



The Climate Action Fund Learning Signposts #10

# Food waste

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behalf of The National Lottery Community Fund



# Food waste

## Who is this for?

This learning signpost is primarily intended for people involved in **Climate Action Fund projects** and other projects or groups that aim to reduce food waste. It shares some of the early learning from Climate Action Fund projects that are working in this area.

## Introduction

Food production and consumption are responsible for around **30% of global carbon emissions**. By creating space for agriculture, food production also contributes to between 60%-80% biodiversity loss through the destruction of natural habitats. In the UK, we throw away 6.6 million tonnes of household food waste a year; almost three quarters is food we could have eaten.

A number of **Climate Action Fund projects** are working to reduce the environmental impact of food waste by:

- **Reducing the quantity of food waste** by collecting and redistributing unwanted food and gleaning unwanted fruit and vegetables from farms.
- **Setting up local food compost programmes** to reduce the amount of food waste being sent to landfill or transported long distances to be recycled.
- **Increasing skills and knowledge** through community engagement.

In this learning output, we've captured the successes and learning from four projects that are striving to reduce food waste and its impact. The overarching lessons are summarised overleaf.



Figure 1 Closing Loops, gleaning kale





## Do:

- **Be mindful of messaging around food waste;** it's really important to avoid patronising those who may be struggling to make ends meet.
- **Tailor the message to the audience;** older people may have less climate anxiety than younger people, but almost everyone wants to reduce waste and composting is something that everyone can do.
- **Work with existing trusted partners** where possible to facilitate engagement with local communities.
- **Invest plenty of time** in the early stages of building partnerships and getting to know the communities you'll be working with.
- **Use the offer of free food** plus sociable cooking activities to help engage people – this can be very effective.
- Encourage participants to share their knowledge with each other, for example, how to batch-cook or how to use a surplus of a particular vegetable.



## Don't:

- **Always focus on the environmental impact of composting** – some people are more likely to be engaged around messages related to convenience and saving money.
- **Focus on negative aspects of food waste production** – focus instead on the opportunities it presents.
- **Try a 'one-size-fits-all' approach** when it comes to developing an action plan. Each group will have their own needs and opportunities and each action plan will need to be tailored accordingly.



# Project 1: Food Use Places

The Food Use Places project aims to tackle food waste by working with community organisations across East Sussex that use food in their work – be it through surplus meals, community cafes, affordable food shops or local clubs. It is led by Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, a non-profit organisation helping people learn to cook, eat a healthy diet, grow their own food and waste less food.

## What the project involves

The aim of the project is to support community food organisations across East Sussex to reduce their food waste and for these organisations to support their users in becoming ‘food use confident’. The project involves working alongside 14 organisations across the local area, including a community pub, a community kitchen, two primary schools, an older people’s community centre, a community shop and a youth project - to tackle how much food and packaging waste ends up in incineration.



## This is done through:

- Increasing the awareness of the link between climate change and food waste by providing resources for community settings and incorporating this information into cooking and eating sessions.
- Creating easy-to-follow, community-made recipes that feature surplus food and provide tips around food storage.
- Holding workshops in community venues of the 14 partner organisations around batch cooking, fermentation, knife skills and composting to give people the necessary skills to reduce food waste at home.
- Installing compost tumblers at those of the partner organisations that are undertaking cooking, to be able to process their food waste on-site.



Figure 2 – Food Use Places, the Food Partnership’s community kitchen



# Learning so far

## Messaging

- Focusing on **positive messages** works well, and highlighting simple steps that people can take to understand the link between food and climate change. “Don’t talk about food waste as a problem – talk about food confidence. Flip it to an opportunity.”
- **Be flexible with the messaging.** For most of the community partners, the focus at the moment is cost of living and providing a social community centre. So, the messaging is focusing on how getting involved can help with cost of living, as well as the environmental benefits of cutting waste.
- Be aware that messaging about food waste can be tricky for people on very low budgets. It’s important to **avoid shaming** – instead focus on helping people to share their tips. “For example, ask people to show you how they batch cook and use every scrap of food and then share what they are doing with others.”
- **Tailor the messaging for different audiences.** For example, older people may have less climate anxiety, whereas young people, many of whom are concerned about the climate, have limited things that they can control. However, composting is something that everyone can do.
- Because all partner organisations will receive the same type of surplus at the same time, messages can be shared across the partnership for recipes that are relevant to the food available. “This helps to get across the message that seasonal food is good.”

## Trusted partners

- Working with **community-led organisations** is a great route to engagement because they know what their communities want and how best to work with them around food waste.
- – they are trusted by their local community and they are spaces that people are happy to travel to and feel comfortable in where they are happy to have a conversation with a trusted organisation.
- ‘**Climate Action is happening here**’ is a simple message shared by the partners to celebrate the involvement of communities previously less engaged in the climate change agenda.



Figure 3 - Food Use Places engagement messages

## Engagement

- Food is a great way to start the climate conversation. *“Some of the community places, such as one of the youth projects, had never done anything on climate – but now they are running a weekly cookery session designed to increase cookery skills which opens up conversations about lots of other things such as reducing packaging.”*
- Cooking sessions are proving popular, particularly given the cost-of-living crisis, demonstrating how to make best use of surplus food. *“Some people using the community centres are hungry so it’s great to be able to cook for them and provide them with hot food.”*

- The project co-designed an engagement and evaluation tool with beneficiaries from the partner projects. **The Food Use Confidence dial** (pictured below) allows people and the partner settings to rate themselves by measuring some key food waste reduction behaviours. *“We take people through a series of questions for example ‘I know how to avoid cooking too much food’ or ‘I know what to do with different types of packaging for recycling’. Their answers are scored 1-5 and plotted on a spider diagram which provides a visual tool for engagement, action planning and by revisiting the same questions at a later point a measure of progress.”*

- A.** Ways to use food better & Reduce waste
- B.** Storing & preserving food in the kitchen/fridge/freezer
- C.** Shopping for food, planning and budgeting
- D.** Cooking skills, equipment and recipes
- E.** Food and Packaging
- F.** Food recycling and composting
- G.** Food and its impact on climate change

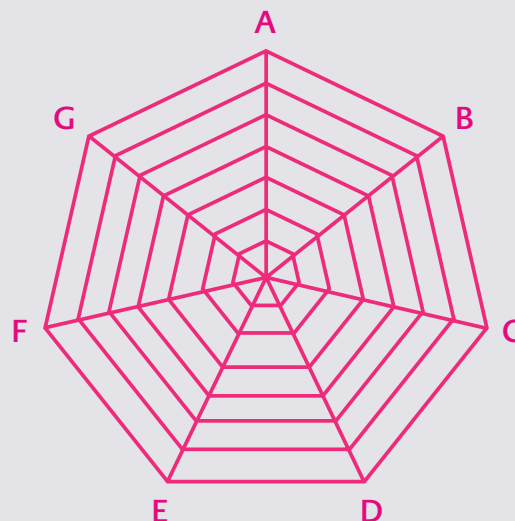


Figure 4 - Food Use Places, Food Use Confidence Dial

- It takes time to get to know people in a particular setting, but it really helps with understanding a community, their needs and how best to engage them on the topic of food waste.
- There is lots of scope for increasing confidence in food use, for example, around increasing knowledge of how to use particular items. *“Some types of surplus food may be unfamiliar to particular groups – for example some groups may not know what to do with a swede. But if you explain they can treat it like a yam, then they’ll know how they can use it.”*

## Partnership development

- **Time has been a big challenge.** There are a lot of partners and the amount of funding each one received wasn’t huge. As a result, the coordinators time has been spread a bit thin.
- Ideally, they would have had more time to invest in the early stages of **supporting projects and building partnerships**, but as a development project it was also useful to just get started, try some things and learn as we went along!

# Successes so far

- **Compost equipment** is popular. Each group has been given a hot composter (which can take large amounts of food including meat and bones), which has proved to be both really useful and a powerful, highly visual hook for engaging people.
- **Building on what people are already doing** has worked well. For example, one of the affordable food community groups was already running cooking sessions with their volunteers. This project is building on those skills, for example running sessions on batch cooking and how to use the whole vegetable.
- **Sharing skills** between those involved, for example, enabling projects to learn off each other through getting together at partner meetings and visiting partners who have skills in a particular area.
- **Bespoke action plans are needed for each group:** the same food waste audit has been conducted with each of the groups, but each group has been supported in developing their own unique plan. For example:
  - The community kitchen has introduced a **Food Use Friday** where they invite people to a 'Cook Up' at the end of each month to cook up everything left over.
    - Another site is organising fermenting and pickling sessions which have proved to be very popular.
    - The community pub has a growing project which is really looking forward to using the compost generated by their new composter.
    - The work needs to fit with other things going on in the centre so whilst some partners have been able to run weekly activities the Hop 50+ project decided to concentrate action and do a whole month focusing on food waste reduction and recycling.
- **Social media** can be an effective way of reaching audiences and other organisations. *"We created a 'rescue reel' of what to do with soggy lettuce; it's had over 18,000 views!"*

## Useful resources

WRAP resources - [wrap.org.uk/taking-action/food-drink](https://wrap.org.uk/taking-action/food-drink)

### Link

To find out more see:

[bhfood.org.uk/food-use-places/](https://bhfood.org.uk/food-use-places/)



# Project 2: Waste Innovation Station Headquarters (WISH)



**Waste Innovation Station Headquarters (WISH) is one of a number of projects being delivered by Cherwell Collective, a Community Interest Company that works to reduce the carbon footprint of its community, including through projects that aim to reduce all aspects of waste. On food waste, they are distributing surplus food to the public, repurposing food surplus in their café and growing food for the community, gleaning and composting.**

## **The project has involved:**

- **Collecting food waste** from a central collector, Oxford Food Hub, and distributing that to the public. Oxford Food Hub recovers food from wholesalers, cafes, warehouses etc all over Oxford and distributes it to almost 200 community food groups in the county – including Cherwell Collective. This operates like a community fridge, where people can help themselves to what they need. This can involve inviting people to bring their own clean jars to decant catering sized surplus that comes in. This sometimes involves large-scale distribution events; for example, in 2022 they distributed 30 tonnes of surplus food (including £9k of salmon) to around 2,000 people between Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve.
- **Operating a kitchen** that cooks the surplus food to provide around 450 dishes a week, through a community café. This kitchen also puts together recipes and meal kits to show people what to do with products when there’s a lot of it. “When we received a pallet load of vegetable suet, we produced guidance about how to make suet dumplings and how you can use them.”

## **Learning**

### **Not all waste can be used**

- They do receive some food waste that can’t be distributed as food. This is used as pig-feed, donated to a local greyhound rescue centre, or used to produce compost for community gardens.
- Their work also produces a lot of cardboard waste, particularly through their mass distribution events. They have asked their local waste authority to provide them with an anaerobic digester so they can deal more efficiently with this waste. This has not been provided yet due to concerns about safety and placement, but Cherwell Collective have plans to tour aerobic digestion facilities to do more research to speed this process up.
- Their gleaning program brought in five tonnes of food, but some of that needed to be processed and frozen when partners could not immediately



distribute or store it. To do this, partnership working was key. Next time they will need larger kitchen facilities and a more regular gleaning schedule so they can deal with gluts by preparing and freezing or tinning food safely. *“This year we had a great success as over 500 kg of apples made it into a ‘community chutney’ with local business the Wonky Food company, but if we had access to other kitchens and specific staff we could have saved more for the hard winter months, so we’re already looking to book large kitchens and processing spaces to be able to save more of the ‘glut’ for lean times next winter.”*

## Groceries

- With many supermarkets having recently scrapped the use of best-before dates, many stores are now holding onto their food until it starts to rot, at which point it is thrown away. This has reduced the amount of surplus that is available.
- The project has dealt with that by directly collecting from shops at their close of day. This has presented a logistical challenge as the shops close at 10pm. The project has established a hub system to cope with the late-night pick-ups, where one driver can take the surplus directly to their home and distribute it from there.
- Another challenge has been the introduction of allergen labels on products as a result of Natasha’s law . For some products (e.g. baked goods) there will be labels on trays but not on individual products. They have dealt with this by telling people who are collecting these items they need to assume that these products contain all possible allergens.

## Make it easy for the stores

- Surplus distribution has to be as easy as possible for the stores. Cherwell Collective has a waste carrier licence,



*Figure 5 - Waste Innovation Station Headquarters, surplus food ready to be distributed.*

together with storage facilities including large freezers and fridges, which means that stores can give them anything, which makes things simpler for the stores. *“It was a fairly simple process to get this licence – it cost £150 and involved an online form.”*

## Qualifications matter

- It’s really important to have the right skills and qualifications around safe handling of food.
- With an on-site kitchen, the team have a number of staff and volunteers who hold higher level qualifications in, for example, food catering. These qualifications aren’t expensive (it costs around £25 per person for a Level 2 qualification) but they are quite time intensive. But it is important to have these skills within the team and means they can have all their paperwork up to date in compliance with environmental health requirements.

## Engagement

- The project is working with socially, financially and medically disadvantaged households. It's open to all, with no means testing which is important for maximising engagement.
- The project is all about connecting people. *"They come for the larder; the extra food – and everyone hates food waste. They stay because there's a café, there's music, they can meet people, it's fun."*
- Their participants don't realise and don't care that the project is about climate action. *"Only after a couple of months do they realise what it's about."*
- Partnerships can be effective to bring attention to the thing that you're doing. For example, they have had help with marketing their mass distribution events from big name partners such as the Eden Project. Their Big Lunch project was covered by the BBC; the message that was picked up by the media was about bringing people together over food rather than food surplus.
- *"To make a mass distribution event work you have to engage with everyone, including the climate deniers and those already passionately fighting for the planet. The important thing is to bring everyone to the table to discover opportunities for saving this food from, which is a great unifying concept across the community, and is ultimately, better for the planet whether you believe humans cause global warming or not."*
- Social media is a good way of sharing skills and knowledge, recipes and enabling people to connect and build bonds about food. *"There is a lot of shame around surplus food and you can break this stigma by celebrating, through social media, the people who are saving the food waste together and take that one step further by celebrating their approach and willingness to share skills and knowledge around using those ingredients with the wider community."*

## The need for transport

- They were only able to purchase a van 18 months into the project. With hindsight, they would have purchased it earlier as it makes the process of collecting and distributing the surplus much easier.

## Local authority partnership

- They are partnering with their local authority on a local compost project for people to bring their food waste to. But the council is in the process of rolling out food-waste caddies to all households, and their contact in the council is in a different department and wasn't aware of that initiative. A key learning is that you need to be partnered with individuals in a number of different departments within the council. *"We were working with people in the housing and business waste team. But the decision about the bins was another unit and it slipped through all the nets."*
- Going forward, they plan to be much clearer with the council about what they need from them to make the project a success, and to ensure that they are kept abreast of any changes to waste processes.



# Successes so far

- **Pricing food according to carbon costing.** In the community café, meals are priced according to the carbon footprint of each portion, turned into car-mile equivalents. For example, vegan soups are usually £1 and a traditional cottage pie is £17. This has proved to be a very effective engagement tool. For example, in sessions with children they will invite them to guess the carbon of their favourite meals, using stackable cars. *“This approach has generated a lot of media coverage and supports people in making a good decision. Would you drive 17 miles for a cottage pie?”* The nutritional value of the vegan and vegetarian (low carbon price) meals are comparable to, or better than, the meat-based meals. *“The kitchen works hard to ensure that all vegan and vegetarian meals contain sufficient available protein in the forms of pulses, legumes and vegetables, and sufficient unsaturated fat in the form of plant-based oils and spreads.”*
- **Investing in partnerships** is key. For example, having access to a mechanical pallet truck is critical to dealing with big distributions. A big fleet operator was able to help with their Christmas distribution – it was at a time when they would not be busy, and it offered them great publicity. *“We made sure to thank them via social media and also through other media interviews – saying ‘we couldn’t have done this without you’. This is key to ensuring that they’ll do the same again next year and for them understanding just how much you value that partnership.”*

## Links

- **FareShare** is the UK’s national network of charitable food redistributors, made up of 18 independent organisations - [fareshare.org.uk](https://fareshare.org.uk)
- **Too Good To Go** is an app that stores use to discount their food at the end of the day - [toogoodtogo.com/en-gb](https://toogoodtogo.com/en-gb)
- **Olio** is another food share app that many supermarkets distribute to: [olioapp.com](https://olioapp.com)

## Resources

- Local Community Action Groups provides a lot of resources around basic ‘how to set up a group’ and leadership structures etc. [cagoxfordshire.org.uk/project-resources](https://cagoxfordshire.org.uk/project-resources)



# Project 3: Incredible Edible Lambeth



Incredible Edible Lambeth is a two-year project which began in June 2023. It involves a partnership between Incredible Edible Lambeth CIC, the London Borough of Lambeth and Make Soil, a global app that maps the sites of compost bins. It aims to get community composting schemes underway on a number of housing estates in Lambeth.

## What the project involves

The objective is to set up community composting facilities on 25 housing estates in Lambeth, where the council does not currently offer a food waste collection service. The intention is that this will generate free compost which can be used on community gardens. The project is recruiting local 'compost monitors' who will be supported to set up the bins, with tools, material and training being provided – including 'non-violent communication' training to support those involved with managing any conflicts that might arise within their group. Participants are also invited to monthly workshops on topics related to composting.



Figure 6 –Incredible Edible Lambeth community composters with one of the newly installed Incredible Edible Lambeth compost bins

## Learning

### Bin location and maintenance

- Have enough bins to enable people to walk to them easily. Some estates are too large for a single bin.
- They are designing the bins with longer term maintenance in mind; they are made with scaffold planks so that they can easily be replaced by residents.
- They will be running workshops in the summer with local residents on how to maintain the bins and will also be putting this information on their websites.



- The project is getting a lot of compost bins made up initially so that they are ready to deploy as soon as locations are agreed.

## Engagement

- Engaging with households on the estates where they are installing compost bins is crucial, to ensure the compost bins are used as intended and to ensure there are local volunteers who will help.
- They had originally intended to start by engaging with households on a particular estate and then consulting them on the installation of compost bins before building and supplying the bins. However, they've found that engagement is much easier if they install the bin first, so that householders have had a chance to see it. They then go door to door offering households their free compost caddy.
- They have found it is easier to engage households around the message that their waste bin will smell less if they use the compost bin, rather than focusing on the environmental benefits.
- Door knocking is an effective but time-consuming method of engagement. Overall, they have found it has taken longer to engage with residents than they had anticipated; they have needed to spend quite a bit of time on estates to build up relationships with the community. *"Face to face interaction in this way is really effective – they start to build a relationship and people are more likely to get involved. But it's very time consuming."*
- Running events – usually at weekends or in the evening - with free food and snacks available can draw a lot of people in. *"Some people are really struggling with cost of living – having free food is really good for encouraging people to join the conversation."*

- Going forward, they are exploring options to partner with a community hub that is active on a particular estate to help them engage with residents who will take on longer term maintenance of the compost bins.

## Partnership working with the council

- They have regular meetings with the housing team at the council and work closely with them to ensure their activities complement those of the council.
- However, a challenge is that the project is only funded for two years and the council is keen to know what will happen after that point. There is a risk to the council in that there would be a cost to get rid of the compost bins if they are not being properly used or maintained. To mitigate this risk, the project team is actively training up a network of compost monitors who will ensure proper use and maintenance on an ongoing basis. Where possible, they are also trying to get them adopted by groups such as food growing projects and community projects or Tenant & Residents Associations.



## Ongoing engagement with the compost monitors

- They run monthly meetings which alternate between taking place online and in person, to which all the compost monitors are invited. At the meetings they share ways of engaging e.g., how to get data from residents to calculate how much waste has been diverted. These sessions have been well received.

## Communication channels

- A key learning is that people have their communication needs (e.g. digital inclusion or exclusion) and it's important to understand these and work with them.
- Incredible Edible Lambeth has a contract to use the Make Soil website and app to communicate with participants regarding the composting project. At present most estates have an existing WhatsApp group that is being used for communication while Incredible Edible Lambeth trials the use of the Make Soil app. *"We are suggesting people use the Make Soil App, but we are leaving the decision to them."*

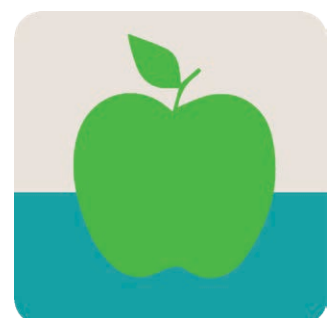
# Successes so far

- **Non-violent communication training;** Conflicts can arise between different groups on the estates they are working on. Non-violent communication training is being provided to the community monitors to raise people's ability to manage conflicts and thus help to make projects happen. Feedback from the initial training session, which was attended by 16 people from different groups, was very positive.
- **Getting community composters together** at monthly meetings to share their knowledge has proven really popular. *"When we ran the first one in August; people really enjoyed being in the same room and chatting."*
- **Padlocks** on the bins have been effective in ensuring they don't become contaminated with rubbish. Residents who attend one of the composting workshops are given the code to unlock the padlock.



Further information:

[incredibleediblelambeth.org](http://incredibleediblelambeth.org)



# Project 4: Closing Loops: Stimulating a regenerative food economy in North Lancashire



Closing Loops is supporting community-led action in North Lancashire to transform waste into a valuable resource, aiming to stimulate a zero-waste, circular and regenerative local economy. It is delivered by Lancaster District CIC (LESS), Food Futures, North Lancashire's sustainable food network and Lancaster District Community and Voluntary Solutions. The partnership is made up of representatives from community food groups, food producers, local food businesses, Lancaster City Council, schools and NGOs working on food and social justice issues in North Lancashire.

The Closing Loops project is taking forward work in the following themes:

- Cooking and eating local, seasonal and sustainably produced food.
- Reducing food waste, surplus food redistribution and composting.
- Supporting the development of zero-waste initiatives for food and other materials currently going to waste – with the aim of creating an ecosystem of regenerative enterprises and community initiatives.

The elements of the project tackling food waste include:

- **Composting:** The project is coordinating community composting activities across the district looking to support what is already happening through workshops, skill sharing and train-the-trainer sessions. Compost demonstration sites will be set up throughout the project with four sites being developed each year. Sites are currently being developed with four partners- a primary school, an urban park, a community growing space used by various community groups and a market garden with a Farm Start training programme. Compost demonstration sites will be selected to give a wide range of situations and scales at which composting might happen within community and enterprise settings. The demonstration sites will act as places to host skill sharing sessions and events that aim to make composting more visible, accessible and valued in the community. Further sites are being identified through community events, consultation and from working with community groups across the district.



- Gleaning:** This part of the project focuses on working with farmers to organise gleaning of surplus fruit and vegetables from the land, for example where supermarkets have cancelled orders at short notice or where the produce does not meet the buyer's specification in terms of shape and appearance. This involves putting together a team of volunteers who can glean the surplus produce when opportunities arise. The gleaners can keep some of the produce for themselves, with the majority being redistributed via project partner, Eggcup, which uses surplus to provide members with access to more affordable food. After some gleans people can take part in a disco soup where a meal is cooked with gleaned produce. The gleaning role is linking with community gardens, orchards and other smaller scale food producers to create pathways for local communities to rescue surplus food from these types of sites. The role is also developing links with business partners to redistribute more 'post-farm gate' surplus food into the local food support network.



*Figure 7 - Closing Loops, a hot composter and wormery installed at one of the sites*

mean that the council will need to bring in weekly food collections by the end of 2025. Closing Loops are considering how they can best respond to this change with ways to celebrate and raise awareness of local closed loops of food waste and all the benefits of community composting for communities and ecosystems, in contrast to food waste being transported away to a big anaerobic digestion facility.

They are also looking at opportunities for developing initiatives that will not be impacted by the regulations- which only focus on household food waste. This includes doing a feasibility study to test the potential for small business composting within the district in response to interest from local cafes and restaurants.

# Lessons

## Composting

- There are some challenging issues around food waste; some people are instinctively disgusted by food waste and by things like composting worms. *“Together we are creating opportunities for communities to connect with the food they eat, the soil it grows in and the role worms play in transforming food waste into compost.”*
- It's more effective to link in with projects that are already working in local communities and working in partnership with them, than trying to start from scratch.
- New regulations are coming in which

- Building a working relationship with the local city council around the composting has been useful in liaising over community composting on council owned parks and using council produced wood chip, which is provided and delivered free of charge.



## Gleaning

- **Engagement with growers:** one of the biggest challenges has been forming relationships with the farmers. They have put a lot of work into this, and they now have good relationships with a small number of farmers. *“You need to be very respectful of their work and mindful of the sensitivities around food surplus. It’s a big ask of farmers to let strangers onto their farm to pick their produce; it’s really important to make it as easy as possible for the farmers; to be absolutely reliable; and to ensure that all the volunteers are respectful of the farm.”*
- **Engagement with volunteers:**
  - They maintain a **mailing list** of volunteers who they contact whenever they organise a gleaning day. This has been compiled through EggCup’s volunteer list and the local Community Voluntary Solutions and other volunteer organisations. They generally find that around 10% of people will respond to an email request for volunteers.
  - Their first two events (in the summer) were well attended, but more recent events have had fewer participants than they would like. **They are trying to increase numbers by:**
    - **Developing their relationships with the growers** to try to be able to provide more lead time to their volunteers (they often get less than a week’s notice).
    - **Increasing their mailing list** so they have more people to contact for example by attending volunteer fairs and asking all their volunteers to spread the word.
  - **Transport can be difficult** both for the volunteers and for the produce. For volunteers, they are looking into accessing minibuses, but the legalities are quite complicated. They are hoping to do this with volunteer drivers. For the produce, there is a limit on how much produce they can transport; they have a 1 tonne van, which is filled in about half a day when picking cauliflowers, whereas picking kale by hand will take a lot longer.
  - They are considering developing a **group gleaning offer** for corporate away days or for other groups including university and college students and community organisations. The aim of these days would be to get people out to farms to visibly see the food going to waste, raising awareness of the scale of the issue and the reasons for this- and then sharing a meal from the gleaned produce. *“It would be great to get supermarket workers/ managers out to the field, to raise awareness of how supermarket buying policies can result in food waste.”*
  - **Apple picking** really captures the imagination of volunteers. *“People know what ‘scrumping’ is when they might never have heard of gleaning. So it’s a good way to engage people and then start a wider conversation about gleaning.”*
- **Engagement with the wider public:**
  - They run a seasonal market every three months where they hand out free produce and talk about the reasons for surplus food. *“Gleaning isn’t a particularly efficient way of getting surplus food into the system, but it’s been really valuable on engagement.”*

- They also run a **'disco soup'** session at the market, where the volunteers get together to make food with a chef, with live music. *"This is a really popular, social event."*
- Going forwards, they hope to do more **workshops** and **cooking events** with items that have been gleaned. *"We want to make it more of an experience for our volunteers."*

# Successes so far

## Food composting

- Partnership working is going well.
  - They learned from one of the other CAF food waste projects that it's important not to skimp on the preparation work for working in partnership with communities; they've invested a lot of time in doing the groundwork.
  - As a result of this investment, they have been successful in getting communities to take ownership over choosing the location of their composting facility.
  - Their partnership with the council is also working well. To make the compost work most effectively, they need wood chips to balance out the food waste – they are able to access this from the council. They are mainly liaising with the council officer who is Head of Public Realm, whose department (environmental services) is then linking them up with relevant community groups such as 'Friends of' local parks.

## Engagement:

- - Where there is demand for compost, there has been really good engagement. For example, one particular community project that involves growing fruit in raised beds was desperately in need of compost and has been very keen to work with them.
- - Similarly, having a single champion in an influential role can be very effective at getting others on board. *"The primary school is a good partner; their head is very keen and has enthused the staff – and they will be training up the kitchen staff in how to use their composter. The aim is that the school will become a hub for community composting in the surrounding residential area."*
- **Closing Loops** ran four **World Café** launch events in different parts of the district – these were well attended and were great for hearing about what people were doing and what they wanted, as well as making connections.

## Gleaning

- As a result of the relationship the team has developed with farmers, the Closing Loops project has successfully gleaned cauliflower, pumpkins, apples, brassica and various specialty kales. Without the work of Closing Loops, these would all have been ploughed back into the soil.
- Having a project partner (EggCup) who was already working in surplus food distribution has been beneficial. EggCup already has so many established relationships and has developed the food safety protocols required to handle large quantities of food (including dairy and meat) safely. EggCup is part of the Xcess Network, a national network of similar organisations. *“It means the gleaning coordinator doesn’t have to worry about redistributing the food – we just have to get it in and then EggCup distribute it. And they have the capacity to take quite a lot at once. For example, we once took in 30 pallets of milk powder; they were able to get this distributed.”*



Figure 8 - Closing Loops, a lorry-load of gleaned cauliflowers

## Further information:

Blogpost about gleaning cauliflowers - [eggcup.org/guest-post-in-search-of-the-perfect-cauliflower/](https://eggcup.org/guest-post-in-search-of-the-perfect-cauliflower/)

### Link

To find out more see:

[foodfutures.org.uk/closing-loops](https://foodfutures.org.uk/closing-loops)

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## About the Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund is a ten-year £100 million fund supporting communities across the UK to take action on climate change.

## About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest non-statutory community funder in the UK – community is at the heart of our purpose, vision and name. We support activities that create resilient communities that are more inclusive and environmentally sustainable and that will strengthen society and improve lives across the UK. We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives. As well as responding to what communities tell us is important to them, our funding is focused on four key missions, supporting communities to:

1. **Come together**
2. **Be environmentally sustainable**
3. **Help children and young people thrive**
4. **Enable people to live healthier lives.**

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, we distribute around £500 million a year through 10,000+ grants and plan to invest over £4 billion of funding into communities by 2030. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £47 billion has been raised and more than 670,000 individual grants have been made across the UK – the equivalent of around 240 National Lottery grants in every UK postcode district.

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[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)

