

Taste a Better Future: Inspiring climate action through community food growing

1. What's your vision and long-term goals for your project?

Our shared vision is for every UK town and city to have a Climate Hub - productive and values-led community-run food growing spaces - helping people appreciate their place in nature, and gain the knowledge and motivation to take action. These hubs will inspire change in food choices and behaviour, engage people with nature, support communities to harness the transformational power of food growing, build skills in food production, and provide fresh and sustainably produced food, helping people taste a better future.

Taste a Better Future is a step towards this vision, creating Climate Hubs at established peri-urban growing sites that are ready to take the next step in expanding their public engagement, and offer mutual learning as well as support to a network of emerging peri-urban growing sites. We will work in partnership to catalyse lasting behaviour change for climate and nature, embedded in participation and an ecosystem of public and institutional support. We will take proactive steps to ensure marginalised and less privileged communities engage and benefit.

Taste a Better Future's public engagement activities will be delivered by five beacon Climate Hubs across England and Scotland. These Local Partners are established grassroots community farms situated at the periphery of large urban areas, within a 30-minute bike ride, walk or bus ride from large populations in diverse and less economically privileged areas. These Local Partners have all engaged locally with their communities and evidenced the need and enthusiasm for this work, and for access to quality green spaces. The programme will equip Climate Hubs to co-create, develop and deliver a seasonal cycle of engagement events reaching thousands of people, to involve them in nature based activity and raise awareness of the climate and nature impact of food, whilst also collecting evidence and networking to facilitate wider change.

National Partners – Sustain (lead partner) and the Landworkers' Alliance LWA, (local engagement partner) will use their extensive experience and networks to ensure the programme learns, shares and maximises the influence of activities. Prior to this bid, we ran the exploratory Fringe Farming initiative, and consulted widely on what is needed for the sector. Working together, we will build on this to run peer-to-peer learning activities for the Climate Hubs and the established Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum. National Partners will oversee research, case studies, story-telling and data collection to enable Climate Hubs to strengthen their case and become embedded in public engagement and institutional support.

Two key workstreams are:

1. Partner led engagement activities hosted by five beacon Climate Hubs, for example:
 - Cultural and seasonal celebrations bringing together large numbers of people locally to share nature-friendly food, skills, inspiration and connections.
 - Workshops and courses engaging people on a deeper level to learn skills of nature- and climate-friendly food growing, creating habitats, building soil fertility, composting food waste and increasing biodiversity.
 - Longer term volunteering or work placements to engage new audiences, including some leading to qualifications and employment.
2. Network learning and movement building, to include:

- Peer-to-peer skills, learning and experience shares, mentoring and buddying, including via Learning Partners and the established Peri-Urban (Community Farms) Practitioners' Forum and regional events.
- Climate Hub practitioner site visits, which could include engagement with stakeholders (e.g. local authority, landowners, community leaders, media)
- Development of open source, co-created resources (e.g. toolkits) supporting the evidence base and development of Climate Hubs, to be shared and advocated for widely.

Three further workstreams are:

- Communication and advocacy
- Governance and programme management
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The programme is designed with influence, legacy and longer-term sustainability at its core. We will advocate for a Climate Hub in every peri-urban area, promoting climate- and nature-friendly community food growing, as a defining characteristic of resilient communities. Sustain and LWA will coordinate engagement with local authorities, landowners, policy-makers, planning authorities and funders, for example via the established Sustainable Food Places Network of 90 UK towns, cities and regions and 50 local authority signatories to Food for the Planet (some overlap) committed to action for climate and nature through sustainable land-use, including support for community food growing.

Expected outcomes will be:

1. Changes in public attitudes, understanding and behaviour leading to more climate- and nature-friendly food choices and less food waste.
2. More people involved in growing food in a climate- and nature-friendly way, leading to increased knowledge and skills, positive local action on climate and nature.
3. Development of an ecosystem of support to strengthen capacity of Climate Hubs and the network to deliver impactful, inspiring public engagement on climate and nature during and beyond the programme.
4. Peri-urban Climate Hubs are recognised as a significant contributor to address climate change and restore nature and play an effective role in raising awareness of food related climate and nature issues among public and decision makers moving towards the vision of a Climate Hub in every town and city.

2. Where and how will your project work?

The food system contributes c.30% to global greenhouse gas emissions and industrial farming is the leading cause of nature loss (Climate Change Committee, 2022), whilst a third of food goes to waste (WRAP). Solutions (Food for the Planet, 2022) lie in public engagement and behaviour change; institutional and policy engagement locally and nationally; transition to agroecological food production (prioritised in the UK Agriculture Act, 2020); promotion and consumption of more fruit, vegetables, pulses and wholegrain foods, and less animal-derived and ultra-processed foods (National Food Strategy, 2022); and radically reduced food waste.

Principal public engagement activities of Taste a Better Future will take place across England and Scotland, in five established community farms acting as beacon Climate Hubs. These are close to large, diverse and less privileged urban populations on the outskirts of Brighton (Fork and Dig It), Bristol (Sims Hill), Edinburgh (Lauriston Farm), Liverpool (Kindling Farm), and Barking & Dagenham, London (Dagenham Farm). In each place, the local authority and/or food partnership

has committed to supporting smaller-scale community food growing for climate and nature, and Climate Hubs will be a key way to take this to the next level of ambition, public engagement and impact.

Over the three-year programme, each beacon Climate Hub will employ a Climate Hub Outreach Worker (CHOW) to run an annual seasonal cycle of nature- and climate-focused public engagement activities reaching a wide audience of at least 10,000 people, with deeper engagement with around 750 people through short courses, 200 through regular volunteers and approximately 160 through supporting the set up of around 40 neighbourhood growing sites. Additionally, 100 practitioners will participate in peer-to-peer learning, sharing, strengthening the case for Climate Hubs and co-creation of resources. They, and others, in the established Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum will be supported by the National Partners, Sustain and LWA, as well as Learning Consultants who are leading practitioners in this space.

In preparation for this bid, we conducted research showing that all five Climate Hubs are facing common challenges - climate, heat and water stress, increased costs, communities under economic and other pressures, biodiversity loss, and lack of access to green and biodiverse spaces for urban communities. They report these as priorities in local plans and policy, with community food growing well placed to contribute to solutions. Climate Hubs will offer local people the opportunity to access green and biodiverse space and learn skills to appreciate and grow fresh, healthy, climate- and nature-friendly food, in an engaging and connected way to inspire participation and behaviour change.

Some of the beacon Climate Hubs report facing specific environmental challenges due to their geography; Dagenham Farm is in the Thames Estuary where, on the hottest day in 2022, 14 homes burned down just over a mile away. Sims Hill in Bristol is under the shadow of the M32 motorway, an unwelcome neighbour causing damaging air pollution for the community and nature, with a significant loss of green spaces in recent years.

All the Climate Hubs cite access to fresh, locally produced, nature- and climate-friendly food as a challenge. Dagenham Farm, Kindling Trust Farm and Sims Hill are in 'food deserts', with poor access to fresh, healthy and affordable food, leaving those without transportation or adequate incomes little choice but to eat unhealthy and climate-damaging ultra-processed food.

Our programme vision prioritises outreach to people who might otherwise have little access to food growing or green spaces, to improve everyday contact with nature for those who can benefit the most. Each beacon Climate Hub will prioritise outreach for diversity, equity and inclusion. For example, Sims Hill in Bristol will work especially with those from refugee and migrant communities; Lauriston Farm in Edinburgh will engage people living in postcodes that score highly on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Sustain's Diversity Outreach Coordinator (funded separately) will support achievement of diversity outreach goals.

Working together, locally and nationally, we will also engage with the ecosystem of stakeholders and institutions who can form the network of support to help this work thrive in the longer term. Sustain and Landworkers' Alliance will coordinate engagement with local authorities, landowners, policy-makers, planning authorities and funders, for example via the established Sustainable Food Places Network of 90 UK towns, cities and regions and 50 local authority signatories to Food for the Planet (some overlap) committed to action for climate and nature through sustainable land-use, including nascent support for community food growing. Sustain is a lead partner for both these initiatives, and hosts practitioner webinars, training, engagement events and coordinated advocacy that can greatly support the influence aims of Taste a Better Future.

Our operational budget allows modest investment in Climate Hub infrastructure to enable public engagement and overcome barriers to participation, as well as co-created and freely available resources to help share learning and address challenges of common concern.

3. How will you work in partnership?

The National Partners are Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming (lead partner) and The Landworkers' Alliance (local engagement partner). Our organisations have worked collaboratively on many projects, including the two-year Fringe Farming exploratory initiative working with local authorities and the Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum to start building the case for farm-scale peri-urban community food growing, which in turn led to this Taste a Better Future proposal.

Sustain is a registered charity (number 1018643) and company limited by guarantee (number 02673194). It is governed by its alliance membership of around 100 national not-for-profit organisations operating in the public interest and elects a Council of Trustees who meet quarterly to provide strategic leadership and to oversee good organisational, alliance and financial management.

Sustain will be the lead and accountable partner, holding the Partnership Agreement with National Partners and Local Partners. Sustain has extensive experience of partnership working and programme management. Sustain will manage programme finances, due diligence, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and commission consultant Learning Consultants.

Sustain will employ the overall Programme Manager, and their job description setting out key responsibilities is available, which covers creation of and support for:

- Workplan, partner agreements, budgeting and reporting processes
- Various governance, advisory and practitioner groups
- Relationships with Local Partners
- Opportunities for skills development and peer learning
- Budgets, financial management, tracking and reporting processes for programme wide functions and for Local Partners
- Activities to fulfil monitoring and reporting; data, research and consultation; programme evaluation
- Programme-wide communications, influence/advocacy, and engagement plan
- Greater engagement with lower income and under-represented people and groups, (working with Sustain's Diversity Outreach Coordinator).

The main contact for Sustain is Sarah Williams, Programmes Director, who will serve on the Programme Management Board for Taste a Better Future, providing senior leadership, delivery and advocacy expertise and strategic connections with the Sustainable Food Places Network.

The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) is a cooperative company limited by guarantee, with non-profit status - company number 09386794. The LWA has a membership body of 2,000+ supporters and landworkers based in the UK, from which a 12-person 'Coordinating Group' (directors) is elected. The leadership LWA staff who have contributed to this bid are Peter Samsom, Resilient Local Food Systems Project Worker, and Rebecca Laughton, Horticulture Campaigns Coordinator and Alyce Biddle, Operations Manager.

LWA's role in Taste a Better Future is to support the Climate Hubs and Climate Hub Outreach Workers, helping to coordinate the co-design of public engagement activities and learning materials, running the Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners Forum and peer-to-peer

events, coordinating Climate Hub site visits and helping them to improve or increase their engagement with diverse audiences. LWA will employ the Programme Officer, and a job description setting out key responsibilities is available.

Local Partners run peri-urban community farms that will act as beacon Climate Hubs for the Taste a Better Future programme. These sub-grantee organisations will employ Climate Hub Outreach Workers, and support delivery of the range of public engagement activities described in this bid, whilst also contributing to peer learning, sharing, communications and advocacy activities to support effective and collaborative implementation and to embed this approach in the longer term:

- Brighton CSA Fork and Dig It CIC, a community interest company, company registration number: 13320268.
- Sims Hill Shared Harvest Ltd, a public interest entity and not-for-profit cooperative social enterprise, company number: 07416757.
- Edinburgh Agroecology Co-op CIC, a community interest company, registered number: SC668231.
- Kindling Farm Limited, a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society, registered number: 7283.
- Growing Communities, a not-for-profit cooperative social enterprise, company number: 03438761.

4. How will the project put communities first?

As part of our selection process for the beacon Climate Hubs, we chose localities where the presence of a Climate Hub could be transformational for local people, either because access to climate and nature-friendly food and resources is poor, or because communities are notably disconnected from green spaces, biodiversity and nature.

Sustain and the Landworkers' Alliance worked closely with five peri-urban community farms to design the Taste a Better Future programme. Our Local Partners (community farms) are grassroots organisations, run by local people, rooted in the communities they serve. Each Local Partner has its own way of involving their community in the design and development of this proposal.

For example, in East London, Dagenham Farm have taken heed of surveys completed by over 100 local residents showing that only 11% of people think it's easy to access sustainable or planet-friendly food in their area; and 85% of people would like to see more food growing spaces, activities and opportunities in their local area. Acting as a Climate Hub, Dagenham Farm says they will be able to respond to the request of their local community and provide more opportunities for climate- and nature-friendly food growing and eating.

In Brighton and Hove, Fork and Dig It ran community consultations and questionnaires to canvas the appetite for climate- and nature-friendly food growing spaces and activities, discovering great enthusiasm for these things. They have also attended local forums to speak with residents and local groups.

Kindling Farm near Knowsley/Liverpool has a long history of community engagement and outreach. They run consultation sessions to help assess community needs and expectations, encourage enthusiastic local residents to be involved in running and delivering events, and invite feedback to help them improve. Kindling Farm responded to local community requests by becoming an open haven for local wildlife and biodiversity, but also for people.

Lauriston Farm, Edinburgh, is Scotland's largest community farm, managed by a workers' cooperative established by local people. They host numerous community events throughout the year - schools and college visits, outreach with other local charities and groups, local people involved in biodiversity studies, and volunteer opportunities. Through such existing and diverse new connections and partnerships, they will co-design a programme of opportunities reflecting the priorities of these groups.

Sims Hill Shared Harvest. Bristol, runs regular activities with their local community of refugees and asylum seekers, responding to a local desire to access nature-friendly spaces that are otherwise lacking. Members of Sims Hill input into the design of their community programmes, through quarterly meetings to feedback and generate new ideas.

The Taste a Better Future programme team and Learning Partners (sector leaders employed as consultants to offer mentoring and expert learning opportunities) will support local Climate Hub Outreach Workers (CHOWs) and members of the Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum to provide abundant opportunity for community involvement in the design of the programme and running of the activities. Input from a diverse range of local people will be vital throughout, to ensure successful engagement of those not traditionally involved in the farms, providing key opportunities to reflect and improve.

We will support CHOWs to run focus groups and surveys, as well as collecting effective feedback from participants in events or other activities.

On a final note, community engagement is core to the success of Taste a Better Future. We would like to see this programme inspire Climate Hubs in community growing sites around the country. For this to be achieved, local people need to be involved in design, delivery and advocating for this work.

5. How will you measure and evaluate the project?

Central to Taste a Better Future is a culture of ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and reflective learning. This is vital to underpin reflective learning, demonstrating value and making the case for Climate Hubs across the UK.

Sustain's Programme Manager and LWA's Programme Officer will support Climate Hubs to gather quantitative and qualitative data to understand the impact of public engagement activities and refine our approach. We will develop a theory of change and the tools to evaluate this with external support, and test how the approach enables people to assess and make long-lasting changes in food choices and activities that benefit nature and climate, and share stories of their experiences. We will also share the tools that are developed to track and collect evidence with the wider practitioners' network and their ecosystems of local public and institutional support. We will also assess changes in attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders and institutions that are the ecosystem of support for Climate Hubs.

Participants in Climate Hub activities will experience the community camaraderie of food growing and eating together, learn about how industrial farming impacts climate and nature, and develop skills to grow, eat and appreciate low-carbon fresh produce. We will track how this changes attitudes and behaviours that benefit rather than harm climate and nature, through measures related to food choices, food waste, growing techniques, and engagement in positive action.

Monitoring activities will include training Climate Hubs to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks vital to their effectiveness and longevity, including:

- Record keeping: Collection and collation of data on the number and types of people engaging with the Climate Hubs, through attendance at open days, regular volunteering, courses and other events.
- Focus groups: Climate Hub Outreach Workers will be trained to run focus groups, with diverse groups they engage with, to build a detailed picture of how involvement with Climate Hubs at different levels impacts attitudes and behaviours that benefit climate and nature.
- Feedback surveys, pre and post activities: Quantitative survey data, kept consistent to track attitudes and behaviour change over the three years, among respondents willing to identify themselves by name/email address.
- Reflection and feedback activities: Following our seasonal pattern, each Autumn/Winter, Local and National Partners will take part in reflective learning activities to evaluate the impact and what has been learned, reflect on improvements and build on the insights gained in planning for the coming year.
- Annual reporting: Climate Hub Outreach Workers will submit an annual report that integrates data from the surveys and focus groups with storytelling about their experiences from the year. The Programme Manager and Officer will combine these reports and share them through the peer network to enable learning and reflection about successes and challenges, to inform future planning.
- Case studies and storytelling: We will compile shareable case studies, alongside storytelling about participation, to demonstrate the personal, community and longer term impact of connecting to food, climate and nature through growing fruit and vegetables.

Changes we wish to see are also described in Outcomes, question 1.

6. How will you learn and share what you learn?

National Partners, Sustain and the Landworkers' Alliance, are extremely well placed to undertake collaborative learning, dissemination, public and institutional engagement and influence for change. Indeed, these are fundamental organising principles and reasons for the existence of these two organisations, so are built into the way we operate and design our programmes, and into the regular reflective learning opportunities throughout programme planning.

Taste a Better Future seeks to learn, adapt and model the Climate Hub approach in locality, as well as share this in a way that other places and community food growing spaces can input on, and learn from, and to inspire other local communities into action for climate justice through climate- and nature-friendly food.

Learning between practitioners will be through mentoring, buddying, support from Learning Partners (sector leaders), co-produced guidance and other resources, and site visits to each Climate Hub, ensuring each Local Partner will visit every other Climate Hub during the course of the programme.

Sustain and LWA run the established Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum, a key audience to share learning beyond the beacon Climate Hubs. Both LWA and Sustain also have large membership bases of community food growers whom we will engage in learning opportunities (for example the 3,000+ community food growing spaces across London that are part of Capital Growth, coordinated by Sustain).

Within the course of the programme, we will actively engage many more UK places to learn from our approach and take part in activities. Sustain is a lead national partner for the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) Network. Established for a decade, SFP works with 90 food partnerships in towns,

cities and regions across the UK, involving local authorities, community groups and others, keenly interested in supporting a better food system, including community food growing. We will organise learning opportunities for this engaged network. As a result, we aim for at least 20 to take significant steps toward strengthening larger community food growing sites within easy reach of urban populations.

To cultivate local action and support, we will train and help Climate Hub Outreach Workers to plan, lead on and take part in communications, public engagement and local advocacy activities, to build skills, strategise and inform our wider learning and engagement plan, with National Partners coordinating comms and advocacy at a national level.

Methods of engagement in learning will take many forms, including:

- Regular reflective practitioner learning, informed by monitoring, evaluation, case studies, focus groups and storytelling
- Publication of co-created and open source guidance and toolkits, pooling shared learning and expertise
- Webinars and training events
- Outreach and presentations at events and conferences
- Creative tools such as short films and social media assets
- Engagement with diverse local, regional and national networks
- Targeted outreach to policy makers, media, landholders and farmers.

We would like support from the Lottery to ensure that our learning programme, and measures of success, comparable with those used by others in the Climate Action Fund portfolio, contribute to wider analysis and understanding of what works.

7. How will you reach more people?

We will implement an outreach and influence strategy to fulfil core aims of the Taste a Better Future programme, implemented by the National Partners at UK-wide level, aiming to increase the reach, impact and influence of the programme.

The Programme Manager will work with Local Partners and Sustain's Diversity Outreach Coordinator (separately funded role) to devise a plan for ensuring explicit outreach to marginalised and less economically privileged groups that may be under-represented in community food growing and engagement with climate and nature, helping to track who is and is not being reached, and helping to adapt and learn from others on how to improve. We have also budgeted to host six paid internships for young people from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Public engagement activities will be designed, and where possible co-designed, with diverse audiences in mind and use community connectors such as social prescribers, for outreach. One example is Climate Hubs using cultural celebrations and diverse seed and produce to engage people from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds in telling the stories of heritage foods and their meaning for soil, soul, sense of place and connection with nature.

We will support Climate Hubs to develop and implement a range of communication and innovative engagement activities to get people involved locally - members of the public, local stakeholders, institutions and decision-makers, aiming to maximise participation and embed positive appreciation of Climate Hub activities in the community and their ecosystem of stakeholders and institutional support. We will share learnings with relevant networks well placed to enhance this work and co-

create communication materials, guidance and other practical resources. These will be open source and made freely available.

Our networks include 50 places (some Sustainable Food Places members plus many others) involved in Sustain's Food for the Planet campaign, with local authorities making specific commitments to support for climate- and nature-friendly food production, including community food growing. We will encourage these to catalyse support for peri urban community farms as a key way to implement Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plans.

LWA and Sustain collaborate to run the Peri-Urban (Community Farming) Practitioners' Forum, involving community growers and organisers working with local communities across the UK. This will be a key network through which to share learning and opportunities to reach and engage with more people. We will invite more food growing groups and practitioners to get involved.

Sustain is an alliance of around 100 national organisations, several of whom have hundreds of thousands of members. Through the communications plan, we will work with these to generate positive stories and engagement opportunities.

Combined, National Partner newsletters reach 100,000+ people and social media followers are 120,000+ – many involved in local action on food, farming and community organising. We will tailor Taste a Better Future communications to cultivate connections with people eager to support Climate Hubs. Sustain and LWA have excellent relationships with relevant media, both at national and local level. We will generate positive stories and coverage to maximise participation.

Taste a Better Future submission prepared by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming (lead partner) and the Landworkers' Alliance (local engagement partner), working collaboratively and in partnership with local Climate Hubs, July 2023.