**Taste a Better Future: How will our climate hubs generate action on climate and nature?**

**The vision: Just imagine….**

Imagine a large productive community space on the edge of every town and city (where there are larger, accessible areas of land), growing fresh, healthy and inherently low-carbon food at scale. Imagine these actively cultivating deep connection with nature, community and the values and practice of planet-friendly lifestyles – making a climate-friendly future something we all want to be part of and contribute to.

**Food production: a problem and an opportunity**

How we currently feed ourselves is destroying the planet, contributing very significantly to climate change emissions and loss of nature. Changing this food system involves multi-level action across production, consumption and appreciation of healthy, climate-friendly food; a healthier balance of plant- and animal-derived food; transition to climate and nature friendly farming methods; and radically reduced food waste. This better model food system is championed by community farms. They enhance soil carbon and structure to absorb green-house gasses and retain water; avoid chemicals harmful to pollinators and wildlife; support the recovery of nature; and build community wealth through accessible local jobs, training, and volunteering opportunities. The community farms explicitly work to generate cultural appreciation and enhance wellbeing, targeting urban communities that have less connection with nature and where their food comes from.

We see these deep-rooted benefits in the work of pioneering local practitioners of peri-urban community farming, passionately motivated by the climate and nature emergencies. We also see the vast untapped potential to engage more people in food growing at scale and the impact opportunity offered by larger-scale peri-urban community farms. Encouraging greater public engagement in food system change, as the Taste a Better Future project sets out to do, is a crucial part of the change needed. Through fostering a better relationship with food, soil, land and community, as a radical and enjoyable alternative, we can build action that mitigates climate chaos and the harm to nature that our current food system is causing.

**The hook: climate and nature engagement through food growing at scale**

Capacity provided by the funding will help peri-urban community farms (Climate Hubs) to:

* **Outreach to people and community groups** through an exciting programme of activities – schools, faith groups, community groups, community centres, social housing groups and more.
* **Attract people to visit and engage** with peri-urban community food growing sites, with food and nature based open days, practical events, training, volunteering and other activities.
* **Offer and develop engaging courses** that provide skills and inspiration, helping people plan practical action on food and climate change that they can take back into their lives and communities.
* **Co-produce new ideas** and build existing and new networks to support one another to take action.

**The change: catalysing action on climate and nature**

Such activities will catalyse action on climate and nature by participants – individual citizens, as well as people well-placed to support this work through changes in policy and practice – by means of:

* **Increased knowledge** to understand and appreciate how agroecologically grown food benefits climate and nature; how to grow more of our food ourselves; and how to support agroecological farmers and food growers to thrive through our involvement, food choices, land access and policy decisions.
* **Inspiration** via talks, sharing and visits for people to want to take their new knowledge, skills and understanding back into their neighbourhoods, institutions or communities to take action on climate and nature, by e.g. participation in food growing; seed-saving; production of seedlings and peat-free compost; changes in food choices and purchasing; cooperative food buying; community composting; running cookery and food-making enterprises; and involvement in radically reducing food waste.
* **Help to overcome the barriers to action** through support, training, peer networks and a Climate Hub to return to and connect with for renewal of connections, skills, joy and motivation to act.

**Wider impact: the actions we anticipate this will lead to**

We will design, review and adapt these engagements so they become a pathway to action that generates wider impact and change, for example support for people to become leaders in, and overcome barriers to:

* **Setting up food growing sites** within their community, school or local area that enhance nature recovery, promote low climate impact diets, and engage more people in climate action.
* **Setting up cooking projects** that radically reduce waste and build ‘cooking for the planet’ skills.
* **Organising bug counts, wildflower planting and mass participation** to raise profile and support within areas, or targeting specific demographics such as young people from diverse backgrounds.
* We also envisage that people who attend courses at Climate Hubs will come together **to co-produce new ideas for climate and nature action** that encourage active participation and citizenship, becoming cohorts and communities of action for Climate Hubs to engage with longer-term.
* **Engagement with key decision-makers** – landowners, social landlords, funders and others such as local authority nature recovery leads, planners working on climate change and sustainable land use, and housing officers looking for green-space projects to support.

**Theory of change: Activities, outputs, short-term and medium-term outcomes**

Our theory of change draws on the inspiration of pioneering peri-urban community farms. Acting as learning partners in the Taste a Better Future project, these leadership community farms will offer inspiration and guidance to five new beacon Climate Hubs, and to our wider practitioner network, engaging thousands of people who live a short journey away, and catalysing active climate citizens to champion food growing, facilitate behaviour change and create opportunities for better learning, policies and practices.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Engagement via a programme of outreach and onsite food-growing, training, volunteering, learning, celebratory and story-telling activities, at scale.
* Systematic work to monitor, evaluate, create compelling communication and ‘making the case’ materials and experiences.
 | **Activities** |
| * Public knowledge and skills development via events, training, courses and volunteering opportunities.
* Inspiration via site visits, speakers, promotion and engagement with the ecosystem of support, at local and national level.
* Sharing of evidence, skills and learning through peers, practitioners, learning materials and activities, and the network of community farms.
 | **Outputs** |
| Local climate action through:* Climate Hub facilitated activities and days in the local areas.
* Peer-led activities that restore nature and improve climate-related food behaviours and choices (with Climate Hub guidance).
* Partnership projects and engagement activities with community groups, schools, institutions, landowners and decision-makers.
 | **Short-term outcomes** |
| * Increased support for, and engagement with, food-related behaviours and choices associated with positive impacts for climate and nature; reduced behaviours and choices associated with negative impacts.
* Improved capacity, commitment, support, understanding and appreciation among local people and decision-makers on how to take action for climate and nature.
* Improved local biodiversity (flora and fauna) and other ecological indicators (e.g. soil. water) through climate- and nature-friendly community food growing at scale.
 | **Medium-term outcomes** |