

Food Values: The Case Studies

Over the course of the Food Values project a series of food education events were run in five different locations across Wales. These were designed to trial the values approach described in the preceding section. Lessons drawn from evaluation of these events is presenting in the next section. Events were run with a range of partners to support longstanding projects in each area, sometimes building on previous food education events with Organic Centre Wales (OCW). The leadership and format of the events varied in each case, reflecting the differing geographies of Wales, including:

- Rural and urban locations.
- A range of demographics.
- A range of cultural and ethnic mixes.
- A range of socio-economic situations.

The values framework informed the design and delivery of each event. All events included:

Sharing a meal: whether this was a bowl of soup or several courses, all of the events focused on the physical act of sharing and eating food. The rationale here was to connect people very literally with food, so they could talk whilst they ate, and the act of eating would prompt reflections. Discussions were related to the food people were eating – some was locally-sourced and prepared, for instance, some organic, and some recovered food waste. This was designed to encourage active and participatory learning. The act of sharing food also relaxes participants and includes them in a less formal and more open setting, in contrast with traditional notions of teaching and learning.

A participatory approach: this meant people were welcomed to express and explore their viewpoints rather than being recipients of information. To do this, facilitators supported group discussions and ensured that all participants were heard. Different methods of engagement were also used, which did not necessitate purely verbal feedback, so that people could express themselves in different ways, such as comments on post-its or through drawing diagrams and other images.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In describing the ways people formulate, negotiate and express values we needed techniques that would explore and capture subjective experience and social relations. We therefore chose a qualitative approach. This involved analysis of:

- Individual interviews with participants and partners (before and after events)¹.
- Facilitators' records of group discussions (including an overview of what was said, how it was said, and how people related to one another).
- Written feedback from participants during the events and afterwards.
- Participant diagrams (for example, values maps as shown in the Framework that were annotated by participants during a workshop).
- Visual minutes (a representation of a discussion or workshop, created in real-time and including pictures and words).
- Written reflections from partners, event organisers, and facilitators (including observations on levels of participation and how deeply participants were engaged).

Coding was used to organise and draw out common themes from the data, including:

- Responses to different questions posed.
- The different values expressed and elicited².
- The different frames used in communications.



¹ Quotes from these are shown throughout this report in italics, without the use of speech marks. The majority of quotes are not attributed to specific participants to ensure anonymity.

² Specific Values and Value groupings are highlighted in green throughout the following discussions.

Aberystwyth

Exploring Organic Sector Values

Background & Aims

This event was run by OCW to engage businesses involved in their Better Organic Business Links (BOBL) programme in and around the Aberystwyth area. It aimed to:

1. Collectively re-engage with the core values that brought participants to organics in the first instance.
2. Review the communications material that OCW were using in order to inform future strategy.
3. Inform the way the individual businesses operated – both in terms of communications and in other aspects of their business models which inherently reflect values held.

A key motivation behind the event was a concern from OCW staff that their publicity and marketing material no longer reflected the core values of organic businesses and instead were simply tailored to consumer preference³. Whilst such an approach to marketing is clearly strategic on one level, OCW staff were concerned that it had led to a diminished focus on the values that they personally felt were core to the organics sector. In particular, it was perceived that a focus on individual well-being and food safety were being prioritised above more collective concerns for environmental and social justice. The event was designed to explore this with participants and consider what alternatives could be developed. In addition, OCW staff wanted to explore potential solutions to the perceived price barrier and 'elite' nature of organics. Overall, the event was inspired by a desire for greater alignment between the values and practice of those working in the organic sector.

What We Did

The event was held at an organic shop and restaurant in Aberystwyth, and took the form of an evening meal with facilitated discussions. The event was advertised in the shop and invites sent out to the BOBL network (including individuals working across the supply chain, from farmers, through to retailers, caterers and consumers); around 30 participants were present.

We explained at the start of the evening that the event was part of a wider research project and invited participants to contribute further through future events and one-to-

³ OCW publicity material had been produced in response to consumer surveys on the barriers and motivations to buying organic produce. This research demonstrated personal concern for health and safety and wider concern for the environment and animal welfare as the main reasons for organic consumption.

one interviews. In common with the other events, the format of the evening was structured around a meal with different questions posed for discussion per course. Questions are shown below, along with a summary of how they were presented and feedback attained.

Each question was introduced by a brief presentation from OCW staff. Discussions were held on tables of up to 8 participants and a facilitator worked with each group. The majority of participants knew each other and the OCW staff who facilitated, which ensured a more relaxed and open conversation.

Questions

1. What values do you associate with the organic sector?

This question was addressed through individual reflection on a list of values provided and subsequent discussion with others on the table.

We then asked – What values are important for a sustainable food system?

This was addressed through further group discussion, and then the values highlighted in response to both questions were marked on values diagrams (shown in the Values Framework).

2. What values are reflecting in the communications we – as professionals working within the organic sector - make to the public?

This question was addressed by reflecting on a series of publicity materials that OCW had produced over the last five years and again referring back to the values diagrams to mark the values.

3. What measures could we use to overcome the price-barrier on organics – drawing on experiences across Europe?

This question was set-up by an introductory discussion from OCW staff where the price barrier was highlighted as major reason why people don't buy organics. Examples from Europe of two-tier pricing were posed as one approach to address this issue. These strategies were framed by OCW as a means to shifting values away from concern with individual wealth, towards social justice. Links back to the values highlighted in question one were made, but there was no further use of the values maps

Data collected included

- recording of group discussions
- facilitators' records & observations
- value maps
- written feedback via evaluation forms and subsequent email communications
- individual interviews

What We Found

Findings are discussed in relation to the aims outlined.

1. Collectively re-engage with the core values that brought participants to organics in the first instance.

Whilst this aim was most clearly addressed through the first question, discussions across the evening reinforced and returned people to this overarching objective. Overall, participants were very positive about the opportunity created during the evening to discuss issues that were central to their professions but often overlooked in the rush and routine of their daily lives. In addition, the framing of discussions around values enabled participants to make the links from personal to wider concerns: *The event made me see very clearly again just how connected food is to every aspect of life, locally and globally, and to all issues - social, environmental, economic, psychological...*

The format of the evening, using small group discussions to explore issues in a relaxed and familiar setting, was also beneficial in terms of prompting deeper engagement. Similarly, the fact that participants mostly knew each other, or felt able to relate due to the overlaps in interest and profession, ensured that trust within the group was high – again promoting more meaningful and considered discussions and connections to core values.

In terms of the value groupings expressed, in answer to the first question participants confirmed the premise outlined in the Values Framework, that **Universalism**, **Benevolence** and **Self-direction** are the values which best equip us to address the key societal challenges (in this case ensuring a sustainable food system), while **Power** and **Achievement** values would be less helpful to this end. This was also iterated in terms of the values which brought participants to organics in the first instance.

In subsequent interviews this was confirmed through emphasis on the values of **Unity with nature**, **Protecting the environment**, **Wisdom**, **Honesty**, **Responsibility** and **Social justice**. For example, participants stressed the importance of an informed understanding of the food system as a clear driver behind organics: *The vast majority of people think food is produced in a certain way. They think cows eat grass, chickens scratch in dirt... so once you get the message across that the reality is very different and you start asking questions it's great. For us giving that information to our customers to make an informed decision is what the spirit of the organic certification is about.*

The expression of these values through the organic supply chain was notably contrasted with experiences of shopping in supermarkets by several participants: *I feel that in the supermarket I totally lose the sense of what time of year it is. It is the same offer all year round which is supposed to be an achievement, whereas to me it's an impoverishment. I also find the social interaction is missing, a supermarket is very anonymous. I come home and have a lot of waste packaging. I'm not sure I know where the produce comes from... who produced the food.*

Protecting the environment was highlighted and expressed in ways that clearly demonstrate values arising from long-term practical experience working on the land rather than being framed as an idealistic goal: *I can remember using nitrogen until the grass was as blue as the bags it came in and you just thought this can't be, it stings your fingers, and you think what is it doing to everything?*

Beyond the prioritisation of values in the Benevolence and Universalism groupings, the need to ensure the sustainable operation of farm businesses led participants to emphasise the following value groupings: **Self-direction**, **Achievement** and some aspects of **Security**. Given the importance of practical farming experience, **Tradition** also came to the fore. However, there was some disagreement in the discussion of these values which will be outlined below.

Firstly, with regards to **Security**, there was a tension between valuing national (food) security, and wider aspirations for global harmony and equity. Participants argued that current framings of food security can lead us to focus too much on domestic needs (the detachment component of security), and to achieve true food security we need to develop a global vision that is equitable and based on social justice (which sits as a value of Universalism not Security).

Secondly, whilst there was more consensus around unhelpful values, namely **Self-indulgence**, **Excitement in life**, **Privacy**, **Preserving my public image** and **Social power** - valuing **Wealth** and **Achievement** was less clear cut. Wealth for its own sake was largely considered as unhelpful, but many acknowledged that wealth as a component of a successful business achieving its goals was useful. Moreover, it was argued that we need success and ambition to achieve goals. This is a common debate in values discussions and reflects a conflation of values and characteristics. To clarify, we have to consider the deeper motivation. **Power** and **Achievement** as characteristics can be effective in reaching all sorts of goals, including social or environmental justice, but when Power and Achievement are valued for their own sake, rather than the ends they produce, they can lead to unhelpful outcomes.

Lastly, **Tradition** was particularly fraught. Some thought Tradition was important in terms of seed heritage and maintaining knowledge that has been handed down through generations, but others disagreed by asking *What tradition should we value? How long does it take for tradition to develop?* They contested that conventional farming could now be seen as 'traditional', and once something has become tradition it has become a habit, so that people then don't ask *why* they do things that way. Traditions sometimes need shaking up. The counter-argument was that tradition is generally proven; it has got us where we are, and carries a badge of authenticity – the slippage between Tradition and **Wisdom** is evident in some of these points. The value of tradition was also framed in terms of place, people and community, and this connected with the value of a **Sense of belonging** and **Unity with nature**.

For many participants their preference for traditional methods was linked to a desire for **Self-direction** and not being beholden to large corporations: *A sustainable food system needs to be less dependent on corporates because they're very prescriptive. There is a danger of the farmer losing their independence... it becomes less and less farming and more and more pure production on a return.*

Another value that sparked notable discussion was **Pleasure**. Enjoying food was seen to be very important, and taste was a key motivator for most in becoming involved in the organic sector. But, it was argued, if pleasure is your only focus you are not going to create a sustainable food system. We also considered how some people (not the participants) only engage with food as energy - there is no pleasure or sensory engagement. Whilst for others their sensory engagement is based on high sugar/salt content, which has led to health problems.

Relating to these points, **Inner harmony** was put forward as a key value that could easily be overlooked. We increasingly hear about peoples' anxieties, how they are unhappy in themselves, with their body, with their image, health, performance etc. Participants stressed that a better relationship with food can be a fundamental component of changing that. If we are more informed and comfortable with the sourcing of our food, if we are similarly more attuned to the environmental impacts of our food and see that our eating practices are more aligned with a wider set of values and ethics it is likely that we can begin to feel more comfortable in ourselves. We can feel more in control, more just, more balanced and our inner harmony reflects a wider harmony that we can enact with the world around us. Food is not just calories, the choices we make about food literally make-up our physical being.

Finally, in light of the range of opinions and levels of debate that arose, the group all agreed that **Broad-mindedness** (a Universalism value) was fundamental because a lot of the other important values required people to work together, and it also means that you are open to new ideas. Interestingly, many were keen to stress that they didn't see the necessity of being purist in terms of organic certification and were keen to engage with conventional producers who shared their values, rather than being exclusive. This is discussed further in relation to communications and publicity below.

2. Review the communications material that OCW were using in order to inform future strategy.

The values elicited by the differing publicity material connected with **Health, Family security** and **Honesty** primarily, but also **Pleasure** and **Protecting the environment**. This is unsurprising given the intention to prioritise these issues in response to the consumer surveys noted earlier. Nonetheless, demonstrating this on the values diagrams, alongside the values raised by the earlier questions, was useful. By using the diagrams it was clear that there wasn't a direct conflict with the values prioritised earlier, rather that some values were being prioritised in the publicity more than others. This would suggest that the existing communications are not erroneous or misleading in their framing, but they are selective and could better engage with the wider set of values that participants felt to be important. One example the group thought was more progressive is detailed here:

We liked the media with a recipe on, we thought that OCW could produce a set of recipe cards for students that could be given out at Fresher's Fayre and include information on where to get organic produce from and the cost for a meal for four to show people it does not cost too much. If this then had info on the benefits of organic produce, and why organic benefits the local area and the UK, we felt it would be a successful piece of media.



Others highlighted the connections, in the recipe cards, to living simply, making do, being humble and eating in season. These discussions show that a recipe card is a useful way to do more than just communicate values, but also to embed them in actions. Through a recipe you are not only marketing a product, but giving people a clear framework to act upon. Taking this point further, some participants noted the following: *There is a very large percentage of the population that could not care less about food; growing food in schools with children and learning to taste/cook it has to be a way out of this for the next generation. We need to inspire people to think a bit more about the food they eat. Cookery demos, recipes, celebrity chefs help address these issues.* Others supported these points by asserting the need to focus on public procurement and food education in schools. Consequently, we could deduce that it is not simply the way you frame your messaging that is important, but also the practical means you demonstrate to act differently.

The emphasis upon ensuring a more informed understanding of the food system also connects with the earlier discussions, and many participants were very adamant that members of the public had a narrow or misguided understanding of what organics involved. They felt, therefore, that it was important to include information about farming methods, animal welfare and the soil system rather than simply saying 'no sprays' are used.

However, it was also acknowledged that the very label of organic can be problematic, because the farm system contains so many aspects and organic certification doesn't always capture what is important to producers. For instance many favoured pasture fed and low-input methods of livestock farming, but organically certified businesses can feed concentrates and be much more intensive. *I've always been a bit uncomfortable that organic farming is... you've got to have rules and standards but...it's all quite a complex cycle.* Being too purist was seen to be alienating and therefore not helpful, particularly given the points noted here on the difficulties of demarcating organic versus non-organic. This linked with other conversations around the need to be broadminded and appeal to people outside of organics. This is not just in terms of communicating with the public, as consumers, but other producers and caterers.

3. Inform the way the individual businesses operated – both in terms of communications and in other aspects of their business models which inherently reflect values held.

In terms of addressing this aim, it is notable that participants were most engaged by the final discussion, on reducing the price barrier, as an area where they could or should effect changes. Consequently, this topic has been followed-up in subsequent events. By contrast, the discussion of communications and publicity was largely seen to pertain to OCW as an organisation, and not the organic businesses themselves. In terms of values, the discussion of pricing was clearly framed by OCW staff as an issue of *Social Justice*, which is subsequently reflected and reaffirmed in the participants' comments.

There was some considerable debate on whether organic produce was actually more expensive than conventional in all instances. Many felt this could be more of perception, that didn't always hold. People argued that sometimes organic produce is less expensive

depending on what is in season, but they also felt that a cheaper price was not something they wanted to distinguish themselves on, because they didn't want to de-value the produce and price isn't the metric they wanted to compete on. One participant stated that 'organic is the true cost of food'. Others noted that organics would never go in a supermarket 'basics' range, so it would always seem 'elite'. *It has been proven by surveys that it is not the case that people always buy the cheapest, but that is always their answer and what they think they have done. And I can reduce the price of my products when I have a surplus to below conventional prices but it does not necessarily increase sales.*

It was also noted that food is such a small component of many peoples' income now compared with historically, so there is a difference in perceived affordability and priority. Finally, participants noted that perception of organics is just as important as price. They felt that the biggest issue was the lack of understanding. *If people understood what food is and how food is produced they'd think this isn't expensive. Or, they'd go bloody hell these tomatoes are expensive in the middle of winter... it must be because they have to heat the glasshouses. Maybe I'll wait until they don't have to do that and they'll be cheaper. People have forgotten all of this stuff.* Similarly better education was raised as a key tool in addressing the price barrier, with many people highlighting the importance of cookery classes, freezing food in season and so forth: *I do think there is a lack of understanding whether you're rich or poor about how to cook, about how to buy ingredients and I think you can eat cheaply from places like ours [an organic store].*

Considering the options of two-tier pricing, whilst there was clear interest there was also concerns as to whether people would feel comfortable being identified as 'poor' (this was compared with the experience of free school dinners). Other options were put forward by participants such as community purchasing to buy in bulk, which has an ethic of kinship and locality associated along with the potential to act in solidarity with others. Vouchers for organic food were also noted as a way to cross all demographics of the population, and a clear value of social justice and countering stigma came to the fore here: *When these questions come up, it is quite easy for somebody to become a bit right wing... But what we find is that we have lots of customers who come in with vouchers, on low income, and they buy vegetables - they don't buy processed food.*

For those working in retail, it was notable that their values for social justice also reflected in their marketing and sales practice: *We're very honest about saying to people, don't buy these now - it's really expensive at the moment. We highlight things when they're good and in season and at a good price... We've tried to move away from the commoditisation of those products.* And similarly in relation to interactions with producers and other supply chain actors: *We want to make sure everyone in the chain gets what they need to get... I don't feel the need to drive the price down in negotiations... I don't think we're making a fortune but I think we're doing fine."*

Finally, we reflected on the broader structural constraints of current farm subsidies which distort pricing and favour some farmers more than others, without addressing these it was felt that we never get to the root of the problem. *All food whether it's organic or not organic is under-priced. That's my feeling. Farming sits on the back of subsidies and it shouldn't really.*

Next Steps

- The first follow-up action from this event was participation by some of the attendees in a later event at Aberystwyth University, which allowed them to make wider links with the student community to discuss some of the issues raised here regarding peoples' perception of organics and how more people can be supported to eat well and engage with local organic businesses.
- Subsequent discussions and events have also been held with interested individuals (from both events) on the strategies to address the price barrier; these are discussed on the project blog.
- A further key step was to present these findings at an OCW conference, with the aim of informing future communications strategy.
- Finally, OCW staff have developed the findings presented here into a standalone report for organic producers on 'Communicating Organic Food Values' – this is available to download from our blog.



North Wales

Sharing Values through Inter-generational Learning

Background & Aims

This event was run by Dr Eifiona Thomas Lane from Bangor University and Arwel Jones, working with OCW staff and community members from Bro Deudraeth and Bro Madog. Activities were held at Ysgol y Garreg, a small traditional rural school in Llanfrothen, and a café in Penrhyndeudraeth. They aim to:

1. Support intergenerational learning and social exchange around food in a traditional North Wales community.
2. Record historic and traditional food practices from the local area, including local recipes and the types of foods eaten within the community.
3. Promote greater reflection and awareness of contemporary food choices, reconnecting community members to the local economy and food system.

Working with older people and children, the event was designed to give both groups the opportunity to report back on values and ideas about food and meals which exist in a traditional bilingual and distinctly rural community. In particular, we were hoping to draw out shared values and experiences. For example, could both groups agree on foods and experiences that they would like to be preserved as part of the community heritage? Would the values of the older people challenge the young, motivating them to question the food system that exists today? And how would the older people react to the children's ideas about foods and eating in contemporary situations?

The event was also intended to support the Gwynedd Local Food Charter, by gaining a deeper understanding of the food system in a traditional rural area with strong links between producers and the community. Discussions would provide an information bank, which could form a basis to develop a food programme for local residents, as well as offering the opportunity for visitors to learn about local food heritage. This model could be adapted for other areas in Wales.

The project was designed by individuals who were keen to strengthen the sustainability of the local food economy. One cornerstone to these values is a belief in community resilience, including the wise use of local resources, and social benefit. Therefore, it was decided to:

- Use local foods
- Use a local cafe
- Work in partnership with agencies and individuals

What We Did

A workshop was organised in the school to discuss local food and prepare questions for the older people at a follow-on meal event in the café. Introductory activities carried out in class included:

- Differentiating between food types, discussing the production and retailing processes.
- A ranking exercise to explore the children's food priorities and values.
- A mapping activity focusing on the children's usual foods, identifying where they came from, how they were produced and so forth.

Following on from the school activities, invites to a community meal were sent out to older people via Age Cymru as part of a regular lunch club. Local businesses and the school community were also invited. Many of those who came along knew each other before the activity or they came from the same village/town. It is also notable that the majority of participants had always lived in Penrhyndeudraeth, or in villages and towns nearby, such as Minffordd, Croesor, Llanfrothen, Trawsfynydd, Porthmadog and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

The children's questions were circulated to the older people beforehand, along with permissions to use information collected on the day, ensuring everyone understood the nature of the meal as a research activity. To help with data collection, the older people were asked to provide written responses via a short questionnaire (encompassing some of the childrens' questions) prior to the event.

The meal consisted of local lamb, bred by the restaurant owner, and produce from the butcher next door. During the meal the children asked the older people the questions they had prepared and the resulting conversations were audio recorded or filmed. Facilitators also supported the conversation by asking further questions to prompt discussion of the attitudes and values held by both generations, and to consider how things had changed over time and why. The resulting film footage has been used as a local community resource.



What We Found

The data we collected included:

- Written records of classroom activities used to explore children's understandings of local food.
- Audio and film recording of conversations and follow-up interviews.
- Observers' notes

Findings are discussed in relation to the aims outlined:

1. Support intergenerational learning and social exchange around food in a traditional North Wales community.

The meal was a lively and positive event for the community, with the children and older people enjoying both the food and overall experience very much. Conversations were free flowing and relaxed, with everyone contributing to the conversation at the next table, which is common practice in traditional Welsh rural communities. Overall, it was evident that sharing the meal was an opportunity to share much more socially around the table.

What was notably different about the event from a normal café lunch was the involvement of the school children. Many participants remarked that it was delightful that Primary School children were included and encouraged to take an interest. Follow-up interviews with the Age Cymru group explored this further, and participants reported that *[they had] learned a lot from the kids... they were good children.*

Staff from Age Cymru also supported the sense that the event had been successful from the point of view of bring the community together and supporting a dialogue between people young and old:

[The older people have had] an opportunity to socialise and reminisce I think, and also to chat to the children from the school. I think that it is crucially important that they pass on the values they grew up with to the younger generation, and also for the younger ones to be able to learn from what older people have been doing over the years. Perhaps there are some foods which have disappeared that we used to have in days gone by, but there are also new foods that I didn't come across when I was young, and that makes for a good conversation ...like tomatoes, for example, you couldn't get them in the countryside in the old days.

The Restaurant owner and producers supplying food for the event were also asked for their reflections on the day, and again confirmed that the event had facilitated a lively interaction between the young and old, coming together around local food. *We had a good day ...Everyone seemed to enjoy the food, especially the meat, and the place was very noisy with all the discussions. It was good to see the children questioning the older people who had to reply.*

In terms of the conversations that ensued, the children had prepared questions to focus on the following themes: favourite foods, memorable meals, and foods that were disliked. In addition, reflections on the content of the meal, local foods, and wider opinions on food also

arose. Reflections on the local food system and traditional food are discussed further in response to aims 2 and 3. Other prominent themes in the discussion were as follows.

Firstly, the existence of a clear link - whether a family member, acquaintance or sense of close proximity – between the food and those who ate it. Everyone knew where the food for the meal had been produced, and by whom. A similar picture emerged for food eaten on a day-to-day basis. Food had a personal connection for many of the participants – although this was clearly more so in the past.

For example, when asked what do you eat and drink that has been produced locally, the responses included the following: *vegetables from Gardd Deudraeth [a community veg box scheme], potatoes and other vegetables from the field or the garden, a pig bred here, a meat box from Fferm Llan [a local farm], water from a well close to Trawsfynydd, produce from local shops and the market.* In reply to the question, what do the words 'local food' mean, the responses were that it was produced in the area, within 10 miles, in Gwynedd, or in Wales.

In terms of values this shows **Loyalty** and **Benevolence** as well as a **Sense of Belonging**; the importance of family and community (**Social Order and Security**) and **Respect for Tradition**.

Secondly, expanding on the discussions of why local food was important, participants noted a desire for freshness and natural healthy food. Some said that it was good to know where the food had come from in terms of safety and trust - as well as the aforementioned connection to people and the land. They also felt more comfortable knowing that nothing had been added to it. Others claimed that it was tastier because it was fresh and hadn't travelled long distances. Lastly, some participants focused on the cost (which can be cheaper when you buy direct) and the importance of supporting local shops. These points reaffirm many of the values noted above, particularly **Security**.

Finally, amongst the historical reflections of how things were 'in the old days', memories of the war, and associated food shortages and rationing, came to the fore in particular. One of the participants remembered her time as a child in the period of rationing, but emphasised that: *they had plenty to eat and a comfortable home with plenty of love, out playing all day and returning home famished after collecting wild flowers for Mother.* Consequently, there was a sense that despite the restrictions of their circumstance there was a certain wealth of food in the locale (which is discussed further below), which could sustain the local community. Equally, the importance of family, a connection with the landscape, and a feeling of care within the community, all came through as key values that the older generation held and wished to share with the children – again reinforcing **Benevolence** and **Security** values. In addition, the framing and impetus of the event demonstrates the importance of **Tradition and Conformity** values from the perspective of the organisers and supporting partners.

2. Record historic and traditional food practices from the local area, including local recipes and the types of foods eaten within the community.

The meal was very successful in terms of sharing old recipes and raising awareness of the traditional foods people used to eat in the area. Favourite foods highlighted were fresh local produce including potatoes, beef, lamb, chicken, fish and cheese, as well as meals including home-made soup, cottage pie, steak and chips, mwttch sweg, lobscouse, rice and macaroni puddings.

A clear prevailing theme was the importance of simple family foods. For example, many of the traditional meals discussed, and remembered fondly by the older people, could be prepared easily with basic cooking skills. Nevertheless, such meals also showed a clear understanding of the value of food nutrition. Meals often contained local produce, such as bacon and milk, and it was noted that many ingredients would not come 'from the shop' and were often unprocessed, such as local dairy produce and vegetables.

A linked theme was that the foods highlighted often belonging to local farming tradition and folk customs. Memorable meals included traditional celebrations such as Christmas dinner and Sunday lunch. But also meals for more regular occasions, including billberry and blackberry dumplings that their Mothers had made, 'five minute potatoes' again made by their Mothers, *trymplân* (a suet pudding in a bowl filled with apples and blackberries and steamed), *pwdin Mai llo bach* (made with a cow's first milk), primary school chocolate pudding and bacon bred at home. Notably, the lunch being eaten during the event was also placed in this local and traditional category and celebrated accordingly.

Discussions were often framed in terms of stories, through which people could relay their experiences of eating particular foods. For example, one person remembered having milk straight from the cow while it was still hot, to which their response and abiding memory was a clear 'yuk!' But equally for more positive experiences, memories came packaged with a framing narrative of childhood, school and family. Again these frames reinforce the importance of a *Sense of Belonging* and *Family Security*.

Finally, some of the older people shared very dear memories from childhood of their connection with nature and the environment. In particular, they felt that playing in the wild had been a huge influence on them, and much of this was associated with food produce such as picking blackberries or billberries to make a tart, stealing apples and drinking water straight from the well. This demonstrates that *Unity with Nature* was also an important value, as well as *Stimulation*, *Hedonism*, and *Self-Direction* in their childhood days.

The influence of the shores of the Glaslyn and Dwyryd rivers were also a strong part of the food memories of the community, for example catching flatfish and preparing cockles. Cockle Town was even the local name for Penrhyndeudraeth because of its historical connection with the seafood industry until the mid 90s. More broadly, it is notable that a sense of *cynefin* (a word commonly used to describe how grazing animals know the open mountain land) and the *milltir sgwâr* (literally one's square mile or patch) are important Welsh concepts to convey a love of the land and deeply engrained connection with it. Equally *hiraeth*, which describes the longing and nostalgia felt for the Welsh homeland, again conveys the profound attachment to the land that is fundamental to Welsh culture. This reinforces *Unity with Nature* alongside *Tradition* values.

3. Promote greater reflection and awareness of contemporary food choices, reconnecting community members to the local economy and food system.

Whilst it is not possible to evaluate the longer lasting impacts of the event from the data collected, it was evident that this aim was met in the shorter term through the differing activities conducted.

At the school children were explicitly engaged to consider different types of foods, where they came from, and how they were processed and packed; including crisps, fresh vegetables and tinned produce. A lively and detailed conversation followed with the group about their



opinion on the foods, and it was apparent that packaging was important (reflecting *Stimulation* values), but the children also had a good understanding of how all the foods were produced, how beneficial they were and where they came from.

Using a ranking system to investigate the children's views and values allowed us to then go deeper. For example, to understand how different aspects were prioritised when they described their favourite food; including freshness, taste, local, healthy, and fair trade. The results across the class and different age groups were notably similar, with the children showing a concern for where food comes from: *local is part of nature and everybody wants something from different places...* They took a pragmatic view of paying farmers a fair price for food: *[because] if they don't get a fair price they won't want to make any more vegetables for us.*

The mapping activity then gave us a better idea of how well the children understood where their food came from; whether this was from shops and farmers, or chip shops, takeaways, cafés and local restaurants. All of them were familiar with the local shops, and most had an idea of what food was produced in the surrounding countryside, usually knowing someone who had a farm or grew vegetables in their garden. Of particular note was the detailed discussion that ensued about ice cream shops and which one was the best – Glandwr Café in Beddgelert or Cadwaladers in Cricieth! All the children were very confident in discussing this in great detail, and in a short time they had produced quite good maps. Again this shows the importance of *Stimulation* and *Self-direction* values for working with children.

The discussions also demonstrate the importance of *Benevolence* and *Security* values, which were similarly noted in the wider conversation with older people at the meal. This suggests that whilst there may be divergences in the younger people's contemporary food practices, there is some homogeneity amongst the community in terms of the food values they hold, and have passed from one generation to the next.

At the event it was notable that there was minimal food waste. This was not only due to the delicious food! Remarks were also made that kitchen waste had been reduced because there was almost no packaging to throw away, apart from potato and vegetable peelings which were returned straight to the soil through the compost system to grow more food for the next meal. Here the use of fresh produce was successfully used to highlight wider aspects of food sustainability in the form of waste reduction.

Another factor covered, in terms of reflections on the local food system, was the connections between local food and a healthy local economy. Participants noted that in order to keep a successful and healthy society, money must circulate locally and this is possible through a strong local food system.

Next Steps

- Follow-up work on local food in Ysgol Garreg (including further work on food maps linking to healthy choices) and an opportunity for parents to learn from the children about the local food economy. This could include more detailed follow-up activities such as: a food related collage or a mural; a cookery workshop.
- Partners to make a funding application for a Food Hub in the community, supported through publicity from the event. Also perhaps an application for financing a Social Life History Centre.
- Use lessons from this event to support similar communities to discuss and celebrate their local food heritage. There is also an opportunity to record how traditional meals and recipes such as Shot, Briwas and Stwnsh Rwdan continue in community memories across other regions in Wales.



Cardiff Soup Stories

Food Poverty and Diverse Communities

Background & Aims

This case-study involved a series of three community food events held in Adamsdown, an inner-city area of Cardiff with a population circa 10,000, where there are high levels of multiple deprivation.⁴ The events were the result of collaboration between a range of partners including local schools, faith groups, food campaign organisations, community groups, a community market garden, and local food bank. They were coordinated and promoted by Father Dean Atkins from St German's parish church and Rosa Robinson of Work with Meaning.

They aimed to:

1. Provide an inclusive space for a diverse community to meet, using food to bring people together
2. Help people recognise the value (not cost) of food—raising awareness of about food waste, local access to food banks and justice of fair food.
3. Gain a grounded community perspective on policy issues such as food poverty.

A key motivation for the partners was that conversations about food education and food policy should be two-way. That is, they should create opportunities for policy-makers to learn about the complexities that influence people's choices and behaviours, and ensure that communities are included in conversations about the problems that affect them. All too often, important discussions about fundamental aspects of people's lives can take place in exclusive high-level meetings and conferences. Consequently, the partners wanted to create inclusive events and run the project in an area of high deprivation, where access to affordable, healthy food is limited and fast-food take-away shops are abundant. Being in the heart of the community would give the opportunity to listen and understand what motivates people, what they care about, how food makes them feel, and why that matters.

What We Did

Over the three weeks partners across the community made soup and came together at drop-in events in the forecourt of St German's Church in Adamsdown, held after school on Tuesday afternoon/evening. Despite the cold weather, events were held outside to encourage passers-by to join in and to place emphasis on the soup and the community rather than the church.

⁴ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2014)

A number of local community organisations, including three local schools, the United Reform Synagogue, Oasis Refugee Centre, and Food Cardiff supported the events. Riverside Community Market Association (RCMA), Fareshare and the Food Co-op donated raw ingredients (vegetables) from which volunteers from the church, synagogue, local school, and refugee centre made soup. Several partner organisations, like Fareshare, the Food Cooperative and Food Cardiff set up banners and displays at the events to show the range of food related services that are available to people in the community.

During the events, Rosa Robinson of Work With Meaning and staff from the Organic Centre Wales spoke to participants about food. Participants were asked to talk about the soups they had tried, what they liked about them and what they thought of the event. Subsequently wider questions were explored: about food eaten at home and the significance and meaning of food in their life. They were also asked to record their favourite soup recipes and stories accompanying them on postcards, and these were used as prompts in the discussions.

The use of values was not explicit at the events. However, the questions asked were intentionally framed to draw out personal stories and engage emotions in order to encourage reflection on values.

After the first soup event OCW staff visited one of the schools involved in the project (Moorland Primary School in Splott) and recorded discussions with two groups of children who made soup for the events (the Eco Council and a Year 5 group). Children were also asked to rank food statements about what food should be (i.e. healthy for us, good for nature etc.) in order of importance.

In the weeks following the events Rosa Robinson interviewed project partners about their involvement in the events, asking them about their experiences of being involved in the events, whether or not they saw them as valuable (and for what reasons).

Data collected included:

- Audio recording of conversations with community members and formal interviews with partners
- Written recordings
- Observers' notes
- Drawings and 'soup stories' shared by community members

*I think it's good
giving soup to
the people that
aren't so lucky
Elin Tredegarville*

What We Found

Findings are discussed in relation to the aims outlined.

1. Provide an inclusive space for a diverse community to meet, using food to bring people together

Food is an important part of Parish life, which we want to share. It strengthens community life and the sustainability of the local area.

Universalism and Benevolence Values were at the core of the organisers' desire to make events welcoming to anyone from the local area interested in food, in need of sustenance or human company, and to encourage tolerance, and understanding of others within the diverse Adamsdown community.

We worked with a range of partners, each with their own community (of faith, education, locality etc.). Affiliation to those groups, and the desire to do something as part of the broader community, resulted in people of a broad range of ages, ethnicities, and religious faiths getting involved. Partner organisations, like Oasis Refugee Centre played an important role in raising awareness of the event and encouraging refugees to join in and be part of the local community. The soup events were well attended—over 100 people participated over the three weeks.

Parents, teachers, volunteers and project partners said that creating a sense of community was a key motivation for their involvement in the event as well as an outcome. They referred to participating in community being a responsibility (or civic duty) as well as giving a sense of belonging. This desire to promote cooperative and social relations, create opportunities for collaborative learning, and a sense of belonging, are all connected with benevolence values.

The events were held outside in order to encourage people in and appeal to Stimulation values. A few passers-by, intrigued by the tables, music and smell of food joined in but the majority of people who came had been involved in the project from the start—in particular, school children and their parents. The involvement of schools was a vital part of getting families involved and fundamental to the events' success. The format of the event—large communal tables in an outside space—made it easy for people to interact and enjoy the food, music and company (Hedonism). It was also something new and exciting for the community—we wanted people to associate the event with a positive new experience.

The events were also designed to strengthen Self-Direction values by encouraging everyone who came along—especially the children—to engage in the event with curiosity, and try new tastes and talk to new people. Regardless of their familiarity with soup, or the ingredients in the soup they had made, most children were keen to test out their newly acquired culinary skills. As they gained confidence and saw their parents and classmates trying other soups, most children were keen to try new tastes too, which connects with self-direction and the stimulation values of experiential learning.

Despite cold winter temperatures, people stayed and chatted. The 'story' of the soups—where they came from and who made them—prompted conversations and reflection. When



people were asked about memories associated with food they were very comfortable to share personal stories and the emotions associated with them, very quickly. Most people wanted to share more than one story, and nearly every story involved friends, family or community and connected to benevolence values. These reflections, about the significance of social eating and sharing, seemed to help people recognise the value of the event and express support for more community food events.

Most people talked about the value of the event as a way of bringing the community together. However, for some people it was about fulfilling a need to eat, and the event made soup and fresh vegetables available for a couple of people who expressed need.

2. Help people recognise the value (not cost) of food, raising awareness of about food waste, local access to food banks and justice of fair food.

Asking people to share their thoughts and feelings about eating showed that food is an emotive subject. Nearly every person had a personal story they wanted to tell about a food memory or emotional association—and they felt comfortable talking to us about these personal stories, despite not knowing us.

Family, friends, community and culture

Recollections ranged from eating raw meat and broth with friends to five generations of a family's lentil soup. The associations attached to these memories ranged from recovery from illness, love for family and friends, celebration, and community, which connected with *Benevolence, Security, Tradition* and *Hedonism*. Prompting reflection in this way seemed to help people recognise and articulate the value of food.

Many of the discussions focussed on benevolence values. Although enjoyment of the taste of food was also important, people talked most about the value of food in the context of bonding, nourishing and comforting family. And, for many people, this was closely bound with *Hedonistic values*, the enjoyment of eating.

Several people expressed the importance of being creative with ingredients to make food stretch (*Self-Direction*) so that they could share meals even when food was scarce.

Sharing food also had strong associations with *Tradition*—food part of culture—people from other countries talked about rituals associated with food and eating—and as comfort and means to bond, nurture and comfort family and friends: *In Ethiopia, eating with friends and family is very, very important. You don't eat alone. One person will always feed another one. Eating is a very social thing.*

A woman from Sudan talked about breaking her fast at Ramadan each night with soup. Her mother taught her that solid food or cold water wasn't good on an empty stomach, it should be hot soup, and that's what she does. Respect for religious rules about food emerged in a few conversations and was clearly an important aspect of eating, culture and community for these people.

Health, provenance and environment

Many of the people we spoke to talked about their preference for making food themselves from raw ingredients. Although most people mentioned '*how cheap it can be to make your*

own' the values that emerged from these conversations tended to focus more on **Security**, **Benevolence** and **Self-Direction**.

People told us they want their food to be safe and healthy and don't trust what might go in to processed food, which relates to **Security**. Consequently, their response is to make their own decisions about what they and their families eat and how it's prepared, which connects to **Self-Direction**. This was a particularly prominent discussion in relation to preparing food for family, especially children.

It was interesting that most conversations about health, tended to focus on providing nutritious food for others. Few people mentioned their own health. One community worker commented that it was good to see healthy, simple food like soup at the event—something everyone is familiar with—rather than *'the usual junk food that's offered at festivals and fetes.'*

The importance of food provenance and trust featured in several discussions. One respondent was particularly articulate about the links between transparency and ethics and the wider social and environmental implications of highly processed food of unknown origin (**Universalism** and **Security**)

A French interviewee talked about food provenance in the context of environmental responsibility and care for the local farmer as a member of the community, connecting with **Universalism** and **Benevolence** values. *In France we buy direct from the farmer. We know him and we trust his food. It is important to support his business. We know how he farms his land and that he is not using harmful chemicals that damage the soil and wildlife."*

One of the people we interviewed—a refugee from Ethiopia—spoke about the factory farming of poultry in the U.K. in contrast to free-range chickens in Ethiopia. *At home the roam as they [the chickens] like and find food for themselves. They live like chickens. Here [in the U.K.] they look the same and they are bred just to be food, not to live like chickens.*

The event was also helpful in raising awareness of seasonal food. A local community garden market donated many of the ingredients for the soups and the seasonality of vegetables was something that was highlighted at the events. School children making soups incorporated a lesson on vegetable growing into their soup making activities. Volunteer soup-makers from the church were keen to make seasonal soups with whatever vegetables were locally available for future community food events—to show how tastes change with the seasons. The Food Cooperative brought a display of fruit and vegetables, to show the variety of goods they sell. This was also a helpful way to show the community healthy food options available in the area, and give people the opportunity to find out more about the scheme, which runs each week in another church in Splott. This was a helpful way to engage people's curiosity and counter their wariness of trying new things.

Education and sharing knowledge

The event created an opportunity for children to understand the value of food in a variety of ways—pleasure, discovery, mastery of skill, and care for others. Making soup from scratch in school made many of the children more willing to try new tastes. Although some had never eaten soup before they were willing to try the soup they had made themselves and were curious to try other soups, which connects with **Stimulation** and **Self-direction**.

The children had been learning about the food ethics and responsibility at school. They were keen to tell us about food waste, and fair trade and that it is important to look after other people and treat people and animals fairly (Universalism): *We shouldn't throw away food that can feed hungry people... We have to make sure we pay people fair money.*

When we asked 'why does it matter?' responses were mixed. Some children maintained universalism values, telling us: *We can't only think about us. We need to think about other people as well.*

Other children found their reasons more difficult to articulate and either trailed off or mixed materialistic values in with benevolence values: *...So they can buy the same things as we have and look after their families.*

This could be the result of a lack of vocabulary to articulate their ideas, a lack of understanding of connected issues, or the result of interpreting values taught in school alongside values transmitted to them via their parents. Interestingly, the children expressed self-direction and stimulations values more naturally, taking confidently about the process of making soup, what ingredients they chose, what their job was, which of the soups they liked most.

Most of the volunteers taking part in the event were members of the church congregation but not local residents. Their motivations included empathy for people struggling with money and a desire to share knowledge was apparent. Several volunteers referred to learning how to manage in times of financial austerity and how they had learnt from older generations of their family to provide comforting, nutritious food with very little money.

Similarly, they were keen to impart their knowledge about cooking and financial management to younger generations, which connects with Conformity and Tradition values but weren't tolerant of new ways of doing things (or their perception of new ways of doing things), like going to MacDonald's to buy food.

3. Gain a grounded community perspective on policy issues such as food poverty

The organisations involved in the events all described their purpose in Universalism and Benevolence Values. Each has a remit to address poverty, social deprivation, and poor health. Some remits also extend to environmental protection and, more broadly, sustainable development. Each organisation agreed that the events were valuable for the wider community and listed reasons such as community cohesion, tolerance, and learning. Other responses about their motivations for being involved were more materially focussed: *Being visible at events helps us find more money. The more people we can sign up to our service the more we can grow—we can increase our membership and get grants.*

Ultimately, these frames that appear to express Self Enhancement Values, were about ensuring financial Security and increasing the organisation's ability to self-sustain, support the community and address inequalities (Universalism and Benevolence), but this only came out when we probed a lot more. Consequently, there seems to be an incompatibility between operational needs and organisational values as a consequence of financial insecurity.



One of the other event organisers expressed concern that the way everything is measured in financial values contributes to the area's inability to be sustainable and perpetuates social and health inequalities—a lack of commercial viability means only cheap shops with high turnover can survive. Even high street banks have left the area because it isn't worth opening for the amounts deposited in the branch. This has resulted in an abundance of fast-food take-away outlets and little else and, as a consequence, it becomes normal and ordinary food to eat.

One person spoke to us about being hungry and another simply mentioned that her benefits hadn't come through. Both took the fruit and vegetables we offered. The people we talked to, whose work is related to the alleviation of food poverty, suggested that the way politicians and press talk about food and need is unhelpful. Instead they think there is a need to understand more about who is accessing food banks and why—that there is a need to understand how other parts of life contribute to social and health inequalities.

Food waste was talked about in a number of contexts: The importance of redistributing surplus food to people in need so that food that is safe for consumption isn't wasted—and, for environmental reasons (*Universalism*). School children talked about food waste in the context of equity. One girl expressed concern about the amount of food that is wasted and told us that she thinks it should be shared with people who are hungry or homeless (*Universalism*). A few people also talked about the importance of not wasting food for financial reasons—being thrifty (*Security*).

Healthy food came up a lot in our conversations. People expressed good knowledge about public health messages about the importance of eating a range of fresh fruit and vegetables and many people said they are concerned about what goes into their food. On the whole, when people talked about health it was in the context of loved ones and friends. Most people talked about cooking for others. People who lived alone, or told us they didn't know how to cook, talked noticeably less about healthy food.

Two people we spoke to (together), who work in the community, suggested that the breakdown of relationships and splintering of families is a problem in Adamsdown and across society—as families break down generations of knowledge about food, cooking and how to look after a family's health is lost—and needs to be acknowledged and addressed in food education. We spoke to several people who expressed a lack of culinary competence or confidence. One woman who volunteered as a soup-maker told us she was new to cooking but taking part had built her confidence. A few people mentioned the need for community cooking facilities where people can learn to cook, build confidence and feel part of a community, learning from each other.

We were told that money is the main worry for people living in Adamsdown. Consequently, a lot of the messages organisations give about food are focused on spending money wisely or saving money (*Security*), which may be unhelpful because they are in conflict with the, *Benevolence*, *Universalism* and *Self-Direction* values that will strengthen community cohesion and mutual support, as well as people's ability to adopt new habits, behaviours and knowledge.

Next Steps

- Our first action will be sharing what we found so that people working at policy and community level can understand why a values approach is helpful and why local narratives are important aspect of social change.
- Secondly, we want to run more community food events and talk to more people about food so we can develop a richer values narrative about food, and a better understanding of how values shape individual, social and material contexts—and how these influence behaviour.



Aberystwyth University

The Student Food Experience

Background & Aims

This event was run by OCW, in partnership with staff at Aberystwyth University (AU), as a means to engage the University community to address the following aims:

1. Bring together staff, students and the local community, and promote a sense of shared purpose around food.
2. Identify the opportunities and barriers to healthy, sustainable eating and waste management on campus and explore the student experience of this.
3. Identify ways that the university could work to support students better to develop more sustainable practices – joining up excellent research with practical action.

The event was also taking stock of progress made since an earlier event held in 2013, which celebrated the attainment of the Soil Association's Food for Life catering mark on campus. We were also motivated by an aspiration for greater sense of community on campus; the need for clearer integration of research and lifestyles; and a desire to have pride and connection to the institution and place where we worked.

What We Did

The event was advertised through University networks and formal invites from the Pro Vice-Chancellor were sent out alongside fliers and posters. The format was a two course meal with questions and discussions over each course. Course one focused on issues of food supply, whilst course two focused on waste. Before each course was served, speakers introduced the topics, showcasing existing initiatives and progress on campus, and then posing questions for the audience to consider. Facilitators worked with groups of ~8 to support and record their discussions.

Questions

- To what extent do you feel these issues (food sourcing and waste management) are important to you and why?
- Are you currently participating in any of these initiatives?
- What might motivate you to get involved in the initiatives, if you are not already?

- What more / else could we do here at the Uni' to improve sustainability in these areas?

The initiatives discussed included:

- The 'Food for Life Catering Mark (for local supply - including the use of University farm meat)
- University Community Gardens & seed swaps
- A Student Food Co-op
- Food waste recycling in student halls (which was about to start)
- Packaging waste reduction

The use of values was less explicit at this event – but the framing of questions around personal motivations and experiences was designed to prompt reflection on values. Similarly, the emphasis on bringing people together, to find common connections to food, is based upon the principles of values-based learning.

At the start of the event the Pro-vice Chancellor signed a commitment to reduce food packaging waste on campus in accordance with targets set by WRAP⁵ who were also in attendance. The meal concluded with reflections from the Head of the Institute of Biology Ecology and Rural Sciences on how AU could make greater links between research in food sustainability and the practicalities of life on campus.

Data collected included:

- Facilitators' records and observations
- Participant comments on flip charts, post-its and via email
- Video recordings of participant feedback



⁵ <http://www.wrap.org.uk/>

What We Found

Findings are discussed in relation to the aims outlined.

1. Bring together staff, students and the local community and promote a sense of shared purpose around food.

The event was well attended (~60 people) with a varied mix of participants, including students and staff from different courses along with local school children and interested partners from OCW and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens who have supported community growing on campus. Some participants had attended the previous event (in 2013), and many individuals were involved in studying or teaching on courses that directly connected with issues of food sustainability – this ranged from catering, through to Law, Geography and Environmental Sciences.

All participants expressed clear concern and engagement with the issues discussed. Motivations included care for the environment and moral imperatives relating to social justice and future generations; these connect with the value groupings of **Benevolence** and **Universalism**. Motivations did not reflect singular issues, as participants stressed the complex and multi-faceted nature of sustainability; this could include concern for local economies, Fairtrade, carbon emissions and wider ecological integrity.

Despite the high levels of engagement from participants, it was evident that the majority were not aware of the various initiatives underway on campus relating to food supply and waste management. Moreover, there was considerable concern about the current levels of sustainability on campus, suggesting that there is a lot to do. The event was, therefore, very successful in terms of raising awareness – and a real sense of optimism emerged from considering the potential for greater connections between initiatives.

Nonetheless some participants, who had tried to start their own schemes, described 'hitting a brick wall'; whilst others who had been involved over longer periods of time described actions as cyclical leading to no real sense of progress. Staff involved in the organisation of the event were sensitive to this latter concern, and expressed a desire for the event to work as an annual process of review. In this manner, commitments made could be monitored and progress assessed more clearly. In addition, participants urged that food sustainability *needs to be a core part of AU life - not a bolt on*.

The format of the event was also successful in terms of offering all participants an opportunity to express themselves, and facilitators noted a relaxed atmosphere where people quickly engaged in deeper emotional and personal reflections. This was often surprisingly so given that many were strangers at the start of the event. Moreover, it was evident that people listened to and mixed well with others at the event – developing connections to take forward.



The process of eating a meal is particularly helpful at eliciting a comfortable and familial context where participants find it easy to open up and share, in a way that they may not do without the structure and affective prompts of the meal. Equally, learning about food issues whilst tangibly engaged was particularly effective. With regards waste, for example, participants were all visibly uncomfortable about leaving food after wastage figures had been highlighted; this bodily experience and subsequent memory are important formative moments supporting people to engage in more sustainable behaviours in future.

In addition to realising the shared values outlined above, further commonalities were evident across discussions. Firstly, a sense of virtue was expressed - as acting on food sustainability made participants feel good. This was an important behavioural driver, in terms of peoples' sense of themselves and how their peers viewed them. People related this to their personal well-being, connecting emotional and physical health, and a need for empowerment, which connects to values of *Self-Respect*, *Meaning in Life* and *Inner Harmony*. However, a lot of discussions emphasised a need to shame those who weren't acting, connecting with values of *Social Recognition*. Consequently, participants noted that the virtuous nature of action could be exclusive.

A very 'placed' sense of responsibility also emerged. On one level this connected with the students' perception of Aberystwyth as a beautiful rural location, with an excellent resource for agricultural and environmental studies; having a strong affinity for sustainability was therefore seen to be a natural linkage which AU should make the most of. More generally, sense of place was emphasised by speakers' framing of problems (such as waste management) as an issue *here in Aberystwyth*, and not far away concerns. Similarly discussions of supply made the local connections a central concern. Localising global issues also emphasises the importance of actions *here and now*, and this temporal framing was seen from speakers and participants alike who stressed that sustainability does not pertain to a distant future problem. This resonates with the values of *Benevolence* and *Universalism* noted above.

It was also apparent that participants placed greater emphasis on local rather than organic produce – potentially because easier connections could be made, including an emotional linkage to people *putting a person behind the food* and place *where I live*. Benefits to the local economy also came to the fore here, alongside individual concerns for *Security*: *it's good to know where it has come from' 'so much is anonymous...*

Despite these collective motivations and ambitions, there was a conflicting sense of who would take the lead. In terms of creating a shared sense of purpose this led to some tensions around who should be responsible for what, with the group automatically differentiated itself along particular axes (student / staff / management). For example, there was a big emphasis on the power of the student voice, and the role of the student community, across the event from speakers and event organisers. Speakers aimed to challenge stereotypes of lazy uncaring students



eating cheap and unhealthy food, and stressed that the university management would listen to the student community. Yet, student participants would then look to management and staff to initiate change, and saw management priorities as more financial than attending to student demands. We reflect further on this below, in relation to aim 3.

These points also connect with a broader tension around individual versus collective responsibility. There was a strong sense that *making it personal* was the most appropriate and effective action. However, this jarred somewhat with the wider aspiration of the event organisers to create a sense of community around food. Whilst many of the participants' reflections demonstrate a strong sympathy and connection with this desire for community, their most immediate and engrained response was for individual change, followed by calls for management to take a lead; there was minimal sense of a co-operative endeavour.

2. Identify the opportunities and barriers to healthy, sustainable eating and waste management on campus & explore the student experience of this.

One of the most evident barriers was the simple lack of awareness of initiatives. Hence, participants requested more signage and communications via posters, emails, social media or networking through established groups. The need for food sustainability to become a central concern for the University community was also seen as a way to get beyond 'bitty' responses that people could overlook.

The need for education more broadly was the second major theme in participants' responses. They outlined a lack of understanding around issues on food waste, with many being very shocked at the figures outlined on levels of waste and where this was occurring. Notably, catering staff stressed this as much as students, suggesting that greater popular insight into the systems in which we work is needed. Equally the food system at large was highlighted as a source of confusion and misapprehension. Here, people questioned how there could be such a big price difference in products – such as Fairtrade bananas which were 79p compared with 49p for non-Fairtrade. Finally, understanding the ecology of food production and nutrient cycles was noted as area for further educational focus. This linked with discussions around the seasonality of food and concerns that we were 'losing touch'.

A need for 're-skilling' was highlighted across a range of practical food tasks – from cooking, to preserving, growing and foraging. With regards to the different initiatives discussed, participants requested further information on how to compost including fact sheets and demonstrations via the community gardens. These types of learning were inherently framed as cross-disciplinary.

Here, experiential, practical and creative approaches to learning were emphasised. *Doing something* was not only seen as an easier way to learn, it also created deeper lasting connections *if we grow we know where food comes from, we appreciate it more and we learn...*, *if you cook you care*, this is also evidenced above in the discussion of waste. In addition, re-skilling was seen as a way to empowerment

people, with participants noting that cooking well improves well-being and independence.

As part of a more experiential approach, sensory engagement with food was stressed as a way of communicating the value of fresh and sustainably grown produce *nothing tastes like a home-grown tomato*. Participants also felt that learning about flavours would help with cooking and therefore reduce wastage. This is because having a better sense of what ingredients go well together would give them more confidence and the capability to use what they have in the cupboard / fridge. Combined with concerns about the loss of seasonal sensitivity in their shopping, participants expressed a desire to be more in-tune with their food. Framing this in terms of health, they considered processed and fast-food in the following terms: *if bacteria won't eat it neither should you*.

A caveat to the need for further education was a call to appreciate the context of behaviours. In particular, educational efforts would need to be steered to work for tired stressed students who are busy in the week. They, therefore, need simple recipes, potentially with phone apps to suggest recipes for particular foods that they have 'left-over'. Equally, greater emphasis on preparing meals at the weekend, freezing more, and being more strategic in shopping habits were all seen as effective strategies to push.

Wider cultural framings were noted as a barrier which needed to be addressed. In particular, the myth of abundance, perpetuated by the availability of cheap food and our ability to waste it; this was coupled with excessive 'needs' and the ease of supermarkets and fast food to satisfy these, whilst simultaneously diminishing our understanding and creating complacency. The cultural stigma against 'waste' was also noted as an issue, i.e. a distaste for things that were past their 'best-before date', or were being discarded for aesthetic and other reasons.

Economic framings came through in the form of individual budgetary concerns and seen as the main priority of AU *it is a business*, but economics did not dominate the conversations. Attending to the economics of food was put across as a matter of 'rational choice' and an inevitable backdrop that had to be dealt with. But the majority of conversations were much more expansive and connected with deeper motivations. In addition, irrationalities were noted such as the inconsistency between economic concerns with the expense food and then throwing it away.

Final barriers were noted in the form of some confusion and conflict over the different definitions and permutations of what sustainability can mean. This was particularly so given the multiple potentially conflicting agendas including local, fair, low carbon, which did not always offer 'win-win' options. Another tension was observed over the definition of local food, which was implicitly framed as good but then some staff noted that their students perceived Morrison's to be local – simply because it was in town. Lastly, participants noted that the plethora of different agendas and labels meant that it was hard to know who to trust, or what was valid,

and there was a degree of cynicism evident in discussion of green / sustainable branding and how this could steer ethical choice.

3. Identify ways that the university could work to support students better to develop more sustainable practices - joining-up excellent research with practical action.

There was a lot of focus on individual behaviours from speaker's talks and participant discussions. This was both for food sourcing and waste related behaviours. However, the institutional role was clearly pushed in the overall framing of event and a number of points emerged from discussions.

The regulating role of AU was particularly evident in conversations around waste; for instance, through suggestions for control of packaging in franchises on campus and portion sizing in canteens. On this later point, there were extensive debates over the most appropriate strategy and whether this should rely on individual or institutionally-led action. Some felt that a 'naming and shaming' approach was needed; others thought a price incentive would help (i.e. paying for wastage). Others suggested the canteens could offer smaller portions with options of seconds or 'doggy bags' so that left-overs could be eaten later. As noted above, it is not simply the case that AU needs to educate and steer student behaviour more effectively, but also that staff who work within catering need greater training and awareness of the issues.

The power of emotional appeal was noted, and the potentially manipulative nature of such approaches considered – particularly with regards to peer pressure and 'shaming'. This contrasts starkly with the notion of empowerment discussed above in relation to educational approaches. Interestingly, some students also contrasted the supporting contexts of home with their current situations at AU, with some suggesting that their home environment was more supportive of sustainability than University. Whilst this is disappointing, it also reminds us that social contexts and peer groups can be supportive and encourage action in positive ways, reinforcing good habits rather than deriding negative ones.

As well as regulating, the second key framing of AU's role was one of leadership; for instance in discussions on the provision of food waste bins in student residences. This was also connected with wider community responsibility, for example through taking a lead on the provision of composting and waste management technology which could improve the sustainability of the local food economy. In particular, it was noted that collected food waste from Aberystwyth town all goes to Oxford to be processed, and it was felt that AU could run a waste digester on campus to address this clearly unsustainable scenario. A helpful by-product of taking such a lead would be the opportunity to offer educational demonstrations and foster an ethos of learning-together, which clearly contrasts with the more negative permutations of peer pressure considered.



The need for joined-up thinking and intelligent design were also emphasised in relation to this leadership role, through for instance the opportunity to see waste as a resource rather than a problem. This was linked with a need for greater understanding of nutrient cycles and food systems. Equally, the potential to address issues of well-being, welfare and justice through interconnected approaches was discussed in relation to connections between improved cookery skills, eating more healthily, saving money and being able to afford to buy more sustainable produce.

Students were also in favour of actions that they perceived as investing in AU for a collective gain. This contrasts with a dominant narrative in the current higher education context, of the student as an individual consumer and the resulting focus on 'student satisfaction'. However, there was tension here as participants also emphasised a need for choice and freedoms associated with being a consumer. This led to questions over waste management in particular, where less choice and a stronger regulatory role from AU would combat waste. Hence conflicting frames of consumer v's citizen were evident. However, a point that unified both of these positions was that poor 'ranking' on sustainability was a real turn-off for students, both as potential consumers 'buying into' AU and in terms of being motivated by a wider sense of collective engagement and care.

Next Steps

- The first action to be undertaken following the event is the distribution of feedback to the participants and to AU management to alert them to the concerns raised and ensure that the participatory nature of the event is taken seriously and feedback not forgotten. It is also hoped that further commitments can then be made, such as the packaging reduction targets signed on the day.
- Secondly, we have created an email list to ensure that participants can receive further communications on the initiatives discussed and aim to use this to promote activities that the participants are themselves developing and championing. We also aim to extend these communications beyond those who attended. Several people expressed an interest in the event but could not attend, so we will include them and ensure that the steps outlined under Aim 2 can be taken forward so that more people on campus know what is being done, and what they can do, to improve food sustainability.
- Thirdly, we would like to make this event a regular event in the AU calendar to properly embed action and regular review.

Newtown

Developing a Shared Community Narrative

Background & Aims

This event was run by staff from OCW and PIRC working with partners in Newtown including Cwm Harry, Mid Wales Food and Land Trust, Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC) and the Town Council.

It aimed to:

1. Create a shared understanding amongst the partners of what values motivated their engagement in local food projects.
2. Discuss how a values approach supports behaviour change.
3. Begin to co-create a narrative which reflects partners' values and effectively communicates the combined work of local food projects in Newtown.

The event built on previous food education work undertaken by the partners which is summarised in the box below; some of this earlier work had involved OCW. Whilst partners felt there were a number of exciting new opportunities emerging in Newtown, with for example interest in growing fruit and vegetables on public land in the town, and the development of a market hall promoting local producers and suppliers, there were also challenges. Partners identified issues of declining public funds and the difficulties of supporting ongoing activity in the sector through voluntary action. Equally, they noted the context of Newtown as a low income area with a high density of supermarkets as a further challenge to gaining wider public support for their projects – and the associated food system model. These were important drivers motivating their aims for the event.

Newtown Partner Organisations	
Mid Wales Food and Land Trust	Renovating the market hall in Newtown and seeking to support social enterprises producing and supplying local food.
Newtown Town Council	Implementing the Incredible Edible model and seeking to scale-up by gaining access to open space currently managed by Powys County Council for food growing across the town. Aspiration to provide linked public education through this on growing, nutrition and cooking addressing agendas of well-being and poverty.
Cultivate (Cwm Harry's growing project)	Run training, support volunteers and run community market gardens, food poverty and well-being agenda.
Neath Port Talbot College	Seek to promote local and healthy eating; boosting the local economy and employment opportunities, providing training in catering, agriculture and horticulture.

What We Did

The event was run as a two-part workshop and 'showcase lunch' at the college. An initial discussion session allowed the core partners to explore the potential of a values-led approach and to consider the creation of a values-based narrative for Newtown (following the principles outlined in the Values Framework). A wider group of ~35 from the local council and aligned third sector organisations were then invited to lunch to share these ideas, with a guest speaker from Incredible Edible Todmorden⁶. The second session was then opened out the wider group taking inspiration from the talk to consider a food-narrative for Newtown.

The workshops and discussion sessions were facilitated and led by staff from Cwm Harry and PIRC. Visual minutes were taken through the day, based on the talks given and the output from the discussion sessions and workshops; these were designed to support and inspire participants and were later used as an output from the event. The 'showcase lunch' included ingredients sourced from local farms or grown through Cwm Harry's Cultivate project and was cooked by catering students at the college. Participants were invited by the partners and consisted mainly of individuals and organisations already known to the event organisers and their personal and professional networks.

⁶ <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

What We Found

Findings are discussed in relation to the aims outlined.

1. Create a shared understanding amongst the partners of what values motivated their engagement in local food projects.

The morning session provided a good opportunity for deeper levels of engagement, prompting people to express their feelings and emotional responses to stimuli in a supportive and encouraging environment. Participants were forthcoming and went into some depth in their responses and discussions.

Their motivations for working in the different food projects were closely aligned across the group and included the following themes: a desire to connect with others; the sharing of knowledge and skills; health; to ensure traceability; to bring about change; to support the local economy; and bring about a sense of pride in the local community.

Connection with others, or working with like-minded people came out particularly strongly, and shows **Benevolence**. One participant saw their work as a *connection to people through food and food through people*. Supporting the local economy was also discussed using this frame, with a focus on working towards a thriving community, rather than a focus on economic success for its own sake. **Universalism** and **Benevolence** also came out in some mentions of environmental concerns, and through the framing of food production as a role with meaning (valuing **Meaning in life**).

Self-direction was also a very strong frame that people used. It came up in terms of wanting to impart skills and knowledge: *We want people to see and experience both how easy and how difficult it is to grow and produce food...to encourage questioning of the food system*. **Self-direction** also relates to concerns around 'traceability', and wanting more transparency in the food system to allow people to make educated decisions: *to show all learners where meat comes from... because labelling of food is complicated and often dishonest*. This latter issue also came from the perspective of **Social justice** with concerns that *companies like Tesco refuse to pay farmers the right price*.

Wanting to change behaviours or attitudes as a motivation for one's work shows a valuing of **Achievement**, as does wanting to 'promote Wales' through demonstrating success and raising profile. To a certain extent, this can also be interpreted in terms of **Conformity** and perhaps **Tradition** and **Benevolence**, given Wales' historic identity as an agricultural nation. This can also be seen, perhaps, in a personal story relating to honouring people's roots *I'm a farmer's son and I want to pass on my knowledge*.

Why is food important to us?

Key issues raised included: sustainability; food skills; an enjoyment of food; health and basic needs; food security, control over food production systems. Notably, participants' own motivations in their work contrasted somewhat with the motivations they perceived others had. For example: *the simplicity of wholesome food has been overlooked; people have been brainwashed; people don't understand that core process of keeping prices low; we want people to understand it's as easy to cook as it is to buy a convenience meal; food has been*

removed from its key role in basic survival and been turned into a commodity based on entertainment.

Sustainability was linked to the environmental impact of current agricultural systems (seen as extractive or draining), which was contrasted with *the role of good food production in creating a good healthy environment*. A responsibility to put longer-term issues such as climate change at the forefront of thinking about food was also noted. This connects with **Universalism**. Sustainability was also connected to the local food economy, with discussion of increasing access to food, and bringing about social value through meaningful jobs. This connects with **Benevolence**, which also came through in relation to discussions of how big business drove food prices down, disempowering small producers and disregarding issues of waste and environmental change: *The likes of Tesco have determined the face of agriculture across the UK ... this is not the true cost of food!*

The threat of losing food skills was prevalent, and people discussed concerns over their vulnerability in the current food system: *community is weakened, and then Tesco and Monsanto move in*. Discussions such as this were framed in terms of **Security**, as were those related to health and food providing basic survival needs. In these conversations, however, there was also an element of **Tradition**; that there had been a shift in attitudes in society that was lamentable.

Stimulation and **hedonistic** values also came out in terms of the physical or sensual appreciation of food and variety. Food was also seen as a consumer good; that people now thought of food in terms of entertainment: *people don't spend money on food for the home, they spend money on food when they go out*. However **Universalism** and **Benevolence** were also evident in people's recollections of food: *my best memories are of my mum and dad cooking. It's everybody time! Everyone can sit around the table*.

2. Discuss how a values approach supports behaviour change.

The activities of the morning session provided the theoretical basis for understanding values and how they can be linked to narratives for change which then empower and reinforce particular behaviours. Engaging with frames and values through critical evaluation of brands and campaigns allowed people to develop the tools required for the development of a communal narrative. Equally, the discussions outlined above ensured that they were more attuned to what their own values were and what they wanted to communicate.

Pam's presentation in the afternoon then provided a very tangible example of the importance of a storyteller, reinforcing what had been covered in the morning session. In terms of the values- framing of her presentation on Incredible Edibles, **Self-direction** came to the fore very clearly - encouraging people to take responsibility and power into their own hands, evoking values of **Freedom**, and **Choosing one's own goals**. There were also strong themes of pride in place, bringing profile to the town, leadership and success, which connect with **Achievement**.

Whilst the presentation was strongly based around the narrative of her own personal story, it was engaging and inspiring to the group. She spoke in a very inclusive manner using 'we' to bring people in the room into her narrative - *we know everything we need to know... we're all part of a community*. This emphasis on **Universalism** was also reinforced by using food as a method of inclusion and as an equaliser - *if you eat, you're in*.

These values offer clear resonance with those articulated by the partners in the morning, reinforcing their own sense of motivation, but also enabling them to more clearly draw out what works in terms of communication. The partners evidently had a gut instinct about what they wanted to portray, but the sequence of activities through the day offered a useful format for considered reflection, and a more informed response to the afternoon's activities.

One facilitator said *this event, I think, woke them up to the power of messages and stories and certainly was their motivation in the afternoon session ... plus, Pam's explanation of how raised-beds communicated a message set them up to find their own way into communicating a message.* Another facilitator outlined: *Making values explicit and training community groups in the power of values and messages equips them to do their work better and is empowering ... the values approach in a group helps people find common ground ... find inspiration in a bigger narrative, and motivates them to work together.*

Encouragingly, the importance of narrative and an understanding of values was also reflected in participant's comments and in their suggested future plans and projects: *If we change food values, we will reduce food waste, we need a compelling narrative that connects the small and simple actions.* One participant also suggested engaging previous market stall vendors to create a narrative about the history of Newtown's food culture. Overall, the event provided a positive step in thinking about values and frames and as one facilitator put it *this [event] made the point experientially and I think it was more powerful for that.*

3. Begin to co-create a narrative which reflects partners' values and effectively communicates the combined work of local food projects in Newtown.

In many ways this was the most challenging aim, and draws on both the morning and afternoon's discussions – connecting motivations and values from the morning to the suggestions and inspiration taken from the Todmorden exemplar. Whilst the day's discussions were very productive it would not be accurate to suggest that a definitive narrative was achieved. Nonetheless, many of the partners and participants did come away from the day with a much stronger sense of why narratives are important. Using the visual minutes as a record of the day, the partners and wider town community are now in a better position to advance a vision for Newtown as 'a food town'.

In terms of setting out a collective and inclusive narrative, it was apparent that the dynamic of the afternoon involved a stronger community framing of food issues, with lots of reference made to *we the town's people* or *we the community*. This was potentially in response to the presence of a broader group but also likely to have been influenced by the community framing of the Todmorden story. It was also clear that by the end of the event participants felt ownership of the narrative they had created – with plans immediately put in place to display the visual minutes publically in Newtown, either in the new Market Hall, or in an empty shop window. It seemed important to everyone that it was in an open, accessible and well-frequented area to inspire the local community and share their experience with others.

Developing a 'brand' for Newtown as a food town, and *creating a strong identity for Newtown and a reason to be proud of the town* framed the issue in terms of **Achievement** values and seeking success. One participant said *we want to be a role model for others*, and there was discussion about Newtown being 'the gateway to Wales'. A lot of this was about gaining confidence and being more vocal about the projects underway: *Newtown already has lots going on - it just needs to communicate this.* The need to acknowledge the history

of Newtown, with reference to Robert Owen and the co-operative movement, was a point raised in the morning that carried through here.

Perhaps more strategically, participants also noted a need to satisfy **Hedonistic** or **Stimulation** values in people, in order to get them to engage: *Seedy Saturday [a seed swap] is a popular event. People are nosy and will investigate if the location is central and interesting.* Similarly, importance was placed on design and aesthetic qualities of public growing spaces - *they have to be attractive all year round.*

Discussions that centred around who had the power to do what were revealing from a values perspective. **Self-direction** was evident in comments about *just getting out and doing it*, and the need for a 'can-do' attitude. But **Conformity** values were also evident with many defaulting to the support of the Town Council in order to get projects off the ground.

Benevolence was also evident in discussions around community, linking up initiatives and a need to see people working together. One participant summed this up by stating *It's not just food, its community.* Aligned with this, **Social justice** and **Equality** framings were evident in discussions around the development of public growing spaces and use of public space in general. The fact that food was a simple, inclusive message also resonated - *we need to challenge the exclusivity of growing and quality food*, demonstrating a need for a narrative centred on **Universalism** values. Similarly, discussions from the morning of wanting diversity in the economy and 'opportunity for all' again resonate with these values.

Overall, although many different values came up in people's conversations, in general there was greatest use of Benevolence and Universalism and minimal connections to Power.

Next Steps

- The visual minutes have now been put on display in a community space in Newtown. The partners are using these, and the narrative they have begun to develop, as a basis for their future collaborative work.
- In particular, they want to use this to support the launch of the Newtown Market Hall initiative at the end of the summer during the Newtown Food Festival.

