

Hull: Campaign launched to tackle food insecurity

Tuesday 15 September, 2020

Campaign group **Gardens and Open Spaces Hull** (GOSH) is sending an Open Letter to every one of the city's councillors asking for their help in tackling the twin issues of **food security** and **healthy eating**.

GOSH was set up by gardeners and eco-enthusiasts in the wake of **Covid-19**. Their vision is for a new **community-council partnership**, designed by the city's network of growers and wilders, that will enable and facilitate local people to cultivate their own food.

Elizabeth Heywood of **The Green Corridor**, a west-Hull ecology project, said: "The pandemic showed us how fragile our systems are. As a city we're facing the devastating consequences of Covid, **Brexit** and **climate change**. We need to work together to ensure we all have access to fresh, healthy food and the means to grow it ourselves.

"Many of us in Hull don't have our own **gardens**, so we need to think more creatively about where we can grow food, and many more of us don't have the knowledge or skills – we don't know where to start. That's where Hull's network of growing gurus can help."

Margaret Milner, Secretary of the Hull & East Riding **Allotments Society**, said: "We are blessed with lots of brilliant organisations and community groups involved in growing food, running **food banks** and encouraging **biodiversity**. They're doing an amazing job!

"Growing things and feeding people is what we do. But what if we all got together with the council and turned that common purpose into feeding the city of Hull. Just imagine what we could achieve."

According to research carried out by the **Food Standards Agency** (FSA), during the height of the pandemic: "Food was a continual source of concern and worry rather than nourishment and security. **Food anxiety** didn't go away when supermarket shelves re-filled. There were no treats and little comforts at the end of a hard day. Many quickly cut calorie intake and reduced the quality of the food eaten - with far-reaching physical and emotional impact. **Many children went without.**"

The report goes on to state that "food insecurity has more than **doubled** under Covid-19 and lockdown. **Food insecurity** levels in May 2020 were **250% higher** than pre-Covid. Roughly 16% of people have skipped meals/cut meal sizes for financial reasons. And as of June 2020 1 in 4 young people [under 25] were experiencing food insecurity."

Kate Macdonald, Director of **Timebank** Hull & East Riding, said: "There is no need for people here to go without. As a city we can and must create the conditions to enable us to grow far more of our own food and share that produce with those in need.

"To do this we must use our gardens and whatever open spaces are available: verges, fields, roundabouts, parks. We also need **wild places for pollinators** to ensure these efforts bear fruit."

GOSH aims to establish a new compact with **Hull City Council** that enables individuals and community groups to take on unused or underused **public spaces** quickly, easily and effectively.

Wendy Gregory of East Hull Community Garden Guerrillas said: "A new ethos of partnership working with each other and the Council is essential to make Hull better, kinder and stronger.

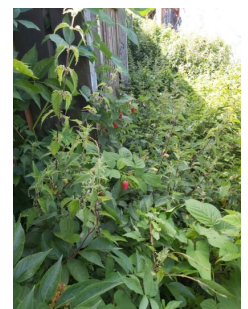
"Together we can facilitate activities and **teach skills** that will make the city more **neighbourly**, more **resilient** and better able not only to withstand future challenges but also to **thrive**."

Kate Macdonald said: "We want to create upstream **solutions** where we have a city of food growers and an ethos of **sharing** our seedlings and our gluts, meaning no one in this city has to rely on handouts.

"Hull and the surrounding area already has so many **committed growers** willing to share their knowledge, which means families can learn how to grow healthy, nutritious food for themselves and share the benefits for mind and body of getting back to nature. Please join Hull's growing **Land Army**."

GOSH is starting with an **Open Letter** to Hull's councillors, seeking their **support** in bringing about

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change and helping to devise a unified food and biodiversity policy. The letter is also available online on Facebook and Twitter for anyone to sign.

Elizabeth Heywood added: "This is just the beginning. Join us! **Our futures depend on it** and there is no time to lose."

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