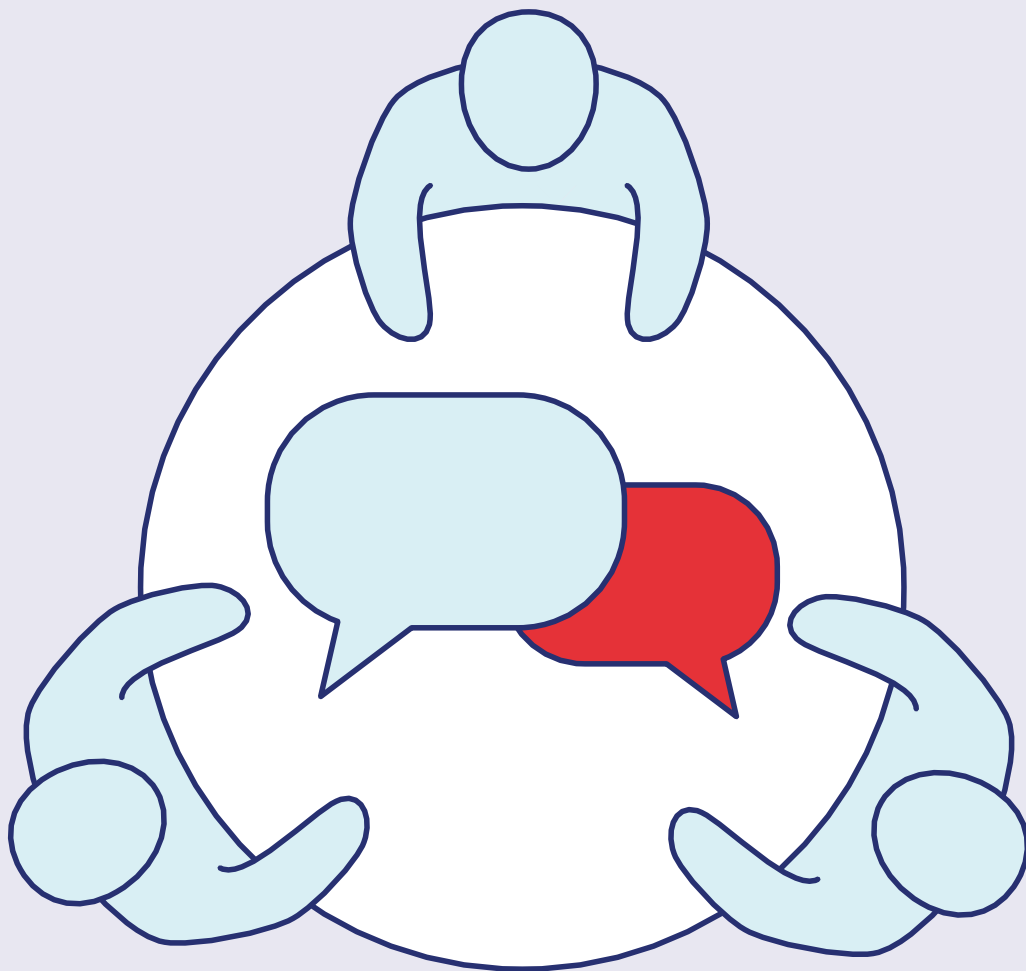


Tackling food poverty together:

A guide to using the Food Power Collective Impact Tracker



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Introduction

About Food Power

Food Power aims to strengthen the ability of local communities to reduce food poverty, through solutions developed in partnership and with the support of peers from across the UK. We support coordinated approaches to tackling food poverty in over 50 areas across the UK, tailored to the particular locality and unique policy contexts across the four nations. The four year programme is delivered by Sustain and Church Action on Poverty and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

About food poverty

Food poverty is commonly understood as 'the inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet' (Department of Health and Social Care). Food poverty, or household food insecurity, can be triggered by a crisis in finance or personal circumstances, but may also be a long-term experience of not being able to access a healthy diet or afford to eat well. Food poverty, or household food insecurity, has a myriad of faces. It can affect children who lack free school meals during the holidays; parents on low incomes going without food so that their children can eat; working people whose low wages leave them struggling to buy healthy food; or older people unable to prepare meals without support.

About this guide

This guide is to help you understand and use the Collective Impact Tracker available from Food Power, created to support food poverty alliances to explore the difference they are making and how they are working. Food Power provided a group of food poverty alliances with financial support to carry out local evaluation of their alliance's work, including testing and refining the Collective Impact Tool. We have written this guide to help local food poverty alliances and others to decide how the Tracker could be useful and how to make best use of it. You might use the full Tracker or decide to use part of it. Alongside this guide, we have a short video talking through how to use the Tracker.

A note on terminology: food poverty alliances

The tool refers to Alliances, local alliances and food poverty alliances to indicate a collective of organisations cooperating to address food insecurity. The form of this grouping will vary; some will not have formal membership or members. The principles of collective impact still apply, and the tool remains relevant. If using the tool with groups you may want to replace this terminology.

About the Collective Impact Tracker

The tracker is a simple tool designed alongside Food Power monitoring and evaluation activity. It is basically a framework of principles, goals and indicators for the type of work food poverty alliances deliver. These are set out in a set of sheets, organised into key categories. Alliances can use this to collect information and data about their progress, using it to systematically collate useful evidence. It is most useful as part of reflections on an alliance's workings and should help to take stock of current activity and make plans for future activity.

Understanding collective impact

This tracker is designed to help food poverty alliances understand their collective impact. Collective impact is an approach to understanding change related to complex problems.¹ It starts from the premise that more is achieved through organisations working together. Considering collective impact seeks to understand the value of organisations working together – rather than in isolation - to tackle complicated issues. As Food Power aims to achieve coordinated approaches to tackling food poverty, focusing on collective impact makes sense.

From looking at examples of organisations working in collaboration, research identified what contributes to success, and the types of impact achieved. These provided the basis for a structured way of understanding and measuring collaboration and its impacts. This framework has been adapted to Food Power and evaluation of local food poverty alliances. The tracker provides a common yet flexible approach, allowing alliances to track their progress without setting inappropriate expectations.

“ *The collective impact tracker was useful in assessing areas of improvement for us. The tracker identified sections which had been highly effective, alongside those which had been somewhat effective and then those which had not been effective at all. This helped us to identify difficulties and allowed for reflection and action to develop a better working relationships with partners.*

Andrea Burrows, Middlesbrough Food Power Alliance

We do also recognise the challenging circumstances in which alliances and local partners are working. This includes the structural reasons behind ongoing, and in many cases increasing, incidence of food poverty, wider policy decisions and community organisations limited capacity. We hope that the tracker can provide alliances with a way to measure and recognise progress even where they feel they are just managing to 'hold the line'.

“ *Our experience over the last year was that we have limited control over many factors that would enable our alliance to become a stronger effective network. Constraints include: funding for alliance collaboration and for each alliance member; decisions made by the council on what they continue or stop; and alliance members' capacity to engage with the alliance itself.*

Emily Fay, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

¹ For more details see 'Guide to Evaluating Collective Impact' Preskill et al 2013
<https://www.fsg.org/publications/guide-evaluating-collective-impact>

Using the tracker

The tracker should support alliances in ongoing learning and reflection. It will help alliances understand their progress (performance, outcomes) and how they are working (process). Alliances might use it in various ways, such as:

- A check-in assessment to be completed annually by lead organisations
- To provide questions for a feedback survey of alliance members/ partners
- As a basis for a group discussion reflecting on progress and next steps.

TOP TIP

You don't have to complete the whole tracker. Depending on the stage your alliance is at, certain sheets will be more useful than others. Focus on the parts appropriate or helpful for you.

The tracker is an Excel spreadsheet file. There are five sheets, each focused on a dimension of collective action and its impacts.

1. **Five foundations** – the core conditions which set an alliance on the path to success.
2. **Ways of working** – the principles and values which guide an alliance's activity.
3. **Structures and systems** – the nuts and bolts of working together.
4. **Impacts and outcomes** – the medium term results of collaboration, steps towards the long term goal of reducing food insecurity.
5. **Significant change** - one key thing you hope your collective activity can achieve

Depending on the stage your alliance is at you may focus on certain sections which are most relevant:

- Early years - focus on what needs to happen and establishing 5 Foundations (Sheet 1)
- Middle years - increasing focus on impacts, ways of working (Sheets 2-4)
- Later years - focus on goals and outcomes, what difference did it make (Sheets 4-5)

“ The survey drew loosely on the Collective Impact Tracker, asking questions about the perceived impact of alliance participation (individually or collectively), preferences for priorities in moving from planning to action, and to ask how respondents might be able to contribute to future alliance activity, as well as their planned/ existing anti-poverty work (and whether the latter was influenced by alliance participation). Questions included multiple choice and free-text questions, and were developed by the team over several iterations.

Charlie Spring, Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance

“ We have a long-running evaluation process linked into our area's joint strategic needs assessment so the tracker can be used to provide some supplementary data. We find that partners aren't able to be part of a long exercise, so we are only really using a very small part of the tracker.

Jo Wilson, Tower Hamlets Food Partnership

TOP TIP

Just complete the sheets appropriate for your alliance at the time you are using the tracker. The top of each sheet gives an indication of who will find it useful.

Once you have identified the sections most useful to your alliance, read through the relevant sheet.

1. Check which goals and indicators are relevant for your alliance.
2. If you like, add indicators you already use or additional goals in the spaces given.
3. Get a group of people together and go through each goal in turn, asking people how they feel you are doing, for examples of relevant progress or evidence. Collect these in the sheet.
4. Alternatively, one person can complete the sheet then share it with others for comments.
5. Complete the sheets in a way which makes sense for your alliance, for example add links to online documents or files.
6. Remember you may want to look back at it in future years to track changes, in which case it should remain understandable if staff change.

Collecting information from partners

There isn't one way to gather information for the tracker. In some cases, it has been most effective to have a first attempt at completing the tool and then ask members for further comment by email, for others a survey has gathered some responses or a focus group has proved effective to engage a smaller group of members. When engaging members it is important to be really clear what the benefits of attending will be, both in terms of assessing the alliance's impact but also how individual members have contributed to any progress.

Case study

Good Food Oxford



Good Food Oxford ran a Theory of Change workshop to clarify the results and outcomes they wanted to achieve, their assumptions about the way change will happen, and how they could use monitoring and evaluation to distil and share learning. Our MEL expert proposed indicators which the alliance discussed and agreed together. We measured progress using these indicators.

Community researchers from the alliance, who are particularly interested in questionnaire-style research as well as journaling and photovoice, also used the indicators to conduct research. Alongside these community researchers, they assessed a combination of progress and outcome indicators. Outputs will also include case studies, an alliance progress infographic and production of a short film.

“We will use the Collective Impact Tracker tool with minimal amends, particularly as it includes aspects related to poverty and race, which are fundamental drivers of our work in Tower Hamlets. We believe it will be useful to compare with other food poverty alliances going forward – in terms of gaps or shared challenges. We’re also exploring how other tools – such as the Sustainable Food Cities Health Check – can complement it.”

Jo Wilson, Tower Hamlets Food Partnership

Case study

Middlesbrough Food Power Alliance



The tracker was the best way to robustly assess the inner workings of the alliance and its members. While completing the tracker, it was clear that the production of an evidence portfolio would aid the alliance in seeing the successes and challenges of the Alliance in its first year. This evidence portfolio includes items such as meeting minutes, snapshots of interventions, planned activities, intervention outcomes, mapping and data documents, and shared documents between the alliance members for service uptake levels.

The tracker was initially completed by the project coordinator, evidence documents are embedded and accessible from the spreadsheet. The tracker was then reviewed and amended by the key alliance members at an evaluation meeting which was hosted for the sole purpose of reflection and evaluation of year one. The evaluation meeting was held for key alliance contributors to add any of their information to the evaluation document and then the scoring was completed collectively.

The evidence file was successful in identifying gaps in data and mapping work we had completed, and has influenced the work of the alliance going forward into years two and three. It was also critical in identifying areas which have had limited success or that the alliance have done all they can do in relation to, such as the Heathy Start scheme. Using this information, the action plan for years two and three can reflect issues within the alliance's remit. A short survey was dispatched to members of the alliance to reflect on their experience of the working relationships within the alliance. This showed all alliance members feel trusted, respected and as a result are comfortable engaging with discussions and learning from other alliance members

“ *Community based organisations dedicate their limited time to focus on carrying out activities. They will however take time to reflect and are happy to have someone else write about the work they are doing in the community. Many organisations have little direct experience of planning and conducting an evaluation. We have found that the best way to engage these partners is to sit down face-to-face to reflect on their work with us writing up the results. We have found that the Collective Impact Tracker has created a useful baseline to look back on. We are due to hold a second evaluative session of alliance members in the first week in February and we will then be returning to the tool to see what has changed since it was first completed.*

Emily Fay, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

Scoring

You don't have to give scores for your progress, but some may like to. Scoring can help to visualise areas where you need more attention, or ways you are having most impact. You might use them to see how your activity is changing year on year. Scores cannot be meaningfully compared or aggregated between areas

The score you give for each indicator is your individual or group assessment of how far your alliance has progressed in relation to an indicator. As a guide to which score to select:

- 1** = not considered at all / nothing in place
- 2** = planning to address / faced difficulties
- 3** = just starting to address / stalled / some progress
- 4** = making progress / maintaining action
- 5** = doing well / achieved / done all we can

Some tips on scoring:

- If a goal or indicator is irrelevant or not suitable to your alliance at this time then leave the cell blank. Don't enter 0 as this will affect the averaging.
- If you are doing the scoring as a group, keep note of points people disagree on and explore why people have different opinions.
- Once you have your scores you might want to visualise them on a star plot. This will generate automatically as long as you have added the scores. The average score for each section will automatically appear on the Totals sheet. If you haven't completed all the sections then on the Totals sheet delete empty rows from the Summary of Scores. If you don't do this it will skew the diagram.
- Alternatively you can just print out the star template and draw onto the chart by hand

TOP TIP

Your scores will only be relevant for your alliance and are for your purposes. You do not have to share them beyond your alliance.

Evidence of impact

When going through the sheets you can capture stories or examples which justify your assessment of how you are doing, and demonstrate how you know you've made a difference. You can note these in the Evidence columns.

“ Although based on limited evidence – around 1/3 of organisations actively involved in the Alliance responded – responses indicate that the Alliance has already helped to bring together organisations from across Greater Manchester and focus attention on food poverty and insecurity. Continuing to connect and build collaborative actions is the key priority for the future.

Tom Skinner, Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance

“ The outcomes of the survey and focus group, summarised in some of the write up of our in-draft 'Alliance story' document, will provide new members and the coordinator a record of the journey so far, to try and mitigate a loss of collective memory as organisations and people change. The survey (partly based on questions from the Collective Impact Tool) and focus group also provided insights from members as to what has worked best - and less well.


Charlie Spring, Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance

What to do when you have completed the tracker

Once you have been through the relevant sections it will be useful to reflect on what you've found, and the picture it presents of your alliance, for example, during a review meeting. Things to consider and discuss:

- Are some of the goals which were not applicable things we should now consider addressing?
- Which areas seem to require more attention or effort to make progress?
- Which areas are well established and might need less focus?
- Who might give a different assessment of the alliance, and why?
- Which areas do we struggle to think of examples and evidence for? Why might this be?
- If we were to 'shout about' one goal and achievement which would it be and why?
- What has the exercise not told us? How might we find that out?

You could also draw on the results to report publicly on your alliance's progress. You could include examples of the achievements you have recorded, and evidence of your impacts.

 *The evidence file which we created as we filled in the tracker, highlighted the need for evaluation of the income maximisation interventions (which are part of our Middlesbrough Food Power Action Plan). We are now collating the data, but it demonstrates that the intervention method being utilised currently is effective and therefore should continue to be rolled out across the town.*

Andrea Burrows, Middlesbrough Food Power Alliance

Frequently Asked Questions

Do we have to use the tracker?

No! We hope you will find it helpful but it is not compulsory. If you don't want to use the whole thing you might still find it useful to help set your own monitoring indicators. Or you could ask about some of the key goals in a survey of alliance members or beneficiaries. For example a question based on the *Ways of Working* would be "As part of this alliance how well do you feel your voice is heard?"

Do we have to fill in the whole thing?

No. Depending on the stage your alliance is at different parts of it will be most appropriate and useful to you. The tracker still works if you only complete one or some of the sheets. Which ones you chose will depend on how old your alliance is:

Early years - focus on what needs to happen and establishing 5 Foundations (Sheet 1)

Middle years - increasing focus on impacts, ways of working (Sheets 2-4)

Later years - focus on goals and outcomes, what difference did it make (Sheets 4-5)

Which part of the tracker you use might also be determined by a particular issue you want help with. For example, if you need to know how effective your procedures are go to Sheet 2.

Even if you only want to use part of the tracker it may be useful to read through the whole thing to have a sense of how to build collective impact and what to aim for in the longer term.

How long does it take to use?

This will depend on how you use it and if you are completing all the sections. It could take up to one hour for someone to fill it in by themselves, but might take two hours for a group of people to discuss it and fill it in together.

Will our alliance members want to get involved in using the tracker?

It is really important to be realistic about the best way for members and partners to input into the tracker. We suggest a range of ways that might work best for you and your members.

Do we have to share the results with Food Power?

No. However, you may find it valuable to discuss it with the team to gain suggestions on future activity.

Why should we use this and not other tools?

You don't have to! But this tracker has been tailored to food poverty alliances and feedback from them has been incorporated in the design.

We already use the Sustainable Food Places Health Check – do we need both?

Not necessarily. Both use similar methods so if you've done one you'll find it easy to complete the other. The goals and indicators used in the tracker are focused on food poverty. The SFP Health Check is more comprehensive as it covers the whole range of their priorities and activities.

There is common ground between them: the SFP Health Check sections on partnership and strategy (Sheets 1-3) covers similar activity to the tracker's Sheets 1-3. So you may not need to complete these parts of both tools. The SFC tool doesn't capture impacts beyond policy so to combine the two you could insert the Food Power tracker's section on *Impacts & Outcomes*, and *Significant Change*.

We already have our own indicators or goals – can we include these?

Yes. We've included space for you to add others where appropriate. Or paste your existing indicators over the ones provided.

What counts as evidence?

This could be things you've done which demonstrate action on a goal, or relevant achievements. For the goals around *Ways of Working* and *Foundations* it might be things like numbers of meetings held, or that you've produced a shared action plan. See the example of a completed tracker in the Appendix to see the kinds of evidence used.

How do we know we are claiming impacts that we are really responsible for?

This is always hard to know, and you can never be 100% sure what caused a particular change to happen. Try to work on the basis of thinking what might have been the situation if the alliance did not exist. It might help to ask a range of people about an impact and what they perceive to have influenced it. So your evidence might be "Half of those asked reported that X happened as a result of activity by the alliance."

It has been really hard to address food poverty in our area – how can we account for this?

In the *Record Keeping* worksheet, you might find it helpful to note the *Constraints* which you've encountered to provide context for your activity. When reflecting on your alliance and completing the tool bear these in mind. Then when assessing your impact consider it in terms of what the situation might have been if the alliance did not exist, or had done nothing. So your assessment of how well you've done might be something like "Given the challenging circumstances we are working in, the alliance has achieved as much as it could."

We don't have much time – what can we do quickly?

You don't have to complete the whole thing. Focus on the sheets appropriate to the stage your alliance is at, or select the goals most pertinent at the moment. You might also ask the person most familiar with the alliance to fill in the sheets, then share this and ask for comments via email.

Our alliance is quite new – can we use the tracker?

Yes. You'll probably find it most helpful to focus on the *Ways of Working* sheet. But do read through the other parts to give you an idea of the kind of evaluation you could work towards in future.

Can the tracker help us compare our alliance with other alliances?

This depends what you mean by compare. This could be useful in terms of sharing what others have found and exploring similarities, contrasts and shared challenges. What wouldn't work is comparing scores or trying to say one alliance is performing better than another on the basis of the scores.

Further resources

Food Power and Cardiff University (2018) [Quick guide to monitoring and evaluation](#)

This briefing provides a quick summary of key principles and actions for monitoring and evaluation.

Food Power (2018) [Mapping and measuring food poverty and the local response](#)

This briefing highlights how a variety of areas in the UK have measured and mapped food poverty at the local level, as well how services have responded to this need.

Greater London Authority (2019) [Food security in London: Headline findings from The Survey of Londoners](#)

The Survey of Londoners collected data to measure food security in London. This data will be used to support the development of long-term solutions to the causes and impacts of food insecurity.

Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance (2019) [Alliance Survey 2019](#)

This survey was carried out by the alliance as part of its commitment to hear from its members.

Tamarack Institute (2019) [Collective impact in practice: Cities reducing poverty](#)

This includes examples from poverty reduction collectives in Canada and how they have reported their impact.

Good Food Oxford: questions to reflect and review

Good Food Oxford developed two sets of questions to help reflection. The first set is used during 'reflect and review' sessions during alliance meetings. The second set were used in the questionnaire for alliance members.

Reflect and Review sessions at Alliance meetings

1. Do we have the level of attendance and participation that we would like (experts by experience, professionals, policymakers, politicians)? What else can we do to improve attendance and participation?
2. Are we learning new knowledge and skills/ is the Alliance functioning as a centre of learning for its members? What else can we do to ensure we continue to learn?
3. Does the work of the Alliance feel relevant to the needs of our communities and organisations? Do we need to do anything to be more relevant, if so what?
4. Are we making progress towards our aims/ intended outcomes and impact? What else can we do to work towards our aims/ intended outcomes and impact?

Final questionnaire for alliance members

1. What do you see as the most important achievements of the Alliance?
2. How did you personally benefit from being a member of the Alliance?
3. How did your community or organisation benefit from Alliance activities?
4. What have you/your organisation done differently as a result of your membership of the Alliance?
5. Have there been any downsides or drawbacks to being an Alliance member? What are they?
6. Do you believe access to good, healthy, affordable food has, or will, improved among Oxford's vulnerable groups and communities as a result of the work of the Alliance? (Responses: a lot, a bit, not at all, not sure). Why or why not?
7. Do you believe food poverty has, or will, declined among Oxford's vulnerable groups and communities as a result of the work of the Alliance? (Responses: a lot, a bit, not at all, not sure). Why or why not?
8. Do you believe local strategy and policy are more responsive to food poverty and supportive of a sustainable food system/ culture as a result of the work of the Alliance? (Responses: a lot, a bit, not at all, not sure). Why or why not?
9. How do you think the work of the Alliance can be sustained once the funding from Food Power ends? How can we ensure continued active engagement of experts by experience?
10. Did the project represent good value for money? Do you think the same money could have been put to better use in another way to achieve the same results, or different but equally important results?

Examples of evidence to use in the tracker

Here is a selection of examples of the kinds of things alliances have recorded in the tracker by an alliance. We have removed or changed details which would identify the alliance.

Sheet 1: Five Foundations	Goal	Indicator	Score	Evidence
3. Mutually reinforcing activities	The Alliance has a collective plan of action	Food Poverty Action Plan agreed by alliance members	5	As can be seen in the January 2019 Meeting minutes the Food Power Alliance take regular reviews of the action plan, all members must agree amendments
4. Shared measurement	Alliance members agree how to measure and report on progress	Food Poverty Action Plan monitoring plan agreed by alliance members	3	Alliance members are involved in the completion of a Progress Log. The log mirrors the action plan, and this enables the alliance to monitor the ongoing and completed actions
Sheet 2: Ways of Working				
4. Relationships of trust & respect	Alliance members share feedback, including negatives	Alliance members report feeling trusted and heard	3	Alliance members are involved in the completion of a Progress Log. The log mirrors the action plan, and this enables the alliance to monitor the ongoing and completed actions
Sheet 3: Structures & Systems				
1. Comprehensive participation	Key sectors and organisations participate appropriately	A majority of members actively participate in meetings and activities	4	Most members committed and regularly attend meetings
Sheet 4: Impacts & Outcomes				
4. Policy influence	Common agenda is translated into specific policies	Policy gaps have been identified and targeted through advocacy	3	Were invited to attend the Council Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel. Data was presented in order to obtain support for a joint application for the Department for Education holiday provision bid, support was granted

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A Sustain publication

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About Sustain

Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the living and working environment, enrich society and culture, and promote equity. It represents around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level.

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