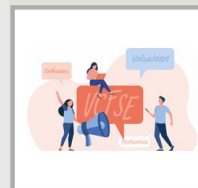


Workshop A: Green Communities

LACVS - LOCAL Project Strategic Launch: A Manifesto for Change



**Jointly facilitated by Yak Patel, Chief Officer, Lancaster District CVS & Tony Dawber,
Preston Community Network**

**Notes recorded by Tony Dawber, Preston Community Network
7 participants**

Suggested local or national stakeholders to connect with on this topic were:

- Blackburn's Farm, Wrea Green
- Borrow It, Blackpool
- Burscough Community Farm
- Climate Action Preston
- Dig In, Preston
- Egg Cup food distribution
- Food Futures
- Friends of the Tawd, Skelmersdale
- Green Rose
- Grimsargh Wetlands
- Groups specifically involved in significant green work and carbon reduction that can teach horticulture, inform, advise, and use exclusively green suppliers are:
 - Hesketh Park Allotments, West Lancs
 - Intact Community Garden, Preston
 - Kendal Food Network (NB Preston equivalent)
 - Lancaster Sustainability Projects i.e. Claver Hill
 - LeftCoast, Blackpool
 - Let's Grow Preston
 - Myerscough College
 - Preston Food Hub Network
 - Soil Association
 - Sustain
- A vast range of small unincorporated groups such as butterfly protection clubs, walking groups etc all doing great green work.
- Other support comes from Let's Grow Preston, providing supplies and advice to other groups, as do Edge Hill University's ecology group. Lancashire Adult Learning offer courses on green issues, horticulture etc but progress can be hampered by the time taken to secure funding.
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund now includes key 'green commitment' questions on Lottery funding applications. Preston City Council have made firm green commitments and Lancs County Council may have - there are many groups committed to a green agenda, but time and capacity are factors which could affect this commitment.

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- LOCAL project is not a lead or have expert expertise in this area but should aim to bring stakeholders and experts by experience as well as knowledge together. In this way aim to facilitate and support these groups and other stakeholders to lead joint projects and collaborations across Lancashire 14. LOCAL must reach out to existing or newly identified stakeholders in this thematic priority who are already or planning to develop and lead partnerships within or across Lancashire 14.

Examples of positive land use:

- Bay Light Festival, Lancaster
- Blackpool to Fleetwood Coast Pathway
- Community
- Guardians of Nature, Penwortham who have restored areas of garden and parkland.
- Let's Grow Preston who have converted an old bowling green into an area where plants and vegetables can be grown.
- Morecambe prom
- Preston Guild Wheel - circular cycle network, a great resource but noted use peaked during Covid and has since declined.
- Promenades, allotments, public parks
- The Hyndburn Way cycle and walking network.
- The many 'Friends of...' groups
NB Natural England often involved but hard to connect with.

The group discussed positive examples of neighbourhoods taking responsibility for local green spaces, what their motivations are and the core factors that affect them:

- Beat the Streets scheme, successful in offering incentives to plant trees.
- Claver Hill Lancaster is a good example.
- Fishwick – a former rubbish dump grassed over and now plants grow and flourish.
- Friends of the Tawd, the areas they restored are well used and grew organically from a small amount of initial funding.
- Guardians of Nature, motivated by one woman preserving a spot where she found comfort after a bereavement.
- Housing Associations can play a part.
- Let's Grow Preston are carbon neutral and do huge amounts of work saving sick/damaged plants, distributing seeds and food distribution within three miles only, all of these saving on carbon.
- People's Jury in Lancaster- react to and influence local authority decisions
- Retro fitting, part of many projects
- West Lancs Allotment Group

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Health inequalities and anti-social behaviour are serious issues that can be addressed and improved by better use of land, but they can also be a barrier. Many poorer estates have lots of spare land which is not being used. This leads to children and young people often not respecting their environment but how do we change this and involve them? There is enormous potential in education, upskilling, green engineering, retro fitting etc. and schools and colleges are starting to respond but need to do more. Could there be an opportunity to work with Lancs Colleges Association to use resources to empower young people?

There are issues with the supply of goods which can be unreliable. This ultimately comes back to lack of marketing of green policies and initiatives, a good example is Ashton Park, which has bad publicity and disagreements over its renovation plan and needs good PR to combat this. There is loads of excellent work going on but it is hampered by lack of comms and marketing and publicity.

There is potential to exploit spare land but problems with core funding to cover maintenance costs, staff costs, utilities charges. Also, funding is often being pulled too quickly and anti-social behaviour affects work.

How are we responding to the Climate Emergency? Local authorities are on board with this but have issues with levels of staff and resources and the lack of a clear vision and strategy. Collaboration is key to solving the problems, especially with the national groups who have greater resources.

The group were concerned about a lack of cross-patch partnerships and discussed key aspects of cross- sector collaboration:

- a) Specific national Government, local authority, and NHS funding essential.
- b) Feedback needs to be brought together in this area.
- c) Covid multi sector food hubs obviously a key example of collaboration and this has continued but more study in this area needed.
- d) Marketing, showing the positives and spreading the message are key.

All attendees agreed they would be interested in further meetings to progress the issues.

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SUMMARY:

There were many grassroots organisations identified from the group discussions that have expertise in the field of green communities and lots of great projects highlighted that are making positive use of green spaces. All this work was acknowledged as improving health inequalities & anti-social behaviour. There is enormous potential for learning here. Poor land management or land use encourages antisocial behaviour and instils little respect for the local area and natural environment. Green projects often suffer from a lack of reliable sustainable funding & resources. The funding often doesn't cover essential running costs and/or is short term and don't last long enough to be able to make a sustainable impact.

Questions discussed included:

- how are the VCFSE sector responding to the Climate emergency?
- what difference are we making?
- should we be working in collaboration at national, regional and grassroots levels taking advantage of more robust national resources?

A further discussion focussed on a lack of cross patch partnerships and access to statutory funding, along with a lack of feedback and positive marketing opportunities which are inhibiting progress. Further lessons can be learned from the successful collaborative working of multi sector food hubs with more research and sharing of examples of positive partnerships.

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Green Communities Workshop A – Potential Action Points:

- i. Explore the possibilities of working in collaboration with education to share learning and support young people on how to use and protect their local green spaces as well as the need to evaluate how ownership develops civic pride and conservation.
- ii. Bring projects together and develop a consortium of green space managers to share Knowledge and support learning to ignite other projects.
- iii. Explore an in depth neighbourhood project promoting the benefits and innovation that will help to champion the use of green spaces
- iv. Explore/expand tool hire/share schemes.
- v. Help VCFSE sector organisations develop the strategies & knowhow to do their projects justice through better marketing and promotion.
- vi. Help to grow Climate Action networks, creating collaborations, tapping into national campaigns and resources to generate more drive and positive action.
- vii. Explore and document what makes the multi sector food hubs a successful, thriving model and investigate the lessons that can be learned and replicated.

FURTHER INFORMATION & LINKS:

- Sustainable Food Places
<https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/>
- Soil Association – My Food Community
<https://www.fflgettogether.org/my-food-community/>
- VCFSE Sector Manifesto For Lancashire 14
<https://www.locallancashire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/A-VCFSE-Sector-Manifesto-for-Lancashire-2022-6.pdf>
- Media from the event
<https://www.locallancashire.org.uk/strategic-launch/>