

Proposal for renewal and development of the Hazelhurst CSA

AGM - September 21st 2017

The vision

- To revive and develop the Hazelhurst CSA into a community benefit society that offers Sheffield residents the opportunity to invest in local, organic food production.
- To capitalise on existing opportunities to grow organic food near to Sheffield, and to identify and develop new sites in and around Sheffield where good food could be grown.
- To make positive contributions to public health, the local economy, and the environment in (initially south) Sheffield.

How this will be achieved

We propose to work in partnership with Friends Fields to develop its growing site in the Moss Valley, south Sheffield, with a view to leasing 1.5 acres of the site for horticultural production. Food produced on site will be sold at market value to the Regather Co-Op vegetable box scheme.

Grower(s) will be recruited and trained; developing skills and community resources as well as creating local employment and promoting sustainable local economies.

In parallel to development of the Friends Field, conversion of HCSA to a community benefit society will be undertaken and the opportunity for investment in community shares made available. Surplus generated by the society will be reinvested and / or redistributed to the local community.

A further goal will be to identify and develop other potential growing sites where organic food production, processing, packing, delivery, wholesale and retail operations could take place. Using produce from these sites, a range of high quality products could supply the Regather box scheme as well as other buyers in Sheffield and Derbyshire.

Rationale & Role of Regather Co-Op

Regather Co-operative, based in Sharrow, has a long standing interest in local food and economy. Over the past 2 years Regather has participated in the DCLG funded Community Economic Development (CED) programme, resulting in a CED strategy for urban and peri-urban food production across South Sheffield.

The Regather organic vegetable box scheme has been running for several years and has grown to deliver local food to 150 weekly customers across the city. Customers choose vegetable or fruit boxes in a variety of sizes, and can add extra products such as milk, bread and store cupboard

ingredients. The fresh produce is currently supplied by local producers including from Wortley Hall Walled Garden, High Riggs and Sheffield Organic Growers - however demand currently exceeds supply, and supplementary produce is bought in weekly from regional and international producers via wholesalers The Organic Pantry. Since the customer base continues to grow, we can confidently conclude that more people in Sheffield would like to buy more locally grown produce than is currently grown here in Sheffield.

As a co-operative enterprise Regather continues to steadily and sustainably develop and with this the membership and organisational capacity of Regather has increased too. Individually and collectively we have all played a role in making this happen. Going forward the opportunity for us to work with and develop the currently dormant HCSA has arrived at a great time and is a great opportunity to make the vision outlined above a reality. The structure of the CSA is suitable to be developed into a community benefit society, and lead to further community investment in good food through the offer of community shares. The existing shares owned by existing HCSA members can potentially be used to leverage in grant funding and loans through a funding stream called the Reach Fund and Just Growth.

Proposed action plan

- Project manage development of Friends Fields, including installing a bore hole, irrigation infrastructure, and hard standing. Funding for this infrastructure itself already exists.
- Pursue funding opportunities for project development and growing costs (equipment, seeds etc).
- Convert to a community benefit society and launch share offer.
- Sign a lease on 1.5 acres at the Friends Fields site.
- Train / recruit growers.
- Start market garden growing operation within 2018 growing season, to supply Regather box scheme.
- Market research and marketing plan to grow box scheme and supply additional outlets.

Yours, in solidarity,

Helen, Charlotte, Doug & Gareth

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