

Bath and North East Somerset Food Strategy (2026-2031)

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1. Foreword

Food is part of who we are in Bath & North East Somerset. It shapes our landscape, our local economy and the way our communities come together. From the farms and orchards of the Chew Valley and Somer Valley to the independent cafés, bakeries and producers that give Bath its character, food runs through daily life. We're fortunate to have a strong community of growers and food businesses, dedicated volunteers and food charities, and a proud history of doing things differently - including being home to the UK's first farmers' market.

Over the past decade, residents, growers, volunteers, community groups and local businesses have shown what can happen when people pull together. New community led organisations like market gardens have taken root, more people are getting access to places to grow food through allotments and shared growing spaces, and the way our area supported one another during the pandemic showed just how powerful food can be in connecting people. This strategy builds on that experience and sets a vision for creating a local food system that is healthier, fairer, greener and which supports a thriving local food economy.

“I’m proud that this strategy puts climate, nature and sustainability at its centre. A greener food system is one of the most practical ways we can cut emissions, restore biodiversity and build resilience to future climate challenges. Supporting regenerative growing, reducing waste and strengthening local supply chains will help protect the landscapes we depend on and ensure food plays its part in tackling the climate and ecological emergencies.”

Councillor Warren

“I’m equally proud that this strategy tackles food insecurity head-on and aims to put healthy, affordable food within reach of all our residents. A fairer food system means no one is forced to choose between heating and eating. By strengthening community provision, supporting families and ensuring those facing the greatest pressures get the help they need, we help to give every resident the dignity, security and opportunity they deserve.”

Councillor Born

What unites us is a simple belief: food is not a side issue. It sits at the heart of the public's health, our environment, and our local economy. Delivering this strategy will depend on continued collaboration across the Council, the voluntary sector, the NHS, schools, growers, retailers and residents. No single organisation can reshape a food system alone, but together, we can.

We want to thank everyone who shared their insight, experience and creativity throughout this process. Their contributions have shaped a strategy that is ambitious, practical and rooted in the realities of Bath & North East Somerset.

We are proud to present this Food Strategy for 2026–2031. It is a commitment to fairness, health, environmental responsibility and a thriving local food economy, and above all, to improving the lives of our residents now and for the future.

2. Executive Summary

Bath & North East Somerset has spent the past decade laying the foundations for a stronger local food system. The Food Strategy for 2026–2031 brings this progress together: it celebrates the people, projects and local food assets we already have, and sets a clear shared vision for the next five years. It also sets out the key needs and gaps that must be addressed to make the local food system healthier, fairer and greener, whilst supporting the conditions for local food growers and businesses to thrive.

The strategy has been developed through extensive collaboration. Engagement with residents, community groups, the voluntary sector, food businesses, farmers, and public services has provided a detailed and nuanced picture of local strengths and the challenges that still need to be addressed. This has been combined with national policy, local data and examples of best practice from other areas. In order to deliver on this aim, the strategy has four key objectives:

To create...

- **A healthier food system**, where nutritious, healthy and culturally appropriate food is easy to access
- **A fairer food system**, where every resident can access good quality, affordable food
- **A greener food system**, where food production protects nature, with reduced waste and local supply chains that support climate and ecological goals
- **A thriving local food system**, where local food businesses and growers can thrive and contribute to the local economy

To achieve these objectives the strategy sets out priorities that B&NES Council, our partners and communities wish to deliver. For some priorities, the Council is in a position to commit to taking action immediately (chapter 6). For others, as they require the Council and partners to identify and mobilise capacity and resources together, they are expressed as opportunities (chapter 5). For each objective and set of priorities, the strategy articulates outcomes which align with the UK Food Strategy priority outcomes. The emerging [West of England Combined Authority \(WECA\) Outcome Framework](#) will serve as the key monitoring framework for our collective action. Delivery of this strategy will depend on strong partnership working. The framework set out in the following chapters highlights a range of priority areas across health, planning, economic development, community resilience, climate and nature. It also identifies opportunities to strengthen local supply chains, improve access to good food, support community provision, and embed food more firmly within strategic decision-making.

No single organisation can transform a food system alone. This strategy sets a shared direction for joint action, enabling Bath & North East Somerset to build a food system that benefits people, place and the environment.

3. Understanding the local food system

3.1 What is a local food system

A local food system is the connected network of people, places and activities that gets food from the land to our plates. It includes the whole cycle of food: how it is grown or raised, processed and stored, transported and sold, prepared and eaten, and how surplus and waste are managed. The local food economy sits within this system and describes the economic activity it generates, such as trading, jobs and how spending is kept within the area. A local food system is wider: it also includes the social, health and environmental outcomes of how food is produced and accessed.

A diagram showing the components of a local food system: production, distribution, processing, marketing, purchasing, consumption, and recovery. A diagram showing the components of a local food system: production, distribution, processing, marketing, purchasing, consumption, and recovery.



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3.2 A ten-year journey towards a stronger local food system

Over the past decade, Bath & North East Somerset's food system has evolved through a series of distinct phases, each shaped by changing local capacity, national

1 <https://mmfc.coop/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Local-Food-System-Chart-for-Food-Co-ops.jpg>

pressures and community leadership. Together, these phases have created a strong foundation for the next stage of coordinated action.

2014–2017: Establishing food as a priority

Food became a clear focus for the Council, supported by a dedicated council officer and the area's first food strategy. Early efforts centred around increasing local food production, improving access to good food and supporting our local food culture. Strong progress was made in using local suppliers for school meals, supporting allotments and community growing, and achieving one of the first Sustainable Food Places Awards.

2017–2020: Community leadership grows

Whilst community and voluntary organisations have always played a crucial role in relation to food, community and grassroots projects have played a key role in leading and sustaining momentum over the last ten years. [Transition Bath](#), [Bath Farmers' Market](#), [FoodCycle](#), local growers and farms, food pantries and kitchens, as well as many local volunteers, have sustained growing, education, and food access initiatives, providing important local leadership.

2020–2022: Responding to the pandemic

The pandemic created an urgent need for rapid coordinated action to ensure our residents had continued access to food. The council's Health Improvement Officer (HIO) for food insecurity (recruited in early 2020 in response to a council motion to address food insecurity) became pivotal, alongside the establishment of the [Community Wellbeing Hub](#) and the strengthening of the [Fair Food Alliance](#) which enabled partners across statutory and voluntary sectors to work together at scale. This period highlights both the fragility of the food system and the value of local partnership working.

2022–2024: Rebuilding momentum and looking ahead

Community-led initiatives continued to expand, including the successful Weston Spring Farm crowdfunding campaign. The 2024 Economic Strategy formally recognised the importance of food within place-making, health and economic resilience, committing to the development of a local food strategy.

Learning from the journey

Three clear lessons emerge from this journey:

- **Sustained coordination is essential** to keep food priorities visible and connected across sectors
- **Community organisations are indispensable**, and their leadership and innovation must be recognised and supported
- **Resilience requires both crisis response and long-term systems change**, ensuring we can respond to future challenges

These lessons inform the Food Strategy for 2026–2031, which seeks to build on the strengths developed over the past decade while addressing the structural gaps that remain.

3.3 Celebrating our strengths

3.3.1 Those who already make our food system healthier

Across Bath and North East Somerset, community groups are doing the everyday, practical work that helps people eat well. They run community fridges, pantries, food clubs, food banks, farmers' markets, community kitchens (such as [Bath Community Kitchen](#)), and provide shared meals, all rooted in local relationships and a commitment to good, healthy food. Organisations like [Age UK Bath & North East Somerset](#) also offer a variety of different services for older people including support with shopping and cooking.

Since the pandemic, the area has seen a real shift in how surplus food is shared. Projects like [CropDrop](#), which passes on spare allotment produce to community organisations such as [Keynsham community fridge](#), sit alongside national schemes like [FareShare](#). During Covid, local commercial kitchens even turned surplus ingredients into healthy ready meals — a great example of what's possible when people get creative. In addition, organisations such as [Grow For Life](#) recognise the benefit that green space and gardening can have on our mental health, offering social and therapeutic gardening sessions to support people living with low confidence, anxiety, depression or isolation.

Alongside this, B&NES Council commissions and delivers a range of services which support access to healthy food. Working with schools and wider partners, these include ensuring that eligible children have access to free school meals, lunch clubs, and the [Holiday Activity and Food Programme](#), which supports children and families in receipt of benefits related free school meals outside of term time. Beyond these, the Council's planning policies also help protect opportunities for access to healthy food, for example, by supporting space for food growing in new developments and safeguarding land used for allotments and community growing.

3.3.2 Those who already make our food system fairer

Fairness in the local food system is driven by people and organisations who make sure support reaches those who need it most. [St John's Foundation Trust](#) funds a Public Health Officer in the Council who leads the [B&NES Food Equity Action Plan](#) and coordinates the [Affordable Food Network](#) and [Income Maximisation Group](#). This work helps connect community food support with council policy, local data, and wider funding opportunities. [The Fair Food Alliance](#) also works with the [University of Bath](#) to understand the lived experience of food insecurity, making sure services are shaped by the people who use them. "3SG, as the B&NES voluntary sector infrastructure organisation, provides essential support to community food partners, including training, networking and help accessing funding."

Alongside this strategic work, a wide range of community food organisations offers practical, dignified support to residents experiencing food insecurity. Groups such as [Oasis \(Roundhill Pantry\)](#), [The HIVE pantry](#), [Mercy in Action](#) and [FoodCycle Bath](#) provide low-cost food, shared meals and welcoming spaces that help keep good food accessible to all.

Community gardens and shared growing spaces such as [Somerdale Shed and Community Garden](#) and [Alice Park Community Garden](#) deliver inclusive, public-facing growing opportunities that prioritise social outcomes as much as food production. These spaces are managed as shared, collective projects where people work together to grow in a shared community space. They are often flexible about participation, and open to one-off volunteers.

3.2.3 Those who already make our food system greener

B&NES has a strong network of growers, gardeners and community organisations who are helping the district respond to climate and nature challenges through food. Groups such as [Bath & Bristol Organic Growers](#), [Bath Organic Group](#), [Bath Allotments Association](#), [Bath Area Growers](#) and [Transition Bath](#) offer practical training, advice and coordination to support climate friendly and ecologically rich projects and often bring in external funding like [RHS Connected Communities](#). Their work helps people grow food in ways that look after soil, support wildlife, and strengthen local ecosystems.

Market gardens, including Gerald Rich's Market Garden in Batheaston and [Middle Ground Growers](#) in Bath, show what climate friendly food production looks like in practice. They supply local markets, restore soil, create habitats and train new growers, with demand for those skills continuing to rise.

Community growing already plays a part in meeting the Council's climate goals. Allotments, community growing projects (such as the [Pear Tree Community Farm Project](#) or [Grow Timsbury](#)) and urban growing projects provide green spaces, support pollinators, cool built-up areas and shorten supply chains. The strength of interest in food growing is also reflected in the emergence of new commercial allotment providers in the district, such as [Roots](#), offering additional space for people who want to grow their own food.

The Council has taken practical steps within its own remit. Since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019, it has expanded food waste recycling (including to flats) and collected more than 7,000 tonnes of food waste in 2021. The updated Climate and Nature Strategy, being developed alongside this food strategy, strengthens the link between food, climate action and nature recovery.

3.3.4 Those who already make our food system thrive

Our thriving local food economy is built on the diversity of farmers, growers, producers, retailers and hospitality businesses who support jobs and businesses in the area. B&NES is home to a mix of arable and livestock farms that supply cereals, fodder and pasture for regional dairy and beef systems. Farmers markets in [Bath](#), [Midsomer Norton](#), the [Chew Valley](#) and [Timsbury](#) give local producers, such as [Bath](#)

[City](#) or [Somerset Valley Farm](#), regular places to sell their food, while other local businesses such as [Larkhall Butchers](#) help to further support the local food economy. In Bath, the [Bath Business Improvement District \(Bath BID\)](#) supports cafes, restaurants and independent food retailers by promoting markets and events that bring people into the city, and by coordinating practical services like waste and street management.

Through its planning policies, the Council protects agricultural land and supports the development of local food infrastructure, both of which help to underpin a resilient local food economy. Its management of council owned allotments provides affordable routes into growing for residents, supporting skills, confidence and early pathways into horticulture.

This foundation of local skills and production also benefits major employers like [Yeo Valley](#), just outside the district, which supports around 1,800 jobs across farms, manufacturing and distribution in the South West.

The [Grown in Bath and North East Somerset map](#) helps residents, visitors and businesses discover local producers, strengthening the visibility and identity of the local food economy.



3.3.5 Case Studies

Case Study – [Crop Drop](#)

Launched in 2020, [CropDrop](#), is a volunteer-led project, which coordinates the redistribution of fruit and vegetables from allotments and growers in Bath and North East Somerset to food projects. By 2024 the number of connected allotments sites had increased to 7 and the food projects increased to 8, with 10 connections - see **2024 Drops Infographic** (credit Joseph Lavington). Now in their 6th year of operation, [CropDrop](#) has begun matching individual allotment sites with affordable food projects to build the relationships between the two organisations, as well as setting up the collection/delivery arrangements from the outset, either with the food project collecting the produce from the allotment site or ‘allotmenters’ delivering produce to the food project.

With the encouragement and support of the [Bath Allotment Association](#), two new allotment sites recently joined the [CropDrop](#) operation, these are Larkhall allotments, who donate not once, but twice a week to Larkhall’s [New Oriel Hall](#) and to [Oasis City Centre Pantry](#), and High Common allotments which donates to the [Mercy in Action Pantry](#).

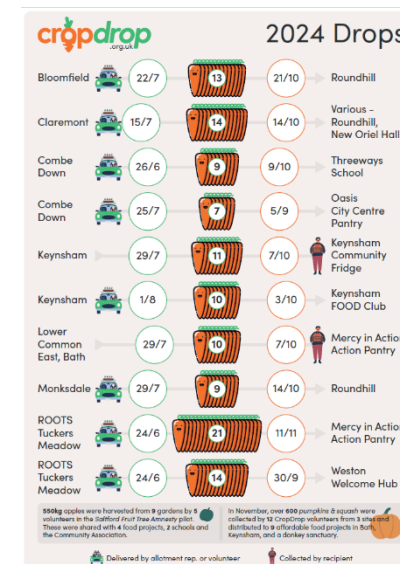


Looking to 2026, [CropDrop](#) is hoping to continue its work with the Bath Allotment Association:

- To connect more allotments with food projects such as Abbey View and Canal Gardens
- To seed more growing knowledge and confidence into areas like Twerton and Whiteway, by collaborating with the [Twerton & Whiteway Network](#) and [Bath City Farm](#).

Quote

“I still continue to be so grateful for the kindness and generosity of everyone especially through a challenging growing season. Nothing is ever wasted and I cannot convey my gratitude enough for the hundreds of nutritious meals that have been made and the myriad of food based experiences created for our wonderful kids. The produce and project has meant I have things to draw from especially now when budgets are tighter than ever. I don’t think I can ever thank you enough!!!” - Rosalie Forde (Head of Food and Design Technology, Three Ways School)



Case Study – [Bath Allotments Association \(BAA\)](#)

BAA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with over 700 members partners with a number of local and national growing and wildlife organisations to protect and strengthen these vital green spaces. Run entirely by volunteers, it represents allotment and garden growers across Bath and surrounding areas. To find out [more follow this link](#).

Our aims

- Campaign to safeguard existing allotments and secure new food-growing spaces
- Support growers through affordable seeds, equipment, advice and training
- Promote sustainable, productive food growing

What we do

During 2024–25, BAA delivered a wide-ranging programme of improvements by combining grant funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, Councillors' Discretionary Fund and Wessex Water with its own funds and volunteer time. Partnership is key to our success and we have long established links with [Transition Bath](#), [Alice Park Community Garden](#), [The Urban Garden](#), [Bath City Farm](#) as well as BANES Parks Department who support us in delivering our projects.



Expanding access to food growing

Volunteers clear hard-to-let plots and in 2024-2025 created 20 microplots across four sites, enabling new growers to start producing food. Several microplot holders have already progressed to larger plots.

Improving sustainable food production

BAA also expanded its work on **regenerative growing**, establishing trial plots across the city and supporting a growing network of practitioners sharing practical, soil-friendly approaches. **Biodiversity** initiatives flourished through partnerships with [Avon Wildlife Trust](#), [Froglife](#) and [Bath Natural History Society](#), resulting in new ponds, wildlife corridors and habitat features across multiple sites.

Reducing water use for crops: Water resilience is another priority. Discounted water butts are supplied, communal rainwater capture systems installed and natural water source improved, reducing reliance on mains water for food growing during dry periods.

Affordable seeds and equipment: [The Trading Hut](#) provides discounted seeds, seed potatoes, compost and essentials, lowering the cost of growing food.

Skills and knowledge sharing: Free workshops cover seasonal food-growing skills, soil care, perennial crops and ecological pest control. Monthly bulletins provide timely growing advice and we host school groups, care centre residents and health focused projects on sites across the City.

Sharing surplus food: Through [Cropdrop](#), surplus produce is donated to local food pantries and community organisations from May to November and in 2025 we led a session as part of the [Holiday Activities and Food programme](#) in support of young people discovering the benefits of growing and eating your own food.

Case Study – [The Monksdale Road Allotments](#) (Bath Allotments Association)

*The Monksdale Road Allotments has **149 plots** and a six-month waiting list, reflecting strong demand for food-growing space. Growers range from experienced food producers to families and first-time growers*

A strong community spirit underpins shared initiatives such as a chicken co-operative and a productive orchard supplying apples, pears and plums, supported by community juicing and fundraising events. Microplots help new growers gain skills before moving to larger plots.

Surplus produce is donated to [Roundhill Pantry](#) through [Cropdrop](#), directly supporting local food access. The site also hosts [Greenlinks \(Bath Mind\)](#), where participants grow food to support physical and mental wellbeing.

With new ponds, hedging and wildflower areas created this year, Monksdale Road Allotments exemplify how allotments can produce food and importantly function as thriving community hubs and urban nature sanctuaries—quiet, productive spaces that deliver lasting social, health and environmental benefits.

Follow this [link](#) to take a tour of the Greenlinks Space at Monksdale allotments.



Case Study – Weston Spring Farm

Middle Ground Growers (MGG) was born in 2020, on a small 2-acre market garden at Dry Arch Growers (a Transition Towns project) in the village of Bathampton.

Like all ventures, MGG started with an idea: producing planet friendly food for local communities, delivered by bike.

We started by supplying a whole food shop (Harvest) in Bath and selling directly on the farm. Rapidly we also decided to launch a veg box scheme and began delivering to 20-25 families every week in 2020, 75 in 2021 and 110 in 2022.

We received the support of hundreds of people in 2021 when we successfully raised over £95,000 in donations to get us started on our new 16 acre 'Ecological Farm for Bath' in Weston.

Our operations are now based at Weston Spring Farm and we are aiming to provide food for over 200 homes and 12 local outlets. We grow planet friendly organic vegetables for home delivery veg box schemes and Bath Farmers Market. We also host seasonal farm open days, learning opportunities and workshops on the land.



Case Study – B&NES’s Council waste programme

Bath & North East Somerset has taken a long-term, strategic approach to tackling food waste as part of its Towards Zero Waste Strategy. Following the district-wide rollout of household food waste collections in 2010, the council has steadily expanded access and currently provides food waste collections to over 90% of all flats.

In 2025 the council delivered further improvements by transitioning over 300 harder to reach flats in Bath city centre from bagged waste collections to standard recycling containers, including food caddies. To ensure every B&NES resident has access to a food recycling collection, the council’s waste team will also be installing new, communal on-street food bins to serve central Bath flats that do not have storage space for regular containers.

All collected food waste is processed at [Codford Biogas](#) through anaerobic digestion, generating renewable energy and fertiliser. Diverting food waste from residual waste is key to reducing disposal costs and waste-related greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside the expansion of food recycling, the council has invested in behaviour-change campaigns, school engagement, and planning guidance to ensure new developments include appropriate recycling bin storage. These actions have contributed to a 25% reduction in residual waste since 2017 and a 60.5% recycling rate in 2024/25.



3.4 Key needs this strategy seeks to address

3.4.1 BANES population and geography

By 2032, B&NES's population is projected to increase by 8.4% and one in five residents will be over 65. ². These demographic shifts will influence food needs, with greater emphasis required on the provision of accessible, nutritious diets for older residents. An ageing population may also strengthen local food community groups and volunteering capacity, as older residents typically make up a high proportion of volunteers and play a significant role in sustaining these initiatives. Food needs should also continue to be influenced by the needs of other demographic groups such as families, as well as communities that require culturally appropriate foods.

Geographically, Bath and North East Somerset combines the historic city of Bath and market towns such as Keynsham and Midsomer Norton with a wide rural area consisting of villages, hamlets and farmland. This mix creates distinct challenges: rural communities often face transport barriers and limited retail choice, while some urban areas experience concentrated deprivation and a lack of growing spaces.

Although Bath and North East Somerset remains one of the least deprived local authorities nationally (ranked 245 out of 296 in 2025), inequalities are widening. A decade ago, only around 1,500 residents lived in areas among the most deprived 10% nationally; today that figure has risen to 4,500, concentrated in Twerton West, Whiteway, and Fox Hill North ³. These communities face higher risks of food insecurity, fuel poverty, and poor health outcomes. However, food insecurity is not limited to these neighbourhoods: it is increasingly interspersed across the district, affecting residents in otherwise less deprived areas following the rising cost-of-living pressures.

Food insecurity is a growing concern for our residents. The 2024 Voicebox survey found that 1 in 6 residents worry about food running out before they can afford more, and a recent survey of food insecurity among Bath and North East Somerset residents on pension credits by the [University of Bath](#) found that nearly half of respondents reported some degree of food insecurity over the past 12 months ^{4 5}. Residents also highlighted the difficulty of accessing affordable, nutritious food and the longer-term impacts this has on children's health and wellbeing.

While food insecurity is closely linked to urban deprivation hotspots, food deserts appear more widely across the district. Food deserts are neighbourhoods with limited access to affordable and nutritious foods, and living in them is associated with worse health, social, and economic outcomes. UK research shows higher risks of obesity, diet-related illness, mental health challenges, and social inequality in these

² <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/strategic-evidence>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025>

⁴ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Voicebox33%20Report%202024.pdf>

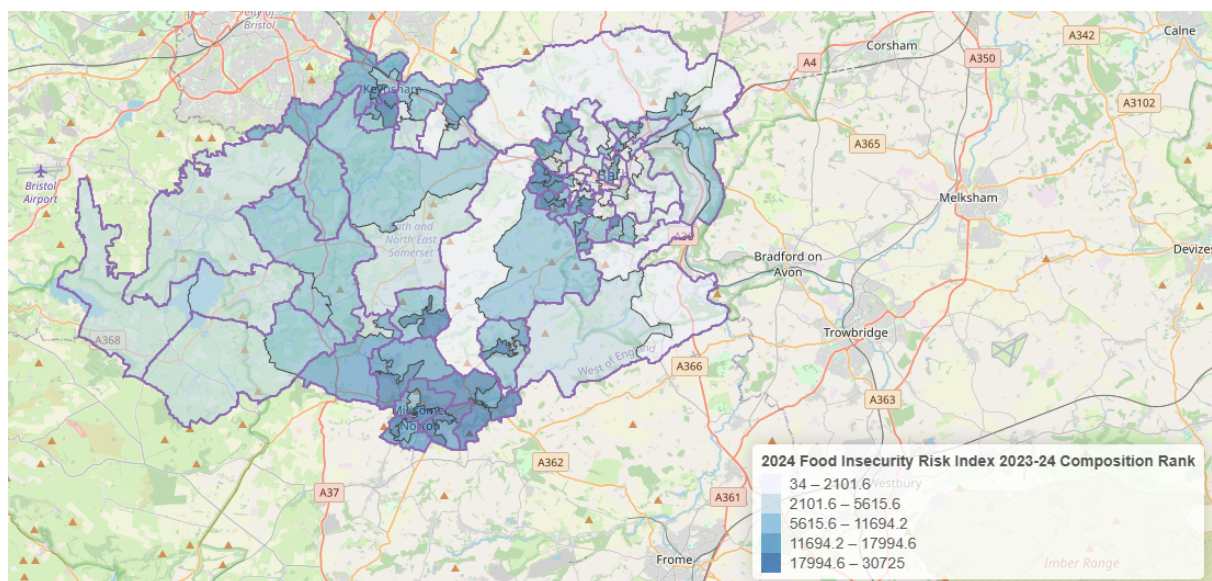
⁵ Wise, J., Hurwitz, R. & Blackwood, L. (2023) A survey of food insecurity among Bath and North East Somerset residents in receipt of Pension Credits. University of Bath. Available at:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Older%20people%20food%20insecurity%20-%20August%202023.pdf>

communities ^{6 7}. The [Food Security Index](#), created by Associate Professor Dianna Smith and Professor Nisreen Alwan from The University of Southampton is designed to identify which neighbourhoods in England are most at risk of food insecurity, a measure akin to food deserts. It evaluates the extent to which neighbourhoods exhibit a range of characteristics across four key drivers. Mapping this index highlights areas of Bath and North East Somerset where food access is most constrained. Figure 1 shows that the areas of Bath and North East Somerset with the greatest risks to food access are certain areas in Midsomer Norton, Keynsham and Bath Central.

Taken together, the demographic profile, urban–rural mix and widening inequalities paint a clear picture: food is a critical issue for Bath and North East Somerset and will only become more important over time. Addressing these challenges requires a whole-system approach — embedding food into planning, health, and community development, while ensuring environmental sustainability and resilience.

Figure 1 - 2024 Food Insecurity Risk Index 2023-24 Composition Rank⁸



6 <https://www.resolvepoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Food-deserts-in-the-UK.pdf>

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-theme-4-food-security-at-household-level>

8 University of Southampton funded by NIHR ARC Wessex - <https://www.mylocalmap.org.uk/iaahealth/>

3.4.2 Our local food economy

Bath and North East Somerset retains a distinctly rural and small-business character: around 70% of land is in agricultural use, and agriculture represents roughly 4% of all local businesses. Our 396 farms are typically modest in scale, averaging 68 hectares compared with the English average of 87, but they form part of a wider South West farming sector that remains commercially significant. In 2024 the South West as a region generated £1,055 million in total income from farming (+32% on 2023), with milk and beef contributing around 41% of this total output. Grazing livestock (47%) and general cropping (22%) continue to dominate the regional farm profile ⁹.

Bath and North East Somerset's food economy sits within a predominantly service-led local economy, where health and social care remain the largest employment sector (≈18,000 jobs). Despite this, the *Accommodation and food services* sector, along with the *Arts, entertainment and recreation* sector combine to form the tourism and leisure sector across B&NES. In combination they account for around 900 businesses, 10% of the total, and make tourism and leisure a key sector for B&NES¹⁰. The food sector is also proportionally larger in Bath and North East Somerset than nationally (≈4% of local spending vs ≈2% nationally), and benefits from a rich ecosystem of local food assets, from the long-established [Bath Farmers' Market](#) (est. 1997) to a dense network of independent producers and small food businesses clustered around our urban areas such as Bath Centre and Keynsham. These enterprises provide strong foundations for a resilient, locally rooted food system ^{11 12}.

The size and strength of the visitor and food economy create the potential for additional growth in the local food industry, which would further support a resilient, equitable and locally sourced food system. Increased trade of local food, from local food growing and farming through to retail and hospitality, provides multiple economic benefits; It generates income growth for food and farming businesses, helps to create new jobs in local food processing and distribution and retail trades, and contributes to the local multiplier effect where money is retained and circulated in the local economy ¹³.

Whilst a strength in B&NES is that activity on food has been the result of entrepreneurship, innovation and energy, partners have expressed the need for a coordinated strategic framework for food that supports alignment to a strong vision and greater use of specific levers that are important in a thriving local food economy. These relate to land-use planning, distribution and logistics infrastructure, workforce training pathways, and the links between local producers and institutional procurement. This strategy seeks to strengthen coordination and address these structural gaps.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agricultural-facts-england-regional-profiles/agricultural-facts-south-west-region>

¹⁰ Economic Strategy Evidence Base: Final Report. 2002. Hardisty Jones Associates.

¹¹ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SEB%20Economy%20Apr25.pdf>

¹² https://app.bathnes.gov.uk/docs/temp/Planning-Policy/Placemaking-Plan/banes_draft_local_food_strategy.pdf

¹³ Sustain (2025) Local Food Growth Briefing. Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming. Available at: <https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/local-food-growth-policy-briefing-1758723866.pdf>

3.4.3 Local, regional and national policy

National policy is moving towards healthier, fairer, greener and more prosperous food systems. Across government strategies, there is a consistent emphasis on expanding access to nutritious food, strengthening schemes that support community food programmes, while also using fiscal measures to reduce sugar, salt and ultra-processed foods. National policy also highlights the need to align food production with Net Zero and biodiversity goals by supporting nature-positive farming and minimising food waste. Alongside this, health and planning frameworks increasingly recognise the influence of local environments on food choices, giving councils stronger powers to restrict unhealthy outlets and improve school food standards. Appendix 1 summarises the key national policies shaping this direction of travel.

Alongside this national picture, local and regional policy across Bath and North East Somerset is increasingly recognising food as a cross-cutting issue that shapes health, sustainability, economic resilience and community wellbeing. Strategies across the Council consistently emphasise the need to expand opportunities for local food growing, reduce food waste, strengthen local supply chains, and embed sustainability into everyday decision-making. There is a clear direction of travel towards creating healthier, fairer, greener and more prosperous places, with policies calling for food growing space in new developments, improved access to nutritious food, and stronger support for communities to engage in food-related activity. Local policy highlights the importance of aligning food with wider environmental and economic goals. Plans such as the Ecological Emergency Action Plan and the Greener Places Plan emphasise nature-positive food production, biodiversity, and land stewardship, while the Economic Strategy promotes rural diversification, horticultural development, and showcasing local producers. The Health and Wellbeing strategy reinforces the role of food in building healthy, sustainable places, and in supporting a good quality of life, while the Procurement Strategy embeds sustainability and climate action into purchasing decisions. Please see appendices for full table summarising key local policies.

3.4.4 Wider factors driving needs

Bath and North East Somerset has a strong and distinctive local food culture, but the wider national picture is shifting in ways that we can't ignore. Many of the indicators that shape people's everyday experience of food are heading in the wrong direction. More households are experiencing food insecurity, and more people are being supported by food banks such as those provided by the [Trussell trust](#). The cost of a healthy food basket is rising faster than household income, adding pressure to families already affected by the cost-of-living crisis ^{14 15 16 17}.

14 Food Foundation Food Insecurity Tracker — 14% of UK households (≈7.3 million adults) were food insecure in Jan 2025

15 Trussell Trust Hunger in the UK report — food bank use rising sharply, with millions experiencing severe hardship in 2024.

16 Food Foundation analysis — cost-of-living pressures reducing fruit & veg consumption and widening dietary inequalities.

17 <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/news/food-banks-brace-for-winter-surge>

Health outcomes linked to diet are also worsening. Nationally, obesity and Type 2 diabetes are at record levels, only a small proportion of adults and children eat enough fruit and vegetables, and levels of malnutrition are rising¹⁸¹⁹. In 2022/23, obesity contributed to one in sixteen hospital admissions in England²⁰. In B&NES more than 1 in 2 adults carry excess weight and nearly 30% of year 6 children are overweight or obese. Whilst lower than the national average, these figures highlight the extent of the issue and need for children and young people to be eating healthier foods.

The food environment is also part of this picture, with a significant number of schools across the UK now having a fast-food chain within a short walking distance, and fast-food outlets being most concentrated in the neighbourhoods with the poorest health outcomes²¹²². Schools in B&NES that are in an urban centre have the most fast-food chains within a 400-metre radius.

Across the UK, food economies are also under strain. Farmers are reporting rising mental health pressures, and farms had worst business survival rate of any sector in early 2025. Production costs such as energy and fertiliser have increased sharply, and there are limited training routes and career pathways for people entering into food and farming sectors²³²⁴²⁵²⁶. Environmental indicators point in the same direction. The carbon footprint of the food we grow and choose to consume is not falling quickly enough, soil health is deteriorating, most water bodies are failing to meet good ecological standards, and biodiversity across rural England continues to decline²⁷²⁸²⁹³⁰³¹.

All of this is happening at a time when the financial context for local action is becoming more difficult. The cost-of-living crisis, inflation, wage pressures and rising demand for public services mean that resources are stretched across both public services and the voluntary sector. According to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#), councils' overall core funding in 2024/25 is 9%t lower in real terms than in 2010/11, and 18% lower per person. Funding for voluntary organisations has also fallen in real terms, with reductions in central government support and individual donations.

Given this context, it is more important than ever to make the best use of the levers and capacity already available across the system, while working with partners to secure additional funding where possible. The way the local food system has grown over time has created real strengths, including strong local leadership, committed

18 Food Foundation (2024) New data highlights rising cases of undernutrition and falling height in children.

19 Malnutrition Task Force (2024) State of the Nation: Older People and Malnutrition in the UK 2024.

20 NHS England – Obesity: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/prevention/obesity/>

21 Bite Back report — 14.2% of schools now have a major fast-food chain within 400m

22 Public Health England — fast-food outlet density ranges from 26–232 per 100,000 population, highest in deprived areas

23 ONS / Cynergy Bank — 1,890 farm businesses closed in Q1 2025 vs 805 new openings (worst survival rate of any sector)

24 AHDB — Farm input costs up 44% since 2019 (fertiliser, electricity, feed, fuel all sharply increased).

25 Farm Safety Foundation — 91% of farmers say poor mental health is the biggest hidden problem; 44 suicides in 2022

26 Farming evidence pack — ageing workforce, declining number of small farms, and structural barriers to new entrants

27 Climate Change Committee. The Seventh Carbon Budget: Advice to Government on the Level of the Seventh Carbon Budget (2038–2042).

28 Environment Agency — 4 million hectares at risk of compaction; 2 million at risk of erosion; arable soils have lost 40–60% of organic carbon

29 Defra / Environment Agency — agricultural diffuse pollution a major contributor to water quality failure; 78% of water bodies not achieving good ecological status.

30 State of Nature Report — 1 in 6 species at risk of extinction; farmland birds down 58% since 1970

31 WRAP Food System GHG Update — UK food system emissions falling too slowly to meet 2030 targets; urgent action required

volunteers and responsive community-led initiatives, including those demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic response. But it has also left gaps in areas such as the way we use our land to grow food, food distribution, workforce development and the links between local producers and key public sector institutions (anchor institutions) ³².

The Council has a range of tools that can influence food outcomes, including planning policy through the Local Plan, procurement and commissioning, and decisions about infrastructure. The West of England Combined Authority also plays a key role, particularly in relation to work and skills, regional transport, and child poverty, all of which shape people's access to good food.

Taken together, these pressures and opportunities make this the right moment to develop a shared food strategy that brings partners together around a whole-system approach. By working collectively, we can ensure that food in Bath and North East Somerset is good for people, good for the economy and good for the environment. Recent joint funding successes, including those supported by [the National Lottery](#) and [St John's Foundation](#), show what can be achieved when organisations invest together and underline the value of shared ownership in strengthening the local food system.

3.4.5 Residents and partners views on Food in Bath and North East Somerset

From the outset, this Food Strategy was designed to be a co-owned programme, recognising that no single organisation can transform a food system alone. This collaborative approach was led by a Food Strategy Steering Group ³³, established at the start of the process and bringing together representatives from the Council, voluntary and farming sector. This steering group arranged two partner workshops, a range of in-person engagement with lesser-heard groups in community settings, and a Bath and North East Somerset wide resident survey to capture local views on food. Feedback gathered through these range of engagement methods has informed the content of this strategy.

Residents across Bath and North East Somerset expressed a mixture of pride in the local food culture and frustration at the systemic barriers that prevent everyone from accessing healthy, affordable, and sustainable food. Affordability emerged as the single most pressing concern. People consistently highlighted that fresh and nutritious food is valued but often out of reach financially, particularly for families and those on lower incomes. This sense of inequity was reinforced by the reliance on food banks, which many described as both a lifeline and a symbol of societal failure in a wealthy country.

³² <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/anchor-institutions-and-peoples-health>

³³ Membership list in Appendix 3

“Food banks are a fantastic resource for when money is tight, it would be great for these to develop further in the area to provide a wider range of food and an even closer community feel”

At the same time, there was strong pride in the strengths of the local food system. Farmers’ markets, allotments, community orchards, and independent shops were celebrated as sources of fresh produce and as places that build community connection. Residents spoke warmly about community fridges, kitchens, and food pantries, which not only provide food but also foster solidarity and reduce waste. Sustainability values were evident throughout, with enthusiasm for local, seasonal food and initiatives that cut packaging and the distance our food has to be transported.

The barriers identified were clear. High costs, food deserts in villages and estates, and limited healthy takeaway options were repeatedly mentioned. Many felt that supermarkets and fast-food chains dominate the food environment, crowding out healthier independent outlets and promoting ultra-processed foods. Stigma around food banks and the reliance on charity rather than systemic provision were also seen as major challenges.

“It would be difficult if I didn’t have food delivered as I have no car and the shops in my village are two small supermarkets with limited stock. Often smaller supermarkets are more expensive and do not cater so much for healthy cooking from scratch. I also want to buy British veg in season and there are too many imported foods in supermarkets, ultra processed foods and very few local food options.”

Looking ahead five years, residents described a vision of a food system that is more local, affordable, and sustainable. They want fresh produce to be accessible within walking distance, supported by an expansion of allotments, community growing projects, and food hubs. There was a strong call for better support for local producers and small businesses, alongside measures to reduce packaging, expand refill shops, and redistribute surplus food. Education was seen as central: healthier school meals, cooking lessons for children and families, and community kitchens where people can learn and eat together were all highlighted. Policy interventions were also suggested, including limits on fast-food outlets, incentives for healthier independents, and restrictions on the advertising of ultra-processed foods.

“I feel very fortunate to be able to access good food, however the price of it isn’t sustainable. People’s incomes are not reflective of the price of food, making the affordability of food very challenging - especially for those with young children who are growing and need wholesome, nourishing foods.”

Residents also raised additional considerations for the Food Strategy. They emphasised the need to link food to wider cost-of-living issues such as housing, debt, and transport, and to ensure that older people are not overlooked in food

provision. Respondents urged the Council to be pragmatic, balancing ambition with affordability.

A small minority felt that a food strategy was an unnecessary interference in personal choice. In contrast, others wanted stronger leadership and lobbying on national issues such as food labelling, sugar and salt content, and ultra-processed food regulation. Calls were made to support agroecological farming, protect farmland from development, and champion animal welfare, and there was also a recognition of the importance of celebrating local food culture more actively, through publicity, events, and education.

“I would like to stop building houses on Grade 1 - 3a farmland. I would like to be able to go into any shop or supermarket and know it only contains actual food, and not the fake food additives that make up the vast majority of the ultra-processed food in there. I would like to see an end to factory farming, and have everything organic, even if people have to eat less meat.”

4. Our vision for a Better Food System in Bath & North East Somerset

Residents, partners and local organisations described a clear and ambitious vision for the future of food in Bath & North East Somerset: a food system that is healthier, fairer, greener and more prosperous for everyone. To deliver this vision, the strategy sets out four aims that describe the kind of food system residents want to see in the years ahead.

4.1 A Healthier Food System

- Make healthier choices the easiest, most natural choices for residents
- Build a positive food culture where good food is visible, enjoyable and part of everyday life
- Help people of all ages gain the skills and confidence to cook, grow and understand food
- Treat access to healthy food as a basic right and support those facing food insecurity.
- Tackle the underlying causes of poor diet, not just the symptoms
- Reduce reliance on ultra-processed foods through practical cooking skills, clear information and healthier food environments

4.2 A Fairer Food System

- Ensure everyone can access healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food, wherever they live

- Take a whole-system approach, with public services, businesses, landowners, community groups and residents working together
- Make food education, support and participation inclusive and co-designed with communities
- Provide access to land for growing in every community
- Support growers and community food organisations to operate sustainably, with fair pay and reliable routes to market
- Build on existing strengths and community assets rather than starting from scratch

4.3 A Greener Food System

- Support diets that are better for the planet, including more plant-based proteins, fruit and vegetables
- Reduce food waste across households, businesses and public services
- Support agroecological and regenerative growers who improve soil health, biodiversity and carbon capture
- Strengthen local supply chains and infrastructure to cut food-based emissions and increase our resilience
- Use public-sector procurement to champion the use of seasonal, low-carbon, locally sourced food
- Make planning, development and land-use decisions that embed greener food systems at every stage

4.4 A Thriving Local Food System

- Build a thriving local food economy that creates good jobs, skills and opportunities.
- Further recognise food as part of economic development and support local producers, processors, retailers and caterers to grow
- Create stable, long-term demand for local food businesses through procurement and local markets
- Encourage fair pay, apprenticeships and training pathways relating to the local food economy
- Strengthen cross-sector food system leadership, with long-term commitment from the Council, NHS, universities, housing associations, businesses, farmers, landowners and community groups

5. Our priorities for a better food system in Bath & North East Somerset

Delivering the four **objectives** set out in this strategy will enable the kind of food system residents, partners and local organisations want for Bath & North East Somerset: one that is healthier, fairer, greener and which supports a thriving local food economy. These objectives are informed by the sustainable food places framework, which were used as a starting point for many discussions with stakeholders, and have evolved throughout the development process. To turn these objectives into practical change, we have identified a set of **priorities** that reflect what people told us matters most and where coordinated action can make the biggest difference.

These priorities, with their intended **outcomes** (aligned with the UK Food Strategy priority outcomes), provide a clear framework for delivery over the coming years. They bring together the key needs and issues and raised through engagement and translate them into focused areas of work that partners across the system can contribute to. Because food influences so many parts of everyday life, the priorities also include a cross-system commitment to put the right structures, leadership and ways of working in place for long-term collaboration.

Under each of these priorities, we have noted our partners and residents' aspirations – ideas for initiatives, projects and collaborations that could strengthen the local food system in the years ahead. They are presented as opportunities rather than commitments on the basis that they require partners to further work together to mobilise the capacity and resources required to achieve them, but partners want this strategy to reflect the shared opportunities and to demonstrate where energy, creativity and community ambition already exist. Actions that the Council can commit to are set out in chapter 6.

This is a whole-system strategy, not a council-owned plan. The framework is intentionally flexible, enabling organisations, communities and networks across Bath & North East Somerset to contribute in ways that reflect their roles, strengths and capacity.

Objective	Priority Number	Priority	Outcome (aligned with the UK Government Food Strategy priority outcomes)
Cross-cutting (across objectives)	1	Establish a framework and ways of working to support long-term, cross-sector collaboration on food in Bath and North East Somerset, enabling coordinated action across communities, organisations, and policy areas.	
Healthier	2	Strengthen children’s opportunities to learn about, grow and enjoy healthy food	An improved food environment that supports healthier and more environmentally sustainable food sales People are more connected to their local food systems and have the confidence, knowledge and skills to cook and eat healthily
	3	Reduce structural drivers of unhealthy, commercialised food environments	
Fairer	4	Strengthen the provision of community food partner activities across Bath and North East Somerset	Access for all to safe, affordable, healthy, convenient and appealing food options
	5	Strengthen local affordable food provision and support to those experiencing food insecurity	
Greener	6	Strengthen community food and growing infrastructure	Food supply is environmentally sustainable, with high animal welfare standards, and waste is reduced
	7	Reduce the local food-related carbon and nature footprint	
	8	Promote food growing methods that restore ecosystems and build long-term soil and river health	Resilient production for a secure supply of healthy food Greater preparedness for supply chain shocks, disruption and impacts of chronic risks

Thriving	9	Increase opportunities for growers and food businesses to connect with consumers	Conditions for the food sector to thrive and grow sustainably, including investment in innovation, and productivity, and fairer, more transparent supply chains
	10	Align ethical, healthy, and sustainable sourcing practices across Bath and North East Somerset's key food partners	
	11	Showcase Local Food Businesses	Food sector attracts talent and develops skilled workforce in every region Celebrated and valued UK, regional and local food cultures

5.1 Priority 1: Establish a framework and ways of working to support long-term, cross-sector collaboration on food in Bath and North East Somerset, enabling coordinated action across communities, organisations, and policy areas.

What we're already doing

- Bath and North East Somerset system has governance and ways of working in place that enables cross-sector collaboration on food insecurity related issues. The [Fair Food Alliance](#) was formed to unite statutory bodies, charities, and community groups involved in addressing food insecurity. This alliance has two network groups that operate within it, the [Affordable Food Network](#) and the [Income Maximisation Group](#), which take action on specific aspects of the affordable food agenda

Opportunities

- Create a cross-sector BANES food partnership to oversee a "whole systems" approach to food, support the delivery of the B&NES Food Strategy, and guide future actions related to all elements of food (not just food insecurity), bringing together representatives from the voluntary sector, business, Council, NHS, landowners, farmers, housing and other key stakeholders
- A funded coordinator role to support the establishment of a cross-sector food partnership and the delivery of the Food Strategy, hosted within a trusted local organisation or the Council, and jointly funded by key partners to ensure buy-in and shared ownership

5.2 Priority 2: Strengthen children's opportunities to learn about, grow and enjoy healthy food

What we're already doing

- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme – offers eligible children and young people enriching activities during school holidays, a balanced meal and where possible food education sessions, such as activities linked to the EatWell Guide, food preparation and cooking
- Universal infant free school meals – all pupils in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 benefit from free school meals, and new changes mean that there is now auto enrolment in B&NES to automatically register all eligible children to Free School Meals so no child misses out on their entitlement
- An Early Years 'Eating Well' Audit tool is being developed by the Council and will be shared with Early Years Settings, who will be able to self-assess against best practice guidelines. This will include food provision (including the Early Years Nutrition Guidance), the environment, play, and elements of The [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) statutory framework. Completion of the tool will act as evidence towards the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirement that asks providers to follow Early Years Nutrition Guidance unless there is good reason not to
- A range of courses and workshops are available for residents of all ages to build confidence in cooking, learn about food and nutrition, and socialise with others - for example, sessions provided through [Bath Mind](#)
- School Curriculum – schools embed food education across health, science, and PSHE lessons, helping children understand nutrition, wellbeing, and sustainability
- Council initiatives such as the [Public Health in Schools](#) programme and the affordable schools initiative support best practice in relation to health and wellbeing in schools and work to reduce the cost pressures that children and families face

Opportunities

- Establish a network of "good food champions" linking education settings with food related groups or settings to enable sharing of best practice and to inspire change. This includes for example, linking farms and/or community growing spaces with education settings, enabling children to visit throughout the year and experience different stages of food production
- Create partnerships between university growing clubs and local schools to teach growing skills and inspire future growers
- Encourage food to be embedded within schools' newly mandated climate and nature strategies, linking healthy eating with the climate and nature impacts of food

- Maximise opportunities for settings to access the best tools and resources to teach children and young people about food

5.3 Priority 3: Reduce structural drivers of unhealthy, commercialised food environments

What we're already doing

- A policy restricting the development of new Hot Food Takeaways and fast-food outlets near places for children and young people will be included in the Local Plan, which is scheduled for consultation in 2026

Opportunities

- An advertising ban on ultra-processed food on Council owned advertising space
- Advocate for national policy change, including raising business rates for large corporations reliant on UPFs, while offering tax breaks or subsidies to those sourcing local, non-UPF food and tax rebates to encourage institutions such as schools, hospitals, cafés, and prisons to serve plant based and non UPF foods

5.4 Priority 4: Strengthen the provision of community food partner activities across Bath and North East Somerset

What we're already doing

- A [map of local food business in Bath and North East Somerset](#) has been created and shared publicly by the Council
- The Council support local food partners by publishing a list of already available resources for community groups (such as the 3SG grant application course and the B&NES “Achieve and Invest” grant list)
- B&NES 3rd Sector Group ([3SG](#)) provides support to community food partners, including training, networking and help accessing funding

Opportunities

- Ensure community food partners are fully aware of the resources already available to support them in delivering food-related activities across Bath and North East Somerset
- A way of highlighting and promoting local food activities — including community meals, growing projects, and cooking workshops — so that they reach and engage more residents

5.5 Priority 5: Strengthen local affordable food provision and support to those experiencing food insecurity

What we're already doing

- [Fair Food Alliance](#) – coordinates the local response to food insecurity across B&NES through subgroups such as the [Affordable Food Network](#) and the [Income Maximisation Group](#), ensuring joined-up action across partners. Its priorities include improving access to money advice and income-related support, shifting from crisis provision (food banks) to sustainable affordable community food models such as food clubs and pantries, and embedding lived experience in the design and delivery of services
- [Community Wellbeing Hub](#) – provides a single point of access for residents experiencing food insecurity, including referrals to food banks, food clubs, and wider wellbeing services
- Pay It Forward schemes – local businesses such as [Landrace Bakery](#) enable customers to pre-pay for food items for other residents helping those in need access affordable meals
- Food Clubs and Pantries – community-based schemes (e.g. [Bright Start Children and Family Centres](#), [Curo's Pantry](#)) provide low-cost weekly food baskets, supporting families, young carers, and older residents. A list of food clubs and pantries is available on the BANES Food Finder Tool hosted by Joe Lavington
- Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme – provides eligible children access to nutritious meals and food skills during the Spring, Summer and Winter school holidays, reducing seasonal food insecurity
- Redistribution initiatives – projects like [CropDrop](#) and [FareShare South West](#) redistribute surplus food to community organisations, reducing waste and improving access to fresh produce

Opportunities

- Strengthen community connections by expanding the community kitchens model and offering taster sessions, pop-up cafés, workshops and food events that build inclusive social networks, develop cooking and budgeting skills, create volunteering opportunities, and increase awareness of available support

- Improve communication with communities through local champions, clearer signposting, and accessible information for residents and organisations, including awareness of financial support, mental health support and employment opportunities
- Increase access to affordable food through additional community pantries and subsidised weekly veg/food boxes sourced from allotments or local growers
- Transport policy in Bath and North East Somerset better supports access to affordable food
- Better use our data and insights to identify and target areas of greatest need, ensuring support reaches those most at risk of food insecurity
- Develop a community-led ready-meal system that combines locally grown produce with community kitchen capacity to deliver surplus food to people's homes, with a particular focus on rural households experiencing food insecurity
- Ensure affordable food provision is more culturally appropriate, including in the provision of culturally sensitive community meals.
- Strengthen the sustainability of our local affordable food provision and wrap around support for the long term

5.6 Priority 6: Strengthen community food and growing infrastructure

What we're already doing

- Bath and North East Somerset is home to a range of food and food growing infrastructure, including allotments, community gardens, markets, community kitchens, food pantries etc
- B&NES are commissioning an open space assessment for Bath and North East Somerset to support the revised Local Plan which will include allotments and local food growing spaces. Tasks include identifying and mapping allotments and local food growing spaces, identifying provision, a review of local standards and the policy context, identifying the percentage of households with access through network analysis modelling, and identifying future needs
- The current Local Plan includes policies LCR8 (Protecting Allotments) and LCR9 (Increasing the Provision of Local Food Growing) which are applied to development in Bath and North East Somerset. Policy LCR9 is used to secure opportunities for informal food growing in residential development and allotments, either through on-site provision or contributions to the provision of allotments. Quantity and access standards are set out in B&NES Green Space Strategy and Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document
- The [B&NES Local Plan](#) is progressing through multiple stages and includes a period of public consultation, which provides opportunities for food growing stakeholders to feed in their views on policy content
- B&NES Council hosts the [B&NES Food Finder](#), which highlights food clubs and pantries across Bath and North East Somerset

Opportunities

- Expand the scope of the Council's growing space mapping exercise to include community food assets such as kitchens and facilities that can be used by social enterprises and local food projects
- The Local Plan actively supports new food growing spaces, brings underused land into cultivation, and protects both existing and potential food assets for the future
- Embed food considerations into the Council's corporate asset challenge and explore where Council owned land can be used for growing purposes.
- Better recognition of farmer poverty and the related mental health challenges, alongside a strengthening of support systems to help farmers address these issues

5.7 Priority 7: Reduce the local food-related carbon and nature footprint

What we're already doing

- A range of funding and support is available to support local food businesses in their move towards net zero (such as grants from [WECA](#))
- B&NES declared a climate emergency in 2019 and an ecological emergency in 2021 and is currently developing its new climate and nature strategy
- The Council waste programme runs a food waste collection scheme for both residents and businesses, and has an aim of eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030
- Redistribution Networks ([FareShare South West](#), [CropDrop](#)) – Ensure surplus food is redistributed ethically to community organisations, reducing waste while supporting food access
- Hospitality Sector – Many Bath restaurants and cafés are engaging with [Too Good To Go](#) and similar schemes, reducing waste and promoting sustainable sourcing to consumers

Opportunities

- That residents and partners are aware of the choices they can make to have the biggest impact on reducing their food-related carbon and nature footprint, such as shifting consumption towards the eat-well plate³⁴
- Local food businesses, including restaurants and producers, are aware of the resources and funding available to support changes towards net zero, such as grants from [WECA](#)
- More surplus food is redistributed, and that is supported through a regional distribution hub
- Eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030

³⁴ <https://www.carbontrust.com/our-work-and-impact/guides-reports-and-tools/the-eatwell-guide-a-more-sustainable-diet>

5.8 Priority 8: Promote food growing methods that restore ecosystems and build long-term soil and river health

What we're already doing

- Regenerative Farms – Local initiatives such as [Middle Ground Growers](#) and [Undercliff Urban Farm](#) are pioneering agroecological methods, focusing on soil restoration, biodiversity, and low-input farming that actively rebuilds ecosystems
- A policy for 'low impact farming' is being consulted on in the latest Local Plan Consultation, which will facilitate agroecological methods being employed
- The existing Local Plan Policy RE5 protects the best and most versatile agricultural land in Bath and North East Somerset from development.
- A farmer cluster has been set up for the Chew, Cam and Wellow catchments, helping farmers to work together at the landscape scale, and the West of England Combined Authority has provided farmers within the Cluster with funding for interventions that deliver nature recovery. The potential for an 'Supercluster' of farmer clusters in the Avon catchment is being explored
- The [Bristol Avon Rivers Trust](#) has supported farmers and landowners throughout Bath and North East Somerset to improve river health, reduce agricultural run-off, and promote land management practices that protect water quality

Opportunities

- Active and funded farmer clusters throughout Bath and North East Somerset, with stronger links to B&NES Council, that enable genuine collaboration around food growing practices such as agroecological approaches
- Consideration of edible gardens, "pick me signs", soil health and other good food growing practices in the management of the Council's Estate
- Farmers are supported in adopting farming practices that are resilient to a changing climate and help recover nature, including the use of nature-based solutions
- A land use and management strategy that protects, enhances and makes available all Grade 1 and 2 urban and peri-urban land for both community growing and commercial sustainable agriculture

5.9 Priority 9: Increase opportunities for growers and food businesses to connect with consumers

What we're already doing

- Farmers' Markets – Bath Farmers' Market (Green Park Station) is one of the UK's longest-running farmers' markets, providing a weekly platform for local growers and producers to sell directly to residents. Other markets across Bath and North East Somerset, such as Keynsham and Midsomer Norton, also showcase local produce
- Community Food Enterprises – Initiatives like [Middle Ground Growers](#), [The Community Farm](#), [The Midsomer Norton Food Co-op](#), and [Southside Food Co-op](#) supply veg boxes, market stalls, and co-op distribution, giving residents direct access to local food
- Events and Festivals – Food festivals and seasonal events in Bath and surrounding towns (such as [Bath Foodies Festival](#) and [Bath Christmas Market](#)) provide opportunities to highlight local producers

Opportunities

- A local community hub that supports local food producers to better collaborate through shared growing spaces, commercial kitchen units and teaching areas. This would better link small local growers with local consumers and enable them to come together and bid for larger contracts
- A more streamlined application process for communities to host food events and farmers markets

5.10 Priority 10: Align ethical, healthy, and sustainable sourcing practices across Bath and North East Somerset's key food partners

What we're already doing

- B&NES Council's procurement policy states that "procurement must consider environmental, social, and economic wellbeing", meaning that as part of any Council formal tendering process, these elements are considered ³⁵
- Key public sector partners in Bath and North East Somerset (such as the [Royal United Hospital](#)) have a sustainability focus in their procurement policies or a sustainable procurement policy, which cover food procurement
- The West of England Combined Authority has a sustainable procurement strategy

Opportunities

- A shared understanding of sustainable food procurement best practice by local partners (including major public sector procurers), and a commitment by these partners to procure their food in this way
- More food procured by the Council as part of all their local services (such as the Holiday Activity and Food Programme, or care homes), is sourced in a sustainable and ethical way
- To better explore use of the [Crown Commercial Framework](#) in local procurement. This is a procurement arrangement that can be used to purchase food and drink, with the aim being to "support sustainability, food quality and welfare standards" when buying food and drink

³⁵ It should be noted that B&NES Council procures a very small amount of its own food, predominately for Council owned care homes.

5.11 Priority 11: Showcase local food businesses

What we're already doing

- Economic Strategy – Food is recognised as part of B&NESs economic strategy, with a focus on showcasing local producers and best practice
- [Bath BID](#) – [Bath BID](#) host a [Good Food Week](#) and [Bath BID Indie Guide](#), both showcasing independent cafés, restaurants, and shops, encouraging residents and visitors to buy local and promoting Bath's food culture.

Opportunities

- Continue growing the annual [Bath BID](#) event celebrating Bath and North East Somerset's independent food businesses, with specific recognition of those producing food sustainably or using local produce
- A dedicated page in the [Bath BID Indie Guide](#) that highlights independent restaurants and food businesses in Bath and North East Somerset that prioritise local produce and sustainable sourcing
- A way of recognising and celebrating businesses that are using local produce/working sustainably

6. Commitments and actions

While the aspirational priorities for our food system in Bath and North East Somerset are the right ones, the Council alone cannot adopt them all as formal commitments, nor should responsibility for delivery rest with any single organisation. This strategy has been designed as a co-owned framework, recognising that meaningful food system change requires collective effort across communities, public services, businesses and the voluntary sector.

Below is a list of Council commitments for the first two years of this strategy, setting out the actions the Council can take directly. In future years, we expect this section to evolve into a wider set of Food Partnership Commitments, with a cross-sector partnership group leading and coordinating delivery across Bath and North East Somerset. This approach helps partners share responsibility, work more closely together and build a stronger base for long-term change.

- We will secure capacity for a coordinator role to support the establishment of a cross-sector food partnership and delivery of the Food Strategy can be secured, and how it will be hosted e.g. within a trusted local organisation or the Council (Priority 1)
- To share good practice examples of education settings that promote food education and skills via [The Hub](#) and Public Health in Schools newsletter (Priority 2)
- To share information on farms and community growing spaces that can facilitate visits by schools via [The Hub](#) and Public Health in Schools newsletter (Priority 2)
- To restrict advertising of ultra-processed food on council owned advertising spaces (Priority 3)
- To continue with local plan development, providing the opportunity for key stakeholders to provide feedback to the draft plan published in summer 2025 (Priority 3,6,8 and 9)
- To continue highlighting potential support for community groups, such as via the B&NES “Achieve and Invest” grant list (Priority 4)
- To support discussions on securing more sustainable long-term funding for the voluntary sector organisations that provide the affordable food provision in the area (Priority 5)
- To strengthen planning policy to meet future needs in the proposed housing growth context and to identify local food growing space projects that could be funded through developer contributions (Priority 6)
- Improved Council communications to residents to help them take action for climate and nature (Priority 7 and 8)
- To explore a set of environmental standards required for all direct Council food procurement (Priority 10)
- To explore how better co-ordination can be used within procurement to align deliveries of food to care-homes, minimising the total transport miles that food needs to undergo (Priority 10)

7. Governance & delivery

7.1 Local Food Partnership

This strategy aims to have food-related work in Bath and North East Somerset be coordinated through a cross-sector Food Partnership. This partnership will bring together representatives from the Council, the voluntary and community sector, the business community, the NHS, and landowners or housebuilders. Meeting periodically, the group will provide shared leadership across all key food issues, oversee delivery of the Food Strategy, and ensure it is refreshed at the end of its five-year cycle.

This model is well established elsewhere in the UK, especially across Wales where national funding has supported the development of similar partnerships. Such groups act as a central forum for collaboration across the food system, enabling more joined-up delivery of projects and initiatives. They also provide a collective platform for securing external funding, allowing the area to respond more quickly and strategically to new investment opportunities. Importantly, the partnership will not duplicate existing activity or take on direct delivery roles; instead, it will strengthen coordination, alignment and shared purpose across organisations already active in the food system.

Potential additional roles for the Food Partnership which came out during the strategy development process included:

- Encouraging parish councils, town councils, faith groups and community organisations to deliver practical elements of the strategy locally
- Developing engagement plans with regional and national bodies, including [WECA](#)
- Strengthening engagement with farmers, landowners and the business sector
- Establishing sub-groups to lead on specific themes or areas of expertise
- Embedding food-related priorities into the strategies and plans of partner organisations

7.2 Internal Council governance

Within the Council, governance of the Food Strategy will sit with the Sustainable Economy Steering Group, which is responsible for overseeing delivery of the Economic Strategy that originally called for the development of a Food Strategy. The longer-term intention is for the Local Food Partnership to report into this same group.

Alongside this formal reporting and monitoring route, the Food Strategy will also feed into the Be Well B&NES Steering Group and the Climate and Nature Partnership Group (sub-pillar of the future ambitions board). These groups will not hold direct responsibility for delivery but will provide insights and challenge to ensure the work reflects wider health, climate and nature priorities.

7.3 Monitoring & evaluation

For the monitoring and evaluation of the food strategy, we are adopting a connected approach. Our core monitoring framework will draw on the emerging [West of England Outcome Framework](#). This alignment will help us to work in a more co-ordinated way across the region, and increase the likelihood of accessing future funding streams that depend on partnership working, or which come through the [West of England Combined Authority \(WECA\)](#). Potentially linked metrics from the West of England Outcome Framework include:

- 3.5.2 Increase accessibility and use of nature and green space (for food)
- 5.2.1 Reduction in direct carbon emissions from industry and commercial operations, including from buildings upgraded
- 5.5.2 Increase in climate resilience for new developments, existing buildings and other infrastructure
- 5.6.1 Increase area/length of green and blue habitat in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) measures
- 5.6.3 Increase in land managed for nature
- 5.6.9 Increase use of nature-based solutions to solve climate resilience problems
- 5.6.11 Increase public engagement with nature (for food)
- 6.1.1 Increase engagement with support, advice, and information for families (as related to food)
- 6.1.2 Increase engagement in activities and education for children and families (as related to food)

The West of England Outcome Framework is still in development, which means we are not yet in a position to monitor the proposed metrics in their current form. However, several of the themes and indicators under consideration are already being tracked through existing council strategies, plans, and statutory reporting processes. As the regional framework becomes more defined, we will integrate relevant indicators into our monitoring approach.

Alongside this, the food strategy will include an annual progress report. The long-term ambition is for the responsibility of preparing this report to sit with the local food partnership, reflecting the strategy's commitment to shared ownership, distributed leadership, and community-led deliver.