



Torbay Food Strategy 2025 - 2030

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Part One: Purpose and Approach

Introduction

Food is fundamental to our health and wellbeing and our identity. What we eat reflects our culture, heritage, and personal histories. Food plays a key role in our society and the economy and provides countless opportunities to bring people together around shared experiences and rituals. Food can also be a vehicle for positive change and a galvanising force for those who are passionate about a range of issues from healthy eating, to climate change to local food growing and community ownership. In turn, food can be a useful tool in building community wealth, fostering and supporting community ownership and engagement and, economic growth. However, for many of the increasing numbers of people who encounter barriers to accessing the food they need or wish to eat, food can be a source of great stress.

Recognising the wider context surrounding food is key. Mass food production methods which have dominated food production over the past 50 years have become increasingly unsustainable and have contributed heavily to biodiversity loss and climate change. There is also increasing evidence which highlights the loss of nutritional value in our food due to soil depletion and chemical use during these production methods.

There has been increased scrutiny on the UK's reliance on imported food which leaves us vulnerable to global events impacting the local food supply chain. In 2023, the war in Ukraine contributed to increased global wheat prices, while drought in Spain has reduced availability of tomatoes and peppers in our shops. As a result of the covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis, food insecurity has unfortunately increased.

Consequently, the past several years has seen a renewed interest in nutritional fresh food which is produced locally and in a way that is kind to people and, the planet. While there are many benefits to this approach, for many residents in Torbay it is simply not affordable. There is ample evidence which shows that people experiencing financial hardship and those living in disadvantaged areas are less likely to eat fresh healthy food, more likely to eat ultra processed or 'junk food' and in turn, more likely to experience diet related poor health.

We recognise that some of these issues are not within our gift to solve locally. However, we know that there are things we can do to help reduce the impacts of challenges in our food system. There is already good work happening in Torbay. The aim of this strategy is to support this, consolidate and develop existing good practice and seize upon opportunities for change. We want to work together to create the conditions which will enable Torbay residents to make food choices which are good for them and good for the planet.

Background

In 2021, building on a robust response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic within Torbay and in collaboration with others throughout Devon a group of stakeholders from across Torbay Council, Public Health, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector came together to talk about what was happening around food; from food insecurity and public health, to sustainable food businesses and community gardening projects.

There was agreement that we could achieve more through a "collective impact" approach which is popular elsewhere in the national Sustainable Food Places movement. This in simple terms means different organisations, including large statutory organisations, community groups, businesses, and others working together in a more joined-up way around shared aims. The group has organically grown and become what is now the Torbay Food Partnership.

Since 2023, the Torbay Food Partnership has been hosted by Local Motion which is facilitated by Torbay Communities. This has been a positive, neutral space for collaboration, connecting different departments and sectors to amplify work already underway and think creatively about the future.

The Torbay Food Partnership aims to enable collaboration and communication across Torbay's food sector. Although it is hosted by Local Motion, the Partnership is an independent body and is supported by variety of stakeholders in Torbay.

In 2024, the Partnership took its next development step and has become a member of the Sustainable Food Places (SFP) network – a national partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters, and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming.

Strategic approach

As a partnership, we meet regularly to get ideas from a wide group of stakeholders to identify the key issues around our food system and work together to address them locally. There are key themes and ideas which keep coming up in the conversations we have, and these have been included in this strategy.

We looked to the systems change approach used by Local Motion and the principles of Sustainable Food Places to guide our approach and this strategy. Sustainable Food Places supports a large and growing network of Food Partnerships across the UK, which are driving innovation and best practice on all aspects of healthy and sustainable food.

Key themes of Sustainable Food Places

The key themes of Sustainable Food Places underpin this strategy and have shaped the Vision for Torbay. They are:

- **Food Governance and Strategy** - Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action.
- **Good Food Movement** - Building awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement.
- **Healthy Food for All** - Tackling food poverty, diet related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food.
- **Sustainable Food Economy** - Creating a diverse, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy.
- **Catering and Procurement** - Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food supply chains.
- **Food for the Planet** - Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste.

For each of the six sections of this strategy, there is an overview of the key issues and the strategic priorities that the Torbay Food Partnership has identified as a priority. They are

underpinned by a commitment to inclusion which is shaped by Sustainable Food Places, Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) initiative.

Governance

Governance of the Partnership has emerged over time and has been influenced by the Local Motion collaborative way of working to which we are committed. We strongly believe that the long-term governance for this work, including progress monitoring, should be centred within the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector with Torbay Council and other key institutions, academics and the business community remaining engaged as partners.

Part Two: About Torbay

Torbay is a unitary local authority area in Devon with a population of 139,300. It sits on the southwest coast of England and comprises the towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. Surrounding these towns are a number of smaller villages with distinct identities and new housing developments. Torbay is known as the English Riviera. Its beautiful natural environment is a draw for tourists and its popularity as a tourist destination means that numbers of people in the area peak in the summer season.

Despite its appeal as a holiday destination, Torbay faces significant economic and social challenges. As with many coastal areas of England, there are high levels of disadvantage and inequality.

Torbay is the most deprived local authority in the South West (and is in the top quarter of most deprived local authorities in England).

- The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation showed that 27.5% of Torbay residents live in the 20% most deprived areas of the country.
- Life expectancy for men living in the most deprived ward (Roundham with Hyde) is 8 years lower than those living in the least deprived ward (Churston with Galmpton).

Deprivation has a significant impact on people's relationship with and access to food. With food retail becoming increasingly concentrated in large supermarkets, which are often out-of-town. This means that accessing affordable healthy food can be challenging for those with limited resources and transport options. In addition, people who are most disadvantaged may not have the skills, confidence, or means to cook nutritious food from scratch, even if they can access the raw ingredients. This compounds diet-related public health concerns.

- Only 34% of adults in Torbay say they eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- 64% of adults are in the overweight or obese range.
- 21% of 5 year olds have experience of dental decay.

By contrast, there is also significant wealth in the area –the average property in Torquay’s famed “millionaire’s row” sells for over 2 million pounds. Affluence and poverty often exist in close proximity with grand Victorian villas having been converted to houses of multiple occupation and the two ends of the wealth spectrum sometimes coexisting within the same street.

The Torbay Food Partnership is acutely aware of the challenges facing local people and through successful collaboration with partners in Torbay it seeks to address some of these issues. It also enjoys a strong collaborative relationship with the wider Devon Food Partnership which will complement this work. Fortunately, Torbay has a strong track record of asset-based community development and many community-led projects are now seeking to address these and other issues. Community growing projects, social cooking groups, and social enterprises are all emerging; providing a firm foundation on which to build. This sits alongside Torbay’s rich natural environment as a coastal tourist destination and its key associated industries including hospitality and fishing.

Part Three: Vision for Torbay

We created the following poster, which sets out Torbay Food Partnership’s draft vision for the food system in Torbay.

Our Vision

Good for community

- People have opportunities to connect through food; growing, cooking, and eating together
- Space is available for community food growing projects, which promote good health and community connection
- We have a diverse and vibrant sustainable, low-carbon food economy
- Our food businesses operate ethically, and place an importance on social value and environmental responsibility
- We have a positive “good food” culture in our community

Good for people

- Everyone has access to affordable, healthy food, regardless of their income and circumstances



- People have the skills, knowledge, and means they need to grow, cook, eat, and enjoy good food
- A living wage and fair, safe conditions for all food workers

Good for the planet

- Reduced food waste and more recycling or composting of the food we can't use
- We reduce unnecessary food packaging and recycle as much as possible
- People understand where their food comes from and choose ethically and sustainably produced food

What we can all do

Individuals

- Support local producers and independent food businesses
- Grow some of our own food, in the garden or in a community garden or allotment
- Cook more meals from scratch
- Choose produce which is seasonal, organic, free-range, and fair-trade
- Choose food products without unnecessary packaging
- Waste as little food as possible and recycle or compost any that we can't use

Businesses, organisations, and Institutions

- Serve healthy and sustainable food to customers, students, employees or service users
- Buy food that supports jobs and businesses throughout the local food chain
- Provide opportunities for people to grow, cook, and eat good food together
- Make low-carbon and ethical food production a priority when choosing suppliers; keeping food miles and food waste to a minimum.
- Focus on quality, rather than quantity of food; people have enough, and less is wasted.

Part Four: Our approach

Food Governance and Strategy

We know that to work at a system wide level across Torbay we need to be strategic in our approach and foster long term collaboration between individuals and organisations. We know that this is key to continue building our food partnership and maximising our impact.

To support us in taking a strategic approach, our key priorities in this area are:

- Continuing to expand the Torbay Partnership and ensure that membership is representative of the local community and is facilitating a clear vision.
- Refreshing the Partnership's terms of reference ensuring that our approach is clear and transparent.
- Working alongside key institutional stakeholders and ensuring that they are involved in the food partnership and are aware of their influence in this area
- Encouraging key institutional stakeholders to take active steps to support the Partnership's work.
- Establishing thematic working groups to support the development of specific pieces of work.
- Developing the communication and engagement strategy for the Torbay Food Partnership.
- Explore the long-term governance arrangements for the Torbay Food Partnership including the establishment of an independent not-for-profit organisation to provide our infrastructure support.
- Engaging with academics and academic institutions with the appropriate knowledge, skills and capabilities to inform and disseminate our work.

Good Food Movement

To encourage a shift to healthier and more sustainable food within Torbay, we need to raise awareness of food issues through engaging with people and supporting them to participate in food-related activity.

To support us in promoting a good food movement, our key priorities in this area are:

- Increasing access to "seed to plate" activities for children and young people to raise their awareness of the connection between food and the environment in a way which is fun.
- Increasing opportunities for people to cook and eat together in a way which feels supported and sociable.

- Providing opportunities for people of all ages to learn how to grow their own food at home or as part of a community garden.
- Providing opportunities for people to try and share new foods from different cultures.
- Raising awareness of ways to minimise food waste and increasing rates of food waste recycling.

Healthy Food for All

Food is becoming increasingly expensive, however we believe that good healthy food should be accessible to everyone. We know that this promotes better health outcomes.

To support us in facilitating access to good quality health food in Torbay, our key priorities in this area are:

- Continuing to support a dignified pathway approach for food aid, which reduces long-term dependence on free food aid by supporting people to access the help and support they need to improve their financial circumstances.
- Working with local businesses and growers of all scales, to ensure that surplus food can be redistributed to those who would benefit most.
- Building capacity, capability and resilience within our local food system, empowering people to be more self-sufficient, maximise their resources, and create a culture of communal abundance.

Sustainable Food Economy

We want to build community wealth by creating a local food economy which is more diverse, sustainable, and prosperous and which attracts visitors to the Bay as part of a wider lifestyle offering. We want to be kind to the planet by reducing the environmental impact of local food business practices and encouraging people to consider sustainability in their buying decisions.

To support us in facilitating access to good quality health food, our key priorities in this area are:

- Giving a platform and visibility to local small businesses and social enterprises which have a sustainable food focus through food markets, events and pop-ups.
- Providing opportunities for small sustainable food businesses to grow through the use of shared processing/cooking facilities.
- Supporting small businesses to find ways in which they could make their practices more environmentally sustainable whilst being financially viable.

- Implementing a “green” accreditation scheme for businesses with sustainable practices which would help locals and visitors alike to make informed choices about where to spend their money.

Food for the Planet

We want to foster people’s relationship with their local environment while also working to improve access to food growing spaces for people, groups and organisations.

Our key priorities in this area are:

- Mapping green spaces which could be used for growing.
- Creating a local growing scheme which would enable people and organisations to have access to green spaces to grow food and/or pollinator friendly plants.
- Increasing individual and community composting of food waste.
- Encouraging growers to share, exchange or preserve surplus crops.

Catering and Procurement

There is already great work happening locally around sustainable procurement and we are keen to build on this existing work.

To help ensure that our procurement processes support our wider food system work our priorities are to:

- Trialling alternative procurement processes and systems where appropriate.
- Exploring embedding ‘food’ within social value policies and other policies where appropriate.
- Supporting and promoting capacity and capacity building within the local supply chain where appropriate. Engaging positively with key anchor institutions in and around Torbay.