June

London Sustainability Weeks 2005 (LSW2005) starts this year on 5th June to coincide with World Environment Day, and is London's largest festival celebrating community projects which are directly contributing to making the city a greener, healthier, cleaner place.

The fortnight of celebration (from the 5th - 19th June) provides an opportunity for the media and the public to discover and experience the diversity and creativity of local action and community projects working to make London's communities more sustainable. Increasing in size every year since its launch in 2003, LSW 2005 looks set to be the best yet, with over 300 events already pledged to take part.

For more information please contact: Christopher Harris, Tel: 020 7359 0452
e-mail: christopherharris@lsw2005.org

5-A-Day website & Food in Schools Toolkit Now Available Online

The Dept. of Health has recently launched a new Food in Schools Toolkit. It is designed to support, guide and inspire schools in taking a 'whole-school' approach to healthy eating and drinking with the help of results from over 300 schools who took part in the pilots projects.

The Toolkit consists of guidance, advice, case studies and templates brought to life by interactive elements such as a 'Food Audit', to help schools create customised solutions, and a 'Virtual Day', which follows a day in the life of a student. It covers healthier breakfast clubs, healthier cookery clubs, healthier lunch boxes, growing clubs, dining room environment, water provision, healthier tuck shops and healthy vending machines.

The Toolkit is available online - www.foodinschools.org - or in printed form from your local healthy schools coordinator or by calling 08701 555 455 or emailing dh@prolog.uk.com. Ask for item code 267050.

Also recently launched by the Department of Health is a new website - www.5ADAY.nhs.uk - packed with tips, games and recipes with different sections for teens and for parents as well as information on the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme and 5 A DAY logo.

Year of the Volunteer 2005 - Small Grants Programme

Volunteering England, in partnership with Business in the Community, The Media Trust, TimeBank and Youth Action Network, Youthnet, are distributing small grants to enable and encourage more people to participate in the Year by taking action to address the needs of their own communities.

The funding for the small grants has been made available by the Home Office as part of the Year of the Volunteer 2005 initiative. Funded activities will be those that are conceived, owned and delivered by individuals or groups of individuals. For more information about what activities will and will not be funded, please visit: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/missions.php?id=935>

Public Input Needed for London Food Strategy

Work on the new draft London Food Strategy, to be launched later this year, is nearing completion under the auspices of London Food, the board established by Ken Livingstone to advise on ways to realise the full potential of London's food sector. London Food is supported by the London Development Agency's Food Strategy Unit. (See Jellied Eel No.9)

The London Food Strategy will be the subject of a wide-ranging consultation during the summer, including a number of public events. All London Food Link members will be sent the consultation documents and we urge members to take the time to respond to the consultation to ensure their views are represented.

London Food is very excited at the prospect of the London Food Strategy, which will set out a radical and ambitious agenda for change to the ways in which London's food system works, building on the strengths of the sector and seeking to overcome its current weaknesses. It will set out a series of priority activities in a number of key areas where co-ordinated action is needed to help London achieve its objectives of a healthy and sustainable food system for everyone who lives in, works in or visits London.

The Strategy will cover all stages of the food chain from primary production all the way through to disposing of waste. Key areas are likely to include: school food; sustainable public sector procurement; communicating messages about the impact of food choices on health, the environment and the economy; and improving regional food links to help local producers to sell more to retail markets in London, amongst others.

If you would like further information on the London Food Strategy please contact Niall Machin in the LDA's Food Strategy Unit on 020 7954 4186, or Niallmachin@lda.gov.uk

Food's Major Impact on London's Ecological Footprint

London First and London Remade, with additional funding and support provided

by National Grid Transco, the Mayor of London, and Biffaward, have recently published a report entitled "Making London a Sustainable City: Reducing London's Ecological Footprint".

Demand from cities such as London means that consumption outstrips the supply of natural resources and points to major problems and constraints on future development. As the second largest contributor to London's ecological footprint, food plays a major role in the report. Some points for action recommended by the report include working with retailers to increase the supply of food from more sustainable sources and promoting farmers' markets and local markets, community supported agriculture schemes, and home delivery of fresh produce. For more information about this report go to: www.londonfootprint.com

Local Food Policies and Cultural Diversity in London

This recent report by the Government Office for London offers an overview of how far local food policies and local food projects in the 33 London Boroughs address the needs of London's minority ethnic groups. Looking in particular at the distribution of policies and projects across London, information and advice on nutrition and health, communication and engagement with minority ethnic groups and sustainability issues, this report addresses many key areas.

Offering recommendations for London agencies, schools and boroughs, the report makes note of the role London Food Link can and should play in facilitating a London-wide network for all community food and health workers. More information and copies of the report can be found at http://www.go-london.gov.uk/sustainable_development/downloads/LocalFoodReportDec04.pdf

Activ8: A Celebration of Play and Healthy Young London, Wednesday August 3rd 2005:

If you have children (or if you are one!) you may be interested to learn about Activ8, a fun, all-day free event in London's Hyde Park on National Play Day, Wednesday August 3rd 2005. Activ8

Diary

1st -3rd June

LFL Exchange trip to Scotland - full report next issue

5th -19th June

London Sustainability Weeks, venues throughout London - page 4

5th June

World Environment Day, Greenwich Park - page 4

5th June

Camden Green Fair & Bike Fest, Regent's Park - page 2

Also 5th June!

Growing Communities event - page 3

8th - 12th June

Local Food Street Launch, West End Lane - page 2

17th June

Making Markets, Creating Places
Glaziers Hall London Bridge, SE1 - page 4

19th June

Islington Farmer's Market 6th Birthday, Islington - page 2

19th June

Bangla Cookery Classes, Spitalfields - page 2

3rd August

Activ8: A Celebration of Play and Healthy Young London - page 5

is part of the Mayor of London's commitment to improving the physical fitness and well-being of children and young people in London.

Activ8 will be based around a number of themed "zones" including a Food Zone where children and young people will be able to combine fun with healthy food and will have the chance to become familiar with healthy foods they may not have tried before.

For further details on Activ8 please contact Mark Ainsbury at the Food Unit of the London Development Agency, who are sponsoring the event, on Markainsbury@lda.gov.uk, tel. 020 7954 4218

Farm Gate

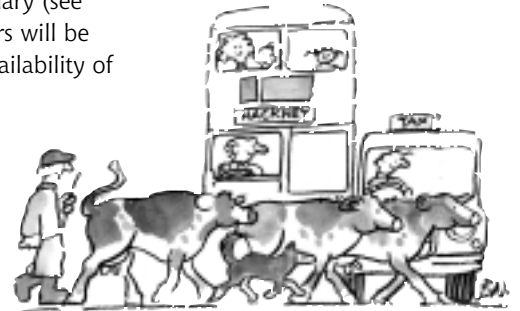
Sustain is working with the transport and sustainable development expert Professor John Whitelegg (www.eco-logica.co.uk) on a proposal for a sustainable food logistics centre in London. It is increasingly plain that, despite being an obvious market for food from surrounding counties, London's food infrastructure is not terribly conducive to supporting the movement of local food and more sustainable imports. With one eighth of all UK citizens living in London, more could be done to increase consumption of local and sustainable food, as well as supporting the profitability of farms by encouraging access to new markets in the capital.

A logistics centre might help. This could be a place where food can be brought for packing, storage, processing and cooking. Marketing and distribution to new markets which could include restaurants, the public sector, smaller retailers and social enterprises could be a vital brokered service to support farmers in and near Greater London. Closed organic facilities may also be useful along with storage for fairtrade imports. Training and farmer retail space may also feature in the proposals.

A seminar to introduce the idea and to test demand for a logistics centre was held in February (see http://www.sustainweb.org/news_detail.asp?iEve=10). From 11th May a survey for farmers will be online for three weeks (www.sustainweb.org) to assess the range, quantity and seasonal availability of produce within 100 miles of London, and to seek feedback from farmers about how a logistics centre can help increase profitability and market access in the capital.

A proposal for a sustainable logistics food centre will go to funders, in early summer, with a view to developing a centre, or centres over the next two years.

For more info contact Dan Keech at Sustain 0207 837 1228 or dk@sustainweb.org



Reducing Food Waste

Over the last few years the traceability of food has received considerable public attention, while food waste has been largely ignored. This is understandable: the traceability of food is important to the individual whereas the destination of food waste is important only to society as a whole. And important it is: London's landfill space is projected to run out in 2006. Actual food waste (not including packaging) contributes up to 25% of our household waste by weight. Londoners throw away twice their body weight in food waste each year.

But surely food waste is biodegradable? Yes, and that is precisely the problem. Food waste in landfill rots to produce methane, a greenhouse gas around twenty times more destructive than carbon dioxide. The best solution to dealing with such waste is through localised composting schemes which fertilise the soil and improve carbon absorption. The EU recognised this in the 1999 Landfill Directive, which will be implemented in Britain next year. Over the next decade the quantities of biodegradable waste going to landfill must reduce to a third of the figures for 1995.

Trading waste

Food waste, a major component of biodegradable waste, will become increasingly important in the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme, the government's Landfill Directive implementation scheme. This allows a decreasing yearly allocation of biodegradable waste to go to landfill over the next decade. Each year the allowance can be banked, borrowed or traded with other areas. Local authorities are encouraging home and community composting with various schemes and incentives (see below). And well they might. Borrowing within the scheme is limited to 5% of the following year's allocation and penalty

charges of £200 per tonne over this limit will be enforced, five times the standard price of landfill.

Wasted food can also be diverted higher up the waste hierarchy, by reducing or reusing waste. Surplus, unconsumed food costs £18 million pounds to the NHS every year. The charity Fareshare, once part of Crisis, estimates that thrown away food could be worth up to £16 billion! Instead, Fareshare, a London Food Link member, collects surplus food from processors and retailers and redistributes it to people in need around the country.

Feed your worms!

However, households are the biggest culprits, generating 63% of the total. A large proportion of food waste is easily recoverable within the household through composting or vermiculture (worm colonies). Both processes produce reusable and potentially valuable garden materials. Many householders in London have already received subsidised composting bins. 25 of the London boroughs claim to have distributed over 200,000 units: that's 6.5% of all London homes. Composting is not restricted to houses with gardens: some of the most effective schemes are operating on Hackney and Southwark estates.

So next time you are mashing potatoes, make sure that the peel gets recycled as compost. You'll be stopping greenhouse gases and possibly even reducing your future council taxes!

For more information contact Fareshare on 020 7394 2468 <http://www.fareshare.org.uk>, or Wastewatch on 0870 243 0136 or <http://www.wastewatch.org.uk>

By Chris Peck

Allotment Slot

Gardening leave

There comes a point, when you look at your plot, and the snails wave back through the long grass, that you sense the moment for radical action has come - or come and gone? Winter was going to be digging time, the chance to throw open the compost bins and throw brown magic all around, to dig out brambles, fix a shed roof (I have three sheds: not one of them sound), plan stuff, create. But gravity intervened in December, when I tripped on a hillside amongst Kerala's coconut groves, and returned to Gatwick with a broken arm. So the winter came and went, I learnt how to type left-handed, and how targets waste everyone's time in the NHS, as the plot slid quietly back to nature. Listen: this is how bad it's got. The mice have taken over. I took a cheese roll up last week to eat after a bit of one-armed digging, and left it in the largest of my lidless sheds, in a plastic bag, for a couple of hours. Come back and there are little black droppings all over, and I've got a Swiss cheese roll you could use as a moneybox. Give me a break, mice: if I can't grow anything I can't store anything in the shed and you're going to STARVE when the cheese roll is history. But they don't listen. So radical action it has to be.

It's time for gardening leave, to retreat, regroup, and get the plot sorted out. And the mice. That's the trouble with an allotment: you neglect it at your peril. It's time for someone else to sit in this corner and tell the stories, while I put spade to spit back home in Dartford. And what a good time to hand over: Suddenly, thanks to an Essex wide boy and a school canteen, EVERYONE wants to know about fresh, wholesome local food. London Food Link: your hour has come. And if you want food that's really fresh, and as local as it comes, get a plot, get digging, and grow it yourself. Oh, and if you know a good recipe for mice ...

By Richard Wiltshire

Defra to Fund New London Food Link Project



The Environmental Action Fund, run by Defra, has given London Food Link a grant to run a three year project to increase the proportion of sustainable food available in London. One

aspect of the project will work specifically with businesses run by or serving specific cultural communities, to tackle the difficulties faced in providing sustainable and culturally appropriate food. The other part of the project will work with restaurants in London, to try and increase supplies of sustainable food.

The London restaurant sector is an important part of London's food system. Yet, whilst a number of research papers have been written on public sector procurement and social food enterprises, and projects have recently been launched to introduce more sustainable food into the public sector, very little is being done with the commercial sector, a fact highlighted by the London Food Link report *Capital Eats* published last year.

However, this is a sector with much potential:

- The London restaurant scene is dynamic, and enjoys great diversity, with around 60 different cuisines represented in the capital, and over 12,000 restaurants.

- Compared to the public sector, firms operate with greater procurement freedoms and often more money. Furthermore, there is a strong case for urging this sector to move towards greater sustainability, due to its size and impact on London's population and economy:
- 34% of all food in the UK is eaten outside the home, and the figure is likely to be even higher in London. The proportion is growing at a similar rate to the US, where 48% of food consumption is now out of the home.
- Eating out by visitors to London generates £1.6 billion annually for the London economy.
- London's restaurants employ almost 200,000 people.

The report *Capital Eats* also highlights the great influence of ethnic retailers on what Londoners eat, with 95% of independent food retailers in London being of Asian origin. After supermarkets, the Asian convenience store accounts for the second largest slice of the food and grocery market in London and the majority of these are Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs). Other "ethnic" food businesses are found in manufacturing and catering.

We are currently recruiting an officer to lead the work with the "ethnic" food businesses. We are also on the lookout for restaurants and food businesses who are interested in being part of this project and increasing the proportion of sustainable food they buy. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Ben Reynolds on 0207 837 1228.

London Food Link would like to thank the following volunteers for their help over the last month: Caitlin Boon, Cindy Chen, Bec Huxstep, Francois Merode, Chris Peck, Jean-Baptiste Trotoux and Laura Wiles.

Shop Window

The Bull in the China shop

London's Chinatown is currently threatened by a re-development plan that could drive out small Asian businesses and destroy Chinatown's unique character. The developers Rosewheel bought the 200 years lease of Sandringham Building two years ago and this year gave tenants notices to quit by the end of March. The evictions are part of Rosewheel's plans to re-develop the area, making way for a Trocadero-style shopping mall. After the development Rosewheel is hoping to target high street brand names and they have informed the existing tenants that they are not in a position to compete with the likes of Tesco and Next. Throughout this process Rosewheel has failed to properly consult the community about its re-development plan.

If the plan goes ahead Chinatown will lose its unique cultural distinctiveness. To begin with, there is a planned relocation for that hallmark of Chinatown, the Feng Shui pagoda. The building work for this re-development plan will last for at least two years, bringing disruption to the Chinatown community with more congestion and increased air and noise pollution. It's very possible that many Chinese shops will be forced to close due to the adverse trading environment caused by the extensive and lengthy construction projects associated with Rosewheel's development.



Concerned citizens sign the petition supporting the Save Chinatown Campaign

Min Quan, a Chinatown-based community monitoring group, started a "Save Chinatown Campaign" that aims to save local businesses in Chinatown from being ousted by Rosewheel. They have called on Westminster City Council in particular to account for its role in the development plans. According to the Chinatown community this re-development plan has been made behind their backs, with Westminster City Council working closely with the Rosewheel developers.



A public demonstration against the proposed Chinatown redevelopment plan

One of Save Chinatown Campaign's main strategies is to call upon people to take part and sign a petition to register objections to the re-development plan. Doing this by the end of June this year could help to retain the unique Chinatown for Londoners and visitors. The Save Chinatown Campaign has received over 7,000 petition cards to date, objecting to the redevelopment plan.

Unfortunately the Save Chinatown Campaign has experienced difficulties during the campaign process. For instance, it lost a court battle which meant that, as a result, Tuk Tuk Noodle Bar, the last tenant of Sandringham Building, had to move out of the building by the end of March. On 25th March 2005, when the last tenant was evicted, the Save Chinatown Campaign held a street ceremony to express gratitude to supporters and contributors.

London Food Link has offered its support by publicising the campaign to the members network, media and other contacts. We have also contacted universities and colleges to gather more petition signatures from staff and students. LFL has also written to Westminster City Council about the re-development plan, and is still awaiting a response.

Although the tenants are being evicted, there is still a chance to affect the nature of the redevelopment and how the space is transformed. If you want to sign the Save Chinatown Campaign E-petition on the Min Quan website, see www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/save-chinatown/. Your support might help to protect Chinatown's distinct character.

For more information contact Jabez Lam at savechinatown@minquan.co.uk

By Cindy Chen

Food Access

Improving London's food access will take a bit of planning!

The London Plan is a document that will influence the lives of all Londoners, in one way or another, over the coming years. It is the pivotal planning policy document for the Greater London Authority, setting out the details of an aspiration to make life better for London's vibrant, diverse, and ever-growing population.

Of particular importance for those working in the fields of food, health and sustainability is the London Plan's recognition that health and sustainability issues lie at the heart of the planning process. The London Plan states: *"Health is a critical determinant of the quality of all our lives. Factors such as access to leisure facilities, fresh food or decent living conditions can all lead to healthier, longer lives. Planning decisions have the potential to influence these factors."*

Yet many people working in the food sector are unaware of the opportunities the London Plan presents to support and create markets for sustainably produced healthy food for Londoners. The opportunities are there for the taking, and Sustain and the Food Commission have been working with the London Development Agency to show how these opportunities could be exploited.

There are many aspects to this work, which we will continue to report on in future issues of The Jellied Eel. Here, we focus on how planners could help to support local food retail to improve access to healthy and affordable food, especially for low-income communities. People working in Primary Care Trusts and in the health, food manufacturing and farming sectors might also read this as a shopping list of the types of measures they could expect from planners, to create and maintain a healthy and sustainable food supply.

"Many small greengrocers have closed down and the remainder are only just viable. They're not going to suddenly re-open without some pump-priming. Nor will they survive without support."

Member of a retail trade association at the seminar 'How can local food retailing be supported, to improve access to healthy & affordable food?', Food Commission, 2005

Problems of food access are often manifested at a very local level. In areas of low economic activity, associated with a high proportion of low-income residents, traders selling food may need additional help - sometimes publicly funded - to help them overcome hurdles to sustaining their businesses. If neighbourhood food retailers are valued as part of strategic plans to tackle food availability and health

inequalities, then they may qualify for preferential treatment and support from public funds to help them overcome barriers and set them on a more viable footing. Local authorities can intervene where the market system has failed to deliver what is needed but is unlikely to do so without incentives. Planners can help by making conditions more conducive for traders to return.

Sometimes the solutions lie in coordinated support for retailers who might otherwise work in isolation, at the very margins of

profitability. For instance, local authority planning and regeneration staff can help to coordinate retail associations that work together to reduce both the high rates of crime and the burden of bureaucracy that falls most heavily on small businesses. Planners can also work with community organisations, such as housing associations, to ensure that new houses and warehouse conversions are designed to incorporate good food access into the very fabric of communities - 'building out' familiar food access problems right from the start.

Some local authorities have considered rates holidays for neighbourhood shops that provide an essential service by selling nutritious and affordable food, and turning over vacant premises to community food projects such as food co-operatives that might otherwise struggle in difficult and insecure circumstances.

Small retailers can also benefit from marketing and technical training, but once again, they are unlikely to be able to do this on their own, without coordination from the local authority or from enterprise agencies, within the framework of a planning strategy that values their contribution to health and sustainability. This might include action to protect food shops from change of use, improved bus routes to shopping areas, and channelling regeneration money into supporting food access projects, such as providing coordinated transport for elderly people who might not otherwise be able to get to the shops.

All of this work is possible, practical and indeed already in operation in some London boroughs. Some borough policies already give support to food retail through a range of practical and financial measures. For instance, Islington's Unitary Development Policy (UDP) - an especially far-reaching example - allows encouragement of: *"initiatives to provide local shopping facilities, for example support for co-operatives or voluntary schemes, establishing mobile shops, street trading or other measures which meet local residents' needs. Financial assistance could be provided, if resources are available. Support could include rate or rent grants/loans, improvement grants to shops, and environmental improvements to shopping areas. Advice to shopkeepers and liaison with local residents groups are other activities that can usefully support the Council's policies. In particular practical management advice to independent shopkeepers may be available from local business enterprise agencies; encouraging the use of vacant space above shops for other purposes, particularly residential use."*

"Our very low aspirational aim is to have no net loss of street markets across London, but we are setting our sights a lot higher than that, as we also aim to promote street markets. We recognise that street markets serve the needs of people on low income, people on no income, and people from different ethnic backgrounds."

Participant from the LDA's Food Strategy Unit, at the seminar 'How can local food retailing be supported, to improve access to healthy & affordable food?', Food Commission, 2005

FOOD ACCESS

But work is also needed at a more strategic level, to support the capital's food system. For instance, street markets are a crucial part of the food landscape in London - often providing healthy and affordable food to diverse ethnic communities who may experience food access problems. In Camden, for example, the local authority has recognised the contribution of street markets to wellbeing and offered low-rate or free stalls to traders selling healthy five-a-day produce to local people.

Crucially, planners and regeneration teams can also support the wholesale food markets that are the lifeblood of a thriving food economy in London. These serve the needs of local retailers, food projects, caterers and the restaurant trade, but they are often not included in borough food strategies. This may be because they are not located within borough boundaries, or because strategy development staff may not be aware of the reliance of local food providers on the wholesale trade. However, there are several very large wholesale markets in London, with many hundreds of traders and producers using them each day. They play a crucial role in London's food chain, and may be especially important in the supply of quality food at an affordable price.

The good news is that measures to support healthy and sustainable food trading are backed by regional and national policy, since work to improve the accessibility and sustainability of the capital's food supply can fulfil a wide range of social, environmental and regeneration objectives as part of the London Development Agency's commitment to a sustainable food and farming strategy for London. The opportunities are there for the taking.

How London's planners can improve access to healthy and affordable food is the subject of a draft document submitted by the Food Commission and Sustain to the Food Strategy Unit of the London Development Agency. The LDA will be consulting on its plans for sustainable food and farming for the Capital over the coming months. (see page 5)

To find out more, contact Ben Reynolds at London Food Links on 020 7837 1228; email: ben@sustainweb.org.

For further information about recommendations to London's planners for supporting local food retailing and improving food access, contact: Kath Dalmeny, The Food Commission, on 020 7837 2250; email: kath@foodcomm.org.uk.

Feeding the GLA Family (continued from page 1)

LFL is making very good progress with the Metropolitan Police Authority and on 6 April we held a very successful seminar with them on developing a sustainable food procurement policy. This was followed by a seminar with some of the Met Police's suppliers, including representatives from Coca-Cola, 3663, Dairy Crest and Courage.

The Met Police's current Environmental Strategy includes an objective for sustainable procurement, and at the seminar key staff from the Met Police catering, procurement and environment departments discussed ways to incorporate food into this strategy.

Ideas included serving healthier menus, and serving more local, organic and farm assured foods. The Met serves up around 10 million meals a year, and if only a proportion of this was sustainably produced, this would still be a considerable amount.

Work also continues in a similar vein with London Underground, and more details about this aspect of LFL's work for the London Food Unit will appear in a future Jellied Eel.

Contact Kate Bowie on 020 7837 1228 or kate@sustainweb.org for more information.

Grilled tomato soup - Serves 4

A brilliantly red soup with a lovely smoky flavour from the grill. Serve as a summery first course or as a meal with country bread.

- 12 vine-ripened tomatoes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 750 ml vegetable stock
- 250 ml tomato juice or V8
- pinch of dried chilli flakes
- pinch of sugar
- Sea salt and pepper
- 2 tbsp grated parmesan
- 1 tbsp fresh oregano leaves
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Heat the grill. Brush the tomatoes with a little of the olive oil. Place under the grill for 15 to 20 mins until the skin scorches and starts to peel. Leave to cool slightly, reserving 4 for serving. Peel and roughly chop the remaining 8 tomatoes, saving the juices.

Combine the chopped flesh and the juices in a saucepan with the remaining olive oil and the garlic, stock, tomato juice, chilli, sugar, sea salt and pepper, and simmer for 15 mins. Taste for salt, pepper and sweetness. Take out the garlic, if you remember.

Place the reserved tomatoes in four shallow soup bowls and ladle the soup over the top. Scatter with the parmesan and oregano, drizzle with the extra virgin olive oil and serve.

From Good Cooking: The new essentials by Jill Dupleix (Quadrille £18.99)



Hospital Food Project

Would the thought of breakfast in a hospital canteen get you out of bed in the morning? On Wednesday 26th January people were wide-awake and hungry in the Royal Brompton hospital, South Kensington, London, for a taste of a local, organic and healthy breakfast. The breakfast launch was a showcase for the products which will be available at the Brompton.

The launch was part of the hospital food project currently being run by Sustain in partnership with the Soil Association. The project is funded by the King's Fund and Defra and plans to increase the amount of local, seasonal and organic food available in four London hospitals. As well as The Royal Brompton three other hospitals in London are participating; St Georges, Ealing and The Royal Bethlem. This project aims to benefit the health of patients and staff, increasing awareness of more sustainable options such as local and organic food, and supporting farming and food businesses in London and the South East.

The NHS spends £500 million on food a year and so can use its spending power to positive effect. Buying local and organic food could help support small, local firms and keep money circulating locally. Sustainable food is less detrimental to the environment due to the reduction in food miles, packaging and use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. More could be done to supply more fresh produce within the NHS to improve the nutrition status of patients and staff.

The Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust is the largest cardiothoracic centre in the UK and probably the largest in Europe. Both hospitals are at the leading edge nationally and internationally in the investigation, treatment and care of people with heart and lung disease.

The British Heart Foundation suggests that cardiovascular disease accounted for 25% of premature deaths in the UK in 2001, and 38% of cancers. Better nutrition could have prevented many of these. Food in the public sector, including food in hospital canteens and wards is likely to affect the nutritional health of hospital staff as well as the people to whom they offer care. The recent government white paper on health



Diners at the Royal Brompton Hospital enjoy a local and organic breakfast

outlines opportunities to make institutions more sustainable and healthier.

Best start to the day

The Brompton Breakfast morning was designed to encourage staff, visitors and patients to start the day the healthy way with a balanced and nutritious breakfast, with local and organic produce top of the menu. Research shows that a nutritious and healthy breakfast helps our body and mind make the best start to the day, aiding concentration and memory, and reducing snacking.

The breakfast menu included organic porridge from family-run London based supplier Essex Flour and Grain, which is a new supplier for the Brompton. Managing Director, Michael Spinks said: "Wholegrain cereals make an important contribution to a heart-friendly diet. I am delighted to be working with Royal Brompton to supply more local and organic cereals and other ambient and dry goods."

Fresh fruit salad and Kentish grown apples were on offer through fruit supplier Prescott Thomas, based at New Covent Garden market. Also available were freshly brewed Fairtrade tea and Guatemalan organic coffee, organic milk, free-range egg omelettes, low salt baked beans and grilled organic bacon and sausages from the award winning 'Helen Browning's totally organic' range, all of which were extremely popular!

At the breakfast launch lots of information was available on the types of food on offer, and many people learnt more about the

differences between organic and conventional farming and the benefit of a balanced diet. Visitors were able to meet catering staff, dieticians and representatives of the hospital food project. This created lively discussions about the issues surrounding healthy, local and organic food. People also met suppliers to learn more about their food journey from field to plate.

The catering team, along with Mike Duckett Catering Manager, Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust, have embraced the project whole-heartedly; Mike commented:

"We want to serve food that is not only healthier for our patients but that is also purchased in a more responsible way, such as Fairtrade coffee and free-range eggs. Also, by increasing our use of local suppliers we can help to promote health by providing fresher, seasonal foods for our patients."

Although the current trend is to separate producer and consumer, this is not the case at The Royal Brompton. As Duckett explains: "We've been on visits to producers and suppliers such as organic dairy farmers and market gardeners, which is a great way of getting to understand the local and organic food market."

The hospital food project highlights how an enthusiastic and motivated staff can really make a change towards sustainable public procurement. Even small changes to hospital catering can optimise opportunities to use local and organic suppliers, improve the quality of meals and increase the levels of interest and enjoyment of diners.

Viewing for a Couch-Eel

Special offer
for Jellied Eel
readers!

Savouring Europe is a new DVD written and directed by Robert Golden. This two DVD set includes 13 episodes, at 26 minutes each, exploring the stunning diversity of the peoples & food of Europe focusing in on regions within 13 different countries.

Includes delivery throughout UK. Overseas postage charged at cost. Offer closes 01 August 2005. Savouring Europe RRP £19.99

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The benefits of membership of London Food Link include:

- *The Jellied Eel*, our quarterly members' newsletter.
- A chance to influence policy-making on food issues including contributing to food and nutrition strategies, government and GLA consultations on food, farming, planning and the economy.
- Membership of an interactive e-mail group with news, events, jobs and developments around food issues in London.
- Discounts off London Food Link events, conferences, seminars and publications.
- Access to online members' area with membership directory.
- A free copy of **Growing Food in Cities** to new members and 50% off all London Food Link publications.



To join London Food Link or for further details contact:

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www.londonfoodlink.org

London Food Link members and supporters include:

Primary Care Trusts, London boroughs, business associations, retailers, farmers, environment and community groups, food access partnerships, allotment groups and food writers. Our work is guided by a working party of key London-wide agencies and groups representing food issues from farm to fork.

LONDON
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

defra
Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

sustain
the alliance for
better food and farming

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF LONDON FOOD LINK.
ILLUSTRATIONS: 'WRIGGLER' EEL BY STEPHEN TURNER. ALL OTHERS BY BEN NASH.