

Food fears fuel parking bay takeover

Thursday 17 September, 2020

Growers of Hull have taken over parking bays outside the Guildhall, turning them into colourful plots bursting with fruit and veg in a vision of how they want to see gardens and open spaces cultivated in the city.

The growers and wilders collective Gardens and Open Spaces Hull (GOSH) called for the council to work with them to ensure food can be grown more easily in underused places and ultimately improve the city's supply of fresh produce.

Kate Macdonald of Mutual Aid Hub said: "We currently import 48% of the food we consume and the impact of Covid, Brexit and this year's catastrophic wheat harvest means we must urgently increase production in Hull to cope with the tsunami of unemployment and price rises that's coming.

"We the people are part of the solution to the issues we face. The huge groundswell of generosity we saw from the people of Hull during lockdown demonstrates there is a will to help each other and step up as part of a solution."

GOSH believes the people of Hull, given the opportunity, support and encouragement, can bring about their own food revolution, working with existing organisations and the Council.

"It's about capturing hearts and minds," said Margaret Milner, Secretary of Hull and East Riding Allotments Society: "Demand for allotments has increased. People want to grow their own food, fruit and flowers. People are (also) seeing the further benefits of working on an allotment, such as their health and wellbeing.

"Allotments are becoming more diverse. We have people from different countries sharing their growing techniques and produce, and charity plots on some sites.

"Growing and feeding people is what we do. So, what if we got together with the Council and turned this common purpose into feeding the City of Hull. Just imagine what we could achieve."

Wendy Gregory of Community Garden Guerrillas added: "Hull has lots of organisations doing a terrific job of growing food and encouraging biodiversity. They can help people who don't know how or where to start. GOSH wants a joined-up approach to tackling those barriers."

Elizabeth Heywood of The Green Corridor said the event aimed to grab attention and fire imaginations, adding: "In lockdown we all loved getting back to nature, watching wildlife and cultivating fruit and veg. Now, as citizens of Hull, we need to help everyone have access to fresh food and, ideally, grow more for themselves."

GOSH believes there is a need for more local small-scale farming opportunities that will help feed the population as well as reducing the impact on the climate. Ultimately the group's vision includes nurturing micro-enterprises that are able to collaborate to satisfy local food requirements, supported by a better supply chain into the city.

Organiser Kate Macdonald said: "This playful action is to highlight the possibilities that can be created from what we have already. We have a tsunami of need coming our way. Food security is already an issue in our city, but we want to move our focus away from charity to solidarity."

People are urged to join the campaign by following GOSH on social media. Additionally, volunteers are always welcome to help out at any of Hull's community gardens, which include Constable Street off Hessle Road, Down to Earth and Newland Allotments, Rooted in Hull on St Peter Street or Pickering Road Community Orchard to name but a few. Contact GOSH for more details.

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