

Sustainable Food Cities

Phase 2 Evaluation
Final Report

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Sustainable Food Cities Phase 2 Evaluation Final Report

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Key points

1. SFC has evolved into a mature and increasingly stable network of 50 active member cities and other geographical areas. Phase 2 of the programme has moved beyond proof of concept to show evidence of impact in a range of areas. Increasingly, SFC has had a determining role in shaping changes at the local level. These can be understood as 'critical pathways' where, in the absence of SFC, it is highly likely that action in most SFC cities would only consist of fragmented initiatives addressing a limited range of sustainable food issues with limited impact.
2. Just over half (54%) of the active SFC partnerships (27/50) have been members for five or more years. Local food partnerships are now represented in local authority areas that cover a total UK population of 20.4 million people. SFC covers a diversity of places and includes membership in some of the UK's most economically deprived urban areas.
3. Financial analysis shows that the programme has been very successful in leveraging additional funding. From the initial Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) allocation of £1,698,186, the programme has raised an additional £3,540,939 in cash and in-kind contributions. This represents a return of £2 for every £1 investment by EFF. The multiplier effect is greater when assessed at city level, with a total SFC grant funding of £493,359 to 31 city members generating £7 for every £1 invested.
4. The growth of the national SFC programme has been accompanied by a substantial period of food policy activity in local government. The scale and comprehensiveness of this work is probably without historical precedent, and it is certainly the case that no comparable initiative to SFC has convened a more detailed picture of action on food issues in UK cities and other local authority areas. Over a seven-year period, evidence from 327 policy actions in 29 leading SFC cities shows that local partnerships are both convening and giving shape to a new food policy landscape in cities. While much activity is driven by local actors, SFC guidance and exchange of ideas within the network has directly informed the technical content, tone and pace of adoption for many policy actions. Direct areas of SFC influence include food charters, multi-sector strategies, and action plans. Local actors – often following the precedents of other SFC members – are successfully advocating for policy changes with a growing body of exemplar cases.
5. Analysis of 25 areas in Phase 2 reveals that SFC funded coordinators and partnerships initiated and augmented a considerable volume and variety of food programmes, projects and activities. Coordinators have directly helped these initiatives through match making; bid writing, project planning and technical advice; advocacy and representation; direct delivery and management; support to obtain funding; and publicity and marketing. Coordinators, in their role to facilitate Local Food Partnership meetings, network events, and media communications, brought attention to a wealth of activities that might otherwise obtain little recognition.
6. In a context where sustainable food policy is largely absent at the national or local level, food activists have operated largely in isolation, often making faltering progress through a frustrating process of trial and error. To address this, SFC offers a range of routes for knowledge-sharing and co-learning including virtual and live training events, national conferences, local and regional food summits. In Phase 2

the team delivered 49 of these events with 1983 participants. Subscriptions to the SFC email discussion group has doubled since Phase 1, from 106 to 214, and receives an average of 30 posts per month. SFC has also fostered a culture where informal sharing of experience and ideas is now common practice and there are many examples where partnerships have moved outside of the formal SFC knowledge sharing platforms to work with and support each other on specific challenges.

7. Processes of innovation transfer have helped partnerships to accelerate progress made on areas that are complex, technical and require specialist insight. In Phase 2 we were able to substantiate a range of cases, including setting up food procurement systems, food poverty alliance membership composition, business recognition schemes, and replication of successful campaign tactics. The breadth and scope of SFC's award framework has helped local food partnerships bring together diverse interests and adopt an organised approach to a complex field.
8. Given minimal resource, SFC has developed strong communication channels through the programme website (28k visits per annum), monthly e-newsletter (circulation 1.7k), twitter account (with 12.5k followers), a dedicated YouTube channel (with 22 videos), and national and local media (41 reports in 22 months). These enable the programme to promote its work and the work of network members to a public audience, engage in policy advocacy and to communicate with and support communication between members of the SFC network and their wider group of stakeholders.
9. SFC has sponsored a series of campaigns leading to unprecedented levels of public engagement in sustainable food issues. The combination of national coordination and local network delivery have been resource-efficient and helped embed actions through a variety of social settings. Through the Sustainable Fish Cities campaign an estimated one billion meals per annum have been served that meet sustainable seafood standards. Sugar Smart is being delivered in 59 local authority areas, of which 31 are SFC members. By March 2019 over 1500 organisations had pledged action to reduce sugar over-consumption. The campaign has gained popular attention through, for example the Coco-Cola Christmas Truck Tour protest and the Transport for London ban on junk food. Learning from this work, Sustain and partners are refining their approach on Veg Cities, the latest campaign to increase availability and consumption of vegetables.
10. SFC has been engaged in several high-profile policy processes in UK and devolved nation governments. At UK level these include action on food poverty, access to healthy food, systems work on obesity, public procurement, and Brexit preparation. In devolved nations, Wales is a leading exemplar of scaling up from local governance. SFC member Cardiff has taken its learning on procurement, food poverty and dietary change into the national policy area. Although the context differs in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English Regions, similar processes show a fertile exchange of policy solutions from local to higher levels of governance.
11. Internationally, the past decade has seen a surge in interest to shape local food policy landscape in cities. Compared to other national contexts, the SFC model is marked out by its unprecedented infrastructure for policy advocacy, networking, coordination, and outreach into popular civil society.

12. Since the initial stages of the programme, SFC has been a subject of keen interest for researchers inside the UK and international higher education sector. Between 2015 and 2019 there have been at least nine academic publications concerned with the programme. Central themes of the research suggest that SFC shows:
- a basis for bringing together disconnected issues across the food system
 - an innovative model for local governance and trans-local governance
 - a promising format for convening formerly disconnected actors
 - an exemplar of community food action at scale
 - an example of innovative city action on food in a context of weak national direction.

1. Overview

This report summarises findings from the evaluation of the Sustainable Food Cities (SFC) Phase 2 programme between 2016 and 2019. Undertaken between April and mid-May 2019 - four months before the formal close of Phase 2 - the aim of this research has been to compile an assessment of the outcomes and impact of the programme.

The research draws upon an analysis of 17 award applications, grant reports from the 26 areas that received coordinator funding, programme campaign reports, a range of programme activity logs, and SFC communications analytics, SFC financial data and funding data from the Food Power programme. This is supplemented by in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders from a selection of SFC member areas.

This final evaluation of Phase 2 builds on and should be read in conjunction with the results of the exploratory and interim research (Hills and Jones, 2017 and Hills and Jones, 2018).

2. The development and maturity of the SFC network

SFC has evolved into a mature and increasingly stable network currently comprising of 50 cities and other geographic areas (see Table 1). Just over half (54%) of the active¹ SFC partnerships (27/50) have been members for five or more years. More than two thirds (72%) have been active for three or more years. Five prospective members are expected to join the network in 2019.

Table 1: Partnership Maturity

Years active	Number of members
1 (or less)	8
2	6
3	3
4	6
5	6
6	21

Active partnerships are present in local authorities that cover a total UK population of 20.4 million people. Member areas are widely distributed across the UK: there are SFC members in all four nations with a wide geographical representation between Aberdeen to Plymouth (north to south) and Belfast to Cambridge (east to west). In addition to some affluent areas, SFC has an established membership in some of the UK's most economically deprived urban areas, such as Oldham and Middlesbrough.

The number of award holders has increased over the course of the programme, with a projection of over 33 members holding a Bronze, Silver or Gold award by late 2020. Given the level of documentary evidence required in award applications, SFC awards are a useful proxy indicator for the robustness and sustainability of local partnerships.

¹ Active members are defined as areas that have reported a local food partnership to SFC within the 12 month period preceding an annual audit.

Table 2: SFC member award holders

	Members	Bronze	Silver	Gold
End of Phase 1	47	7	2	N/A
End of Phase 2	55*	14**	3**	2 (in process)**

*50 active, 5 prospective, 11 dormant

**25 Bronze, 6+ Silver, 2 Gold = SFC projection for 2020

3. Financial support and sustainability of local partnerships

The aim in this section is to explore the value for money and financial health of the SFC programme. One of the key goals of SFC Phase 2 was to support partnerships to reach a position of financial independence and sustainability. The ultimate vision is that SFC should move from a centrally funded programme to an autonomous, mature and resilient movement that has the capacity to generate its own momentum and funding into the long term. This ambition is in the context of almost 10 years of austerity, where key potential funders of sustainable food work such as local government and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) have had their funding cut by approximately 50% and 40% respectively in the period 2010/11 - 2019/20 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2019). In terms of the food agenda (not least because of food poverty) it is also significant that cuts to local government funding have had a disproportionate impact on areas with the highest levels of deprivation (Gray and Barford, 2018).

The financial analysis shows that the programme has been very successful in leveraging additional funding. From the initial Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) allocation of £1,698,186, the programme has raised an additional £3,540,939 in cash and in-kind contributions (Table 3). This represents a return of £2 for every £1 investment by EFF.

The multiplier effect is greater when assessed at city level, with a total SFC grant funding of £493,359 to 31 city members generating £7 for every £1 invested (Table 3).

Table 3: Funding and support leveraged through SFC grant allocations

SFC Phase 2 Grants Total (coordinator & campaigns)	Additional funding leveraged (cash)	Additional in kind contributions leveraged	Total cash and in kind contributions
£493,359	£3,323,138	£217,801	£3,540,939

The SFC coordinator and campaign grants were distributed over three funding rounds in pots that were relatively modest in comparison to Phase 1. This enabled the resource to be shared widely among the network with successful partnerships receiving a maximum allocation of up to £10,000 to support a coordinator salary and up to £5,000 for SFC campaigns in each funding round. Recipients were required to match fund all grant allocations. Grant recipients raised £531,143 in match funding contributions, therefore, collectively exceeding the match fund target by approximately £40,000.

Of the 25 partnerships that received SFC coordinator funding, the majority (72%) have been successful in leveraging funding in addition to compulsory grant match. These contributions were to support core partnership functions as well as specific projects in areas including food growing, food education and food poverty. £663,410 of the additional funding and in

kind support leveraged was associated with successful bids to the Food Power programme². The remainder was generated from a range of sources with the majority coming from local NHS bodies, local government, the Welsh Government and national charities.

There are cases of sizeable sums awarded to partnerships. Much of this has provided the springboard for new funded programmes of work. Leading examples include: following Food Cardiff's pilot, a £1.5 million award from the Welsh Government for a national 3-year holiday enrichment programme; £200,000 from Greater Manchester Council to establish a sustainable food partnership and strategy in the city region; £145,000 from Aberdeen council to fund food growing projects in regeneration areas and Food Sense Wales (a national programme borne out of Food Cardiff), which raised income of £118,168 in the period 2017-18.

The stakeholder research highlighted the pivotal role played by relatively modest SFC grant allocations. First, the funding has enabled the initiation and development of strategic work on food over a sustained period. Second it has provided an important means through which to leverage in local match funding; a point which has been strongly evidenced through the financial analysis.

The degree to which partnerships have been successful in leveraging funding is particularly significant in the context of long-term austerity in the public sector. This indicates growing recognition by funders, as a result of SFC activity, of the importance of the sustainable food agenda. It also suggests confidence in SFC as an important platform through which to pursue environmental, health, social justice and economic strategic priorities.

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that funding remains a significant concern for SFC partnerships. Whilst for some areas, local investment is reaching a point where core funding is relatively secure in the 1-3 year term, the majority are experiencing ongoing challenges in identifying and pursuing potential sources of funding to resource core activities and priority areas for action.

4. SFC's influence on local policy and city food agendas

The growth of the national SFC programme has been accompanied by a substantial period of food policy activity in local government. The scale and comprehensiveness of this work is probably without historical precedent, and it is certainly the case that no comparable initiative to SFC has convened a more detailed picture of action on food issues in UK cities and other local authority areas. SFC membership often starts with local food partnerships tracking connections and gaps in policy actions. In Phase 2, SFC enhanced its advice and support to coordinators on engaging with local authorities on policy (Marceau, 2018; Davies, 2018).

Reporting through award applications and coordinator updates reveal how key actors have succeeded incorporating actions on food into multiple domains local policy. Drawing upon this evidence, Figure 1 shows an analysis of 327 local policy actions on food recorded in 29 SFC member areas between 2011 and 2019. This shows actions across a range of domains including at the high level of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy (e.g. Greenwich, 2015), a

² Led by Sustain, this communities-based food poverty programme is funded by Big Lottery and Church Action on Poverty. The programme is a direct legacy of the SFC campaign Beyond the Food Bank, which itself evolved from work pioneered by the work of the Brighton Food Partnership (see Section 7). It draws on and capitalised upon the cross-sector partnership and network co-learning model developed through SFC.

Local Plan (e.g. Carlisle, 2015). Other policy actions take place in the context of local authority departments or public sector institutions for example with respect to food waste management or procurement.

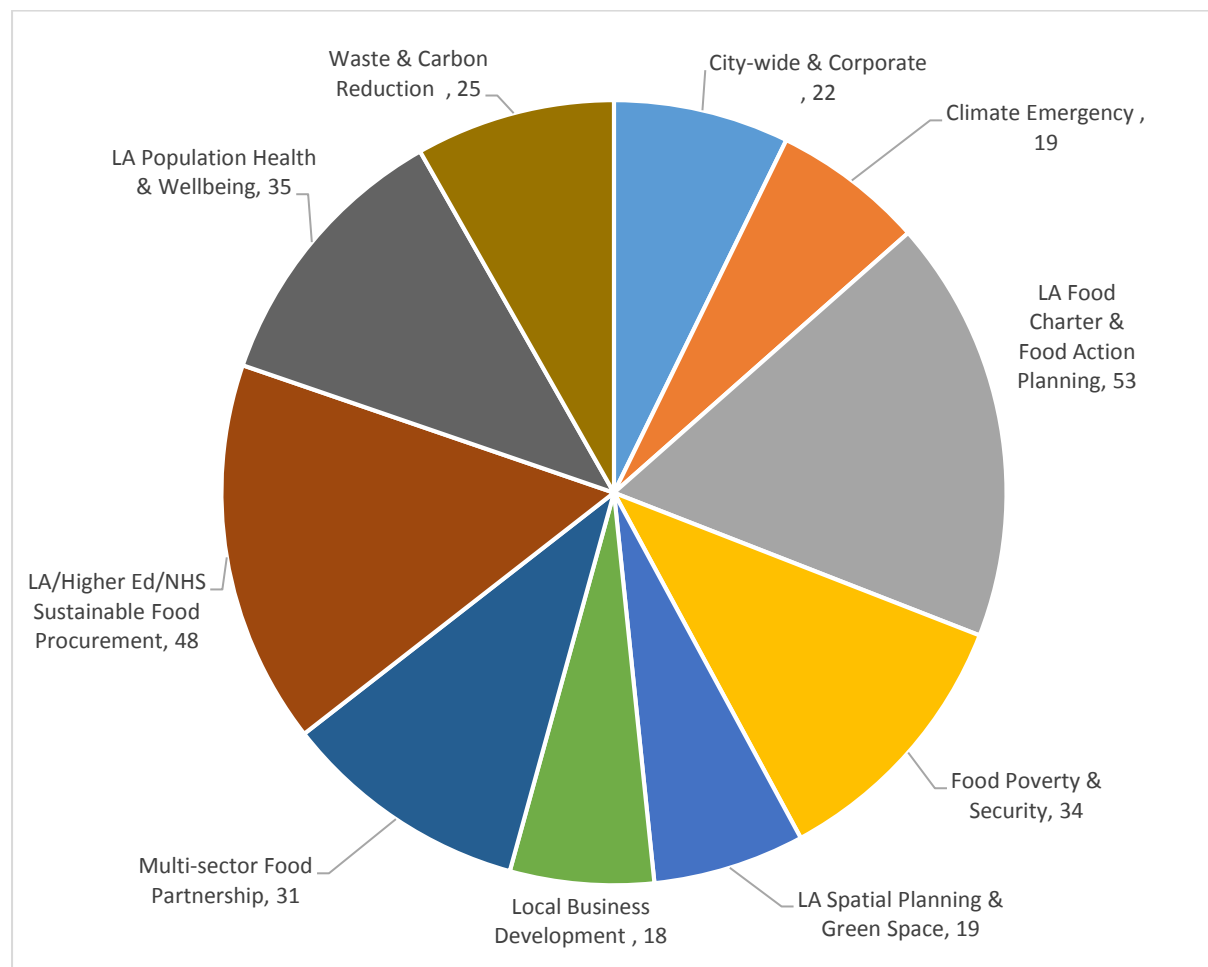


Figure 1: Local policy actions linked to food issues identified from an analysis of SFC award applications and coordinator reports between 2011 and 2019.

Total n=327 actions from 29 SFC member areas.

Under SFC's current recording systems, the specific influence of SFC and local food partnerships actors is not straightforward to trace. However, it is plausible that (1) over time an increasing number of actions are becoming clearly linked to the influence of SFC, and (2) local food partnerships are taking comprehensive stock and a strategic approach towards local policy levers on food issues³. To illustrate these processes, Figure 2 shows an increase in number of local policy actions over time in the 29 areas analysed. It also marks out 89 "SFC linked policy actions" that are directly linked to SFC membership including formation of a local food partnership, establishing a food charter, and putting in place a food action plan.

³ With the exceptions of Brighton and Hove and the Greater London Authority, we found no evidence that local food partnerships had undertaken a systematic analysis of food in local policy prior to engagement with SFC.

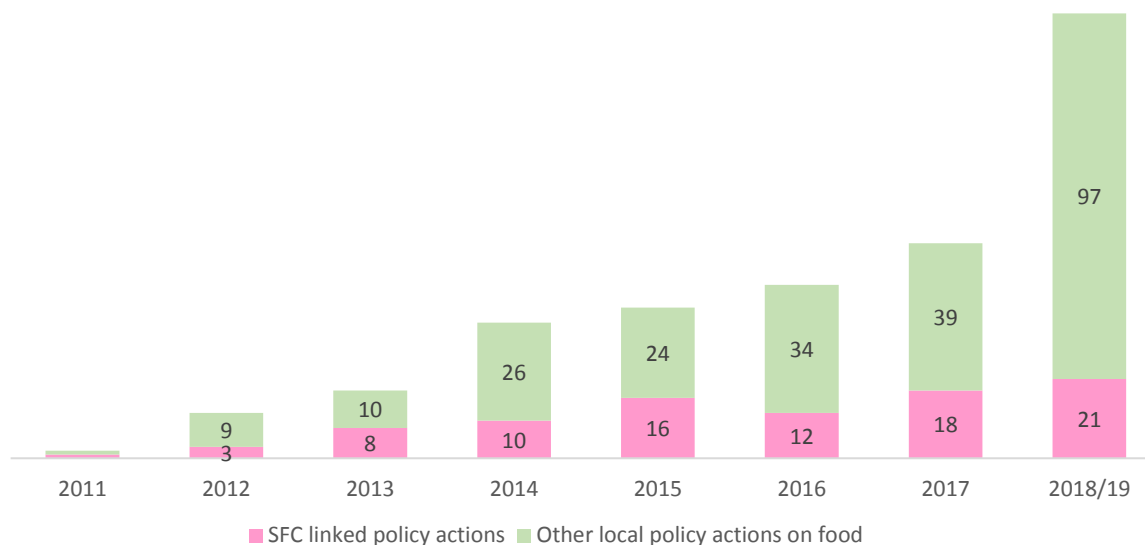


Figure 2: Incidence of food-related local policy actions

Total n=327 Based on analysis of award applications and coordinator reports from 29 SFC member local authority areas.

Further evidence from interviews showed that SFC Network members have been actively drawing upon SFC guidance on local policy agenda-setting, formulation and adoption. As a consequence, local food partnerships have been able to lobby with more confidence, skills and effectiveness. This highlights the potential of SFC if partnerships are supported to achieve a critical level of maturity and capacity in policy advocacy. Some leading examples of higher level policy commitments are as follows:

- 2016. Sustainable Food City Partnership **Aberdeen** successfully advocated for food objectives to be written into their Local Outcomes Improvement Plan after a two-year process of engagement.
- 2017. Local partnership work secured the aim to make **Glasgow** a sustainable food city in the council's strategic plan.
- 2018. In **Bristol**, partnership members have succeeded in engaging the council's senior leadership team to commit to 'Going for Gold' with SFC and to accompany this with financial and in-kind investment in the food partnership.
- 2019. The **Bristol** partnership lobbied successfully for the inclusion of food as one of the main strands in the new One City Plan.
- 2018. Mayoral support was obtained for the creation of a cross-sectoral strategic food partnership in **Greater Manchester**, following SFC Network member proposals.
- 2014 and 2018. **Brighton and Hove** Food Partnership secured a specific food section in Sustainable Communities Strategy and high level commitment to support an SFC Gold Award Application.
- 2018. The draft London Food Strategy for the **Greater London Authority** references the SFC Silver Award and encourages all borough authorities to join the network.

The evidence on policy actions indicates that member areas are adept at taking action on emerging agendas. For example, it is notable that in the last six months, 20 out of 58 local authorities declaring a climate emergency are SFC members and Local Food Partnerships, such as Durham's, are being consulted on priority actions for the food system.

5. SFC's influence on local practice

Analysis of 25 areas in Phase 2 reveals that SFC funded coordinators and partnerships initiated and augmented a considerable volume and variety of food programmes, projects and activities. Coordinators have directly helped these initiatives through match-making; bid writing, project planning and technical advice; advocacy and representation; direct delivery and management; support to obtain funding; and publicity and marketing. Coordinators, in their role to facilitate Local Food Partnership meetings, network events, and media communications, brought attention to a wealth of activities that might otherwise obtain little recognition. This whole local picture was reported to be of value to senior decision makers, as well as to grass-root community and business members.

Some initiatives, that are significant because of their potential strategic impact, are highlighted below.

Developing local supply chains. Several partnerships are working to increase the consumption of locally produced food and help create better links between growers, producers and potential markets. For example:

- The Cambridge Food Partnership is supporting the development of the **Cambridge Food Hub**. The aim of this project is to increase the consumption of locally and sustainably sourced produce. The aim is for the Food Hub to be a significant food storage and distribution centre, small business incubator, shop and cafe that will service Cambridge City and surrounding area.
- Middlesbrough Food Partnership via its **Growing Middlesbrough** initiative is supporting Middlesbrough College to procure more local food and drink. For example, this has led to a dairy product contract with a local organic milk producer (Acorn Dairy). As a result of the additional volumes of products delivered to Middlesbrough College, Acorn Dairy now deliver directly to Middlesbrough on additional days, creating more opportunities for direct supply to smaller independent businesses. This is giving better value for both the independent businesses and Acorn Dairy.

Food poverty. Nine awards in total have been awarded to Food Cardiff for the development of the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (Food and Fun) model, its delivery in Cardiff and support of the National Roll out. The enrichment programme is a case study in the Children's Commissioners recent report: 'A Charter for Change : Protecting Welsh Children from the Impact of Poverty'.

Food Waste. The Cambridge food partnership 'Taste not Waste' programme is working with restaurants, catering businesses and food outlets across the city to reduce their food waste. As a result of joining the programme, Cambridge Cookery will be the city's first zero food waste café.

Initiatives inspired and accelerated by Going for Gold. Leading food partnerships Brighton and Bristol are drawing on the interest, goodwill and support that is being

generated by their bids to gain an SFC Gold Award to work towards creating a step-change in relation to key food system challenges. Each city has carried out extensive consultation with city stakeholders to reach consensus on the projects that support 'Going for Gold' priority areas. Bristol's coordinator grant reports document some of the key activity in this area. For example:

- The Bristol Food network (BFN) is working with the Deputy Mayor on exploratory work to pioneer the first catering Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) in the South West. Through changing procurement rules the DPS will open up the procurement market to small, local producers. This work is being followed by DEFRA and the Crown Estate who are keen to see a DPS piloted in the South West. The BFN lead for the catering and procurement strand of the Bristol Going for Gold (G4G) work is the coordinator of the Dynamic Food Procurement Advisory Board.
- Food waste the second priority area in Bristol's G4G bid. The national NGO Resource Futures is providing *pro bono* staffing resource to coordinate this strand of work. The first stage of the work involves creating a comprehensive spatial map of all food waste work that is currently underway across the city. This will provide the basis for further streams of work.

6. Replication of practice and innovation transfer between SFC members

One function of SFC is to support SFC members to share ideas and learn from one another. For city-level action on food issues, this could be particularly significant given the complexity of the field, a deficit of well-established precedents and models for practice, and the scale and diversity of innovative thinking. SFC offers a number of mechanisms for the exchange of learning including open-access award application records, regular harvesting and dissemination of best practice examples, peer-to-peer communication platforms, in-person network events, and direct signposting work.

Table 5 summarises the engagement of partnerships and a wider group of local, regional and national stakeholders in the broad range of networking and knowledge-sharing events and platforms offered during Phase 2. The case study research and programme attendance records indicate that the national conferences, food summits, campaign related events, training webinars and the email discussion group have proved particularly popular with SFC partnerships and their wider network.

Table 4: Engagement with knowledge exchange platforms, networking and training events

Platform	Number of events	Engagement
Email discussion group. Used by the SFC team for information sharing and by members for learning exchange, peer-to-peer support and group problem solving on common challenges.	Ongoing	Subscriptions have doubled since the end of Phase 1 (106 – 214). Receives an average 30 posts per month
Webinars	16	52 average (23 – 98 per event)
Training events on food hubs, funding strategy and campaigning	4	17 average (12 – 32 per event)
Local and regional food summits and networking events	13 Food Summits 5 networking events	44 average (12-67 per event) 21 average (8-40 per event) Food summit attendance records evidence SFC success in bringing together representatives from a wide range of sectors (including business forums and large businesses, local government, public health and the NHS, universities and schools, NGOs, religious councils, youth and community groups) to these events.
Campaign national conferences	2	125 average (100 – 150)
SFC National conference	2	180 delegates representing 60 places at each conference
Programme consultation events (capturing learning at end of Phase 1 and Phase 2)	8	11 per event

Participants in the case study research consistently referred to these resources as an invaluable source of inspiration, upskilling and support that was not available in any other form. This was summarised by one interviewee as follows:

One of the challenges of running a partnership like this is that you have to be a specialist in so many areas that it is almost impossible to achieve it. So to be able to have that broader network and be able to bring up people who have that expertise in those broader areas is just absolutely brilliant.

Beyond the impact on developing the knowledge and skills of those most closely associated with food partnerships, events such as regional food summits and the national SFC conference were identified as a unique opportunity to informally educate key local stakeholders and raise the profile of partnership work with these actors. For example, seeing best practice from their local area showcased on a national platform and contextualised in relation to global food system issues, helped public sector executives to better understand the significance of the work that was being undertaken by their local partnership. Moreover,

the national events also gave senior decision makers the opportunity to build food-related connections with their peers in other local authority areas.

Given the range of training and co-learning resources referred to above and the strong level of engagement with these opportunities it was beyond the capacity of the current evaluation to carry out a systematic analysis of the impact of this area of the programme's work. The examples below, nevertheless, provide an illustration of the influence of SFC in fostering a culture of co-learning and innovation transfer.

Business Recognition Schemes. Bournemouth piloted a scheme to publicly badge businesses that demonstrate commitments to healthy and sustainable food. Following initial success of the scheme, in early 2018 Liverpool and Cambridge adopted the model for their local context.

Food Growing in Local Planning. Members find this a complex legal and policy field. Sustain's dedicated planning advisor has been able to give members, such as Middlesbrough and Hull, examples of effective clauses to be inserted into local environmental, housing, and business development plans to recognise and protect local food production.

Food Procurement Strategies. Many local food partnerships have struggled to establish robust and effective food procurement groups. Members, such as Oxford, have been able to build upon the terms of reference and technical procedures developed by early stage SFC members such as Bath and North East Somerset, and Bristol.

Food Poverty Alliances. Brighton developed an innovative coordinated approach to address food poverty, which is formally documented in its *Food Poverty Action Plan: 2015-2018*. Brighton's format for research, alliance development, and action planning has been widely adopted by SFC members.

Strategic local food partnerships. Newly created local food partnerships are learning from the experience of others. For example, Sheffield adopted the approach used in Oxford to engage senior stakeholders at the point of formation. With Oxford's advice, this helped Sheffield maintain a focus on the strategic issues and avoid becoming stuck in details. In similar vein Middlesbrough has supported neighbouring council Darlington in their efforts to develop a food partnership.

Partnership structure. Cambridge followed Exeter's lead on achieving registered charity status. Exeter advised Cambridge on the process, which is quite complex for a partnership body. The outcome for Cambridge will be increased opportunities to apply for grant funding and greater public recognition of the work of the food partnership.

Replication of successful campaign tactics. Partnerships have copied and adapted ideas from other local areas about how to run campaigns. For example, for Sugar Smart this involved mimicking the recruitment of football clubs and other sports organisations based upon the successful work in the first area to try this approach.

7. SFC campaigns

Over the course of Phase 1 and 2 SFC has sponsored a series of campaigns. Whilst specific circumstances underpin the evolution of each campaign, each has been given financial, infrastructure and expert advisory support to the local level through EFF funding. The outcome has been an unprecedented level of influence on key areas of sustainable food policy and practice. The network approach to campaigning is a key example of how SFC has innovated and is implementing a new method for *how* change can take place in the food policy field. With a deficit of action at national policy levels, SFC shows how coordinated

action across a wide network of local areas can bridge gaps between grass roots and macro-structural campaigning.

Sustainable Fish Cities. Launched in 2012, Sustainable Fish Cities has been a featured campaign of the SFC network. It is an initiative conceived and supported by an alliance of not-for-profit organisations already working on sustainable seafood issues, coordinated by Sustain. By early 2019, 16 cities – all of which are SFC members - had joined the campaign. Two leading cities were given the status of Five Star Fish Cities as an indication of the proportion of food serving businesses meeting the campaign pledge commitment. Over 200 caterers in five sectors have signed to the fish pledge.

A notable success has been a commitment by NHS Wales to ensure that all procurement for fish meals in hospitals meets the Fish Cities pledge. Overall, the campaign leads estimate that through the campaign over one billion meals per annum have been served that meet sustainable seafood standards. The campaign has been in parallel with positive consumer trends: sustainable fish sales through UK supermarkets increased by 60% in the period April 2016 – April 2018⁴. By March 2019, the campaign continues to have active engagement, with a list of 2030 email recipients.

Sugar Smart. Sugar Smart aims to build awareness of the links between sugar consumption and ill health and to reduce sugar overconsumption. While the campaign is rooted in an idea developed by the Jamie Oliver Foundation, SFC national partners led by Sustain have developed the infrastructure behind the campaign for local area leads, and SFC provided financial support for SFC members to deliver the initiative. Of the 59 local authority areas involved in running a campaign, 31 are SFC members. By March 2019 over 1500 organisations had pledged action to reduce sugar over-consumption. The campaign has an active mailing list of 1854.

The campaign has driven a number of actions including a decision by Coca-Cola to scale back its Christmas truck tour following coordinated Sugar Smart protests in 2018; a joint letter with Healthy Stadia and 60 signatories to phase out of unhealthy sponsorship in football in 2018; a commitment by 40 member Local Authority Working Group to restrict High Fat Salt and Sugar advertising and to promote healthier advertising in 2018. The latter has helped drive the decision by Transport for London to ban junk food advertising in early 2019. In 2018, Sugar Smart was shortlisted for the Charity Times Award Campaign of the Year and is presented on the Local Government Association website as a case study in best practice campaigning.

Veg Cities. The aim of Veg Cities is to increase availability and consumption of vegetables. Veg Cities is a feature campaign of Sustainable Food Cities and is led by Sustain. It builds upon Peas Please, a partnership initiative that was led by Food Cardiff – itself an SFC member. The campaign has been mapped against the six SFC key issues and has been scaled up nationally as the Veg Cities campaign through SFC grant funding. Campaign national and local leads work with local authorities, food groups and organisations from schools, to hospitals, workplaces, food growing enterprises and restaurants.

By March 2019, 21 campaigns are running in local authority areas, of which 19 are SFC members. A similar group of 20 are also involved in the closely linked Veg Power campaign. Twelve areas are involved in promoting Big Dig, an urban food growing activity that was developed in London. In April 2019, 114 edible gardens from across the UK participated the Big Dig Day and received over 2,000 residents and volunteers. An internal evaluation of the

⁴ Source: Marine Stewardship Council (2018) https://www.mcsuk.org/news/seafood_sales

campaign is planned for late 2019. An early outcome has been a commitment by Caterlink, school food caterers, to increase vegetable provision and low sugar on their menus.

Beyond the Food Bank. Beyond the Food Bank was a campaign that aimed to help cities to develop a more joined-up approach to tackling hunger and food poverty in their areas, through specific practical and policy interventions. One specific goal was to reverse the demand for emergency food assistance. In 2015, thirty SFC member local food partnerships and 350 affiliate organisations formally called on government to reduce the effects of food poverty on vulnerable groups caused by benefits sanctions and delays.

Given the complexity of the issue, campaign activities were diverse and tailored to the local authority context. The campaign led to the establishment of the Food Poverty Alliance, and members had a significant input into the second Feeding Britain Report in 2015. The national Food Power programme has been a direct legacy of the campaign. Of the 50 Food Power areas, over half are SFC members and closely link to the core work of SFC Coordinators.

Planning Food Cities. Planning Food Cities is a campaign initiated and led by Sustain designed to help community organisations use the planning system to support community food growing. The area clearly maps on to the SFC scheme and supports SFC goals. SFC members are primary users of the resources through this initiative. By March 2019, the initiative had addressed queries from 29 local authority areas of which 28 were SFC members. The campaign has an active mailing list of 635 members. The campaign has led to the production of a Guide to Councils on Food Growing in Parks, which has been widely disseminated through local government, food partnership and community organisation media channels.

8. SFC, the food movement and wider public engagement

SFC has developed some strong communication channels including a programme website, monthly e-newsletter, a twitter account and more recently a dedicated YouTube channel. These enable the programme to promote its work and the work of network members to a public audience, engage in policy advocacy and to communicate with and support communication between members of the SFC network and their wider group of stakeholders. This communications work is delivered on an SFC staff resource of approximately three hours per week. Detailed communications and media analytics are provided in the technical appendix. Key insights from this are as follows:

Website: In the period 1 Dec 2017 – 30 Nov 2018, the website was visited 28,200 times by new (57%) and returning (43%) users, with 60,328 views per page. The 'find a city', 'about' and 'webinar' pages were the most popular.

E-newsletter: Subscriptions to the e-newsletter increased by 47% (1180 – 1730) between the end of Phase 1 and end November 2018. Average monthly opens is 29% (in comparison to industry average of 18%). The value of the e-Newsletter as an accessible and comprehensive digest of current global and local sustainable food developments and as a means to engage a partnership's wider network was frequently referred to in the case study research.

[The SFC newsletter] is doing a great job of scanning funding schemes that are coming up, which I don't have the time to do. [It also provides] information about what is going on in Canada or the US around Food Policy Councils and all of that is stuff that I can learn from and adapt and improve what we are doing here. I don't have the capacity to screen everything to find that, but this information comes through. Straight away I can read two or three papers and say "Oh they are doing it that way" and really improve what we are doing here.

Twitter: The number of twitter follows increased by almost 50% (8,408 – 12,531) between the end of Phase 1 and April 2019. Due to capacity issues the volume of tweets from the SFC account has reduced over time (15 in February 2019 versus 56 in April 2018), the number of tweet impressions (number of times that a tweet was seen) at the peak of twitter activity was 82,000 suggesting that the work of SFC has broad appeal.

You Tube: Following a suggestion from the Network, the programme team launched the [Sustainable Food Cities YouTube](#) channel in Phase 2 Year 1. This platform features videos exclusively produced by or for the Network, both locally and nationally. The channel has been very well received and brings to life the creativity, commitment and achievements of the SFC Network that inspires others to further action. Many of the videos are being used to either inspire stakeholders to engage in activity to support an SFC Award application or to celebrate the receipt of an Award. 22 videos have been uploaded to date and the channel has 35 subscribers.

The work of SFC receives widespread **national and local media coverage:** there were 41 reports on the programme between January 2017 and March 2019. Many of these refer to news of an SFC award, new membership, or the launch of a campaign. The reports often lead on human stories such as celebrity chef endorsements or the work of community activists.

It is apparent both from the media and communication analytics and the case study research that with very modest input a range of communication channels have been used to good effect. A strategic review of SFC communications is planned for 2019.

9. SFC in UK, devolved nation, and regional policy context

SFC has been engaged in a number of policy processes in UK and devolved nation governments. It should be noted that this has been in a context of public sector austerity and low policy activity with respect to food, particularly in the period following the referendum on EU membership.

At UK level there is some evidence of influence in the field of food insecurity. SFC was presented in parliamentary consultation as making a contribution to improving action on access to healthy food (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2016; Fabian Commission, 2015). Subsequently, the work of SFC has been incorporated into two government agency publications as an example of good practice and resource for local government work on a healthier food environment and a whole systems approach to obesity (LGA, 2017; PHE, 2017; PHE, 2018;). Direct impacts in this area are with regard to the influence of SFC on local food poverty alliances and the Food Power programme (see above).

More recently, in October 2018 the Food Research Collaboration recommended SFC as a source of support for local authorities to prepare for Brexit. In January 2019 DEFRA approached SFC to act as an intermediary advisor to small and medium food enterprises with respect to no-deal planning for Brexit.

In Wales, SFC was a focus of a Senedd Paper on Good Food for All to the Welsh Assembly in 2015 (Morgan, 2015). SFC member Food Cardiff has been pro-active in engaging, particularly, with Public Health Wales and Food Sense Wales (2018) has developed out of work undertaken by Food Cardiff. The aim of the scheme is to clear national level barriers to local progress on sustainable food. Food Cardiff coordinator drove development and now manages Food Sense Wales. Food Sense Wales supported the UK Parliamentary Inquiry into Children's Food in Wales led by the Food Foundation (April, 2019).

In the Scotland Parliament, there has been a Scottish Labour Motion to call for the development of more SFC local food partnerships (October, 2017). This is in a context of a supportive policy environment for example in public sector food purchasing (Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014), Community Empowerment Act (2015), and the Good Food Nation consultation (2018).

Activity in Northern Ireland is less well established as the other nations, but shows some similar evidence of scaling up and out to national level by an SFC city member. In December 2018, the Belfast Food Network advisory group has started to convene a Northern Ireland wide partnership on good food.

In England, at regional level the SFC team report gaining traction with “the 30+ Council members of the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network and slow, but increasingly positive engagement from Local Enterprise Partnerships.”(SFC Year 2 report, 2018). This level of engagement is also exemplified through the entry of the East Midlands as a regional member to SFC which has been accompanied by support from Public Health Midlands.

10. SFC in international context

SFC is part of a worldwide movement to embed coordinated action on food at the level of urban governance. The past decade has seen a surge in interest to shape local food policy landscape in cities. The USA and Canada have 324 cities with some form of local food partnership, often called food policy councils (Sussman and Bassarab. 2016). In Europe, many nations such as Italy, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, have cities that are actively investing in ambitious work to establish integrated programmes for the urban food system.

While there are a number of national networks, SFC is marked out by its unprecedented infrastructure for sustainable food advocacy, policy and action. The SFC network model is distinguished by the scale and extent of its role in coordination, outreach and development, and representation at national level. Phase 2 has been a period in which SFC has attracted considerable interest from overseas national networks and cities for exchange of best practice and international collaborations for knowledge transfer. Fresh impetus has come from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact to create a global network. This currently stands at 186 signatory cities, with SFC acting as a network affiliate.

11. Higher education research, evidence and knowledge exchange

Since the initial stages of the programme, SFC has been a subject of keen interest for researchers inside the UK and international higher education sector. Between 2015 and 2019 there have been at least nine academic publications concerned with the programme. Central themes of the research suggest that SFC shows:

- A basis for bringing together disconnected issues across the food system
- An innovative model for local governance and trans-local governance
- A promising format for convening formerly disconnected actors
- An exemplar of community food action at scale
- An example of innovative city action on food, in a context of weak national direction
- A basis for measuring the impact of place-based approaches to sustainable food

Place-based sustainable food issues has rapidly grown as a field that incorporates a number of disciplines such as urban geography, public health, sociology, economic development, business development. The chart below shows that there has been over 31,000 references to sustainable food cities in the international academic literature.

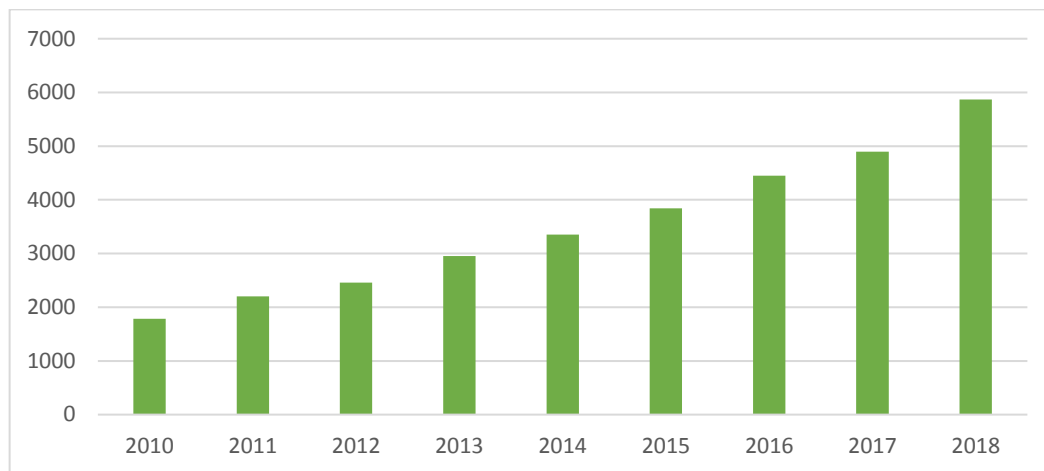


Figure 3: References to 'sustainable food cities' in the academic literature

Source: Science Direct search. Search Peer review journal articles/academic texts/conferences. Title and abstract 'sustainabl* + food + cit*'

Award applications and coordinator reports from 29 SFC members show that at least 21 (72%) of the local food partnerships have links with a local university. These links include assistance from academics to undertake specific pieces of research, expert advice (for example on local economic generation), project evaluation, student internships, use of facilities, platforms for disseminating innovative practice.

SFC members have therefore been actively partnering with research and innovation units in higher education to amplify their work, provide an evidence base, and further the case for local investment. Recent examples include major collaborative funding bids to the European Commission (Bristol, Bath, and Cambridge).

Higher education providers are increasingly investing in the economic, technological, cultural and community life of their primary catchments. Local food partnerships are attractive partners given that they can offer a combination of cross-sector links, community mandate, and strategic credentials.

12. Barriers, challenges and limitations

Quantitative analysis of grant reports reinforces key findings from the qualitative research that limited resources compared with the scale of ambition is the critical limiting factor for partnerships. This is a problem in its own right but may contribute toward staff burnout or turnover which, in turn, slows progress at the local level.

Of the 60 places that have been members of the network since the beginning of Phase 1, 11 have become dormant and five of these have had their membership revoked. This is an indication of the challenges for places to sustain strategic activity on food given limited funding and mainstream policy support. It is therefore a testament to SFC that so many places have managed to sustain their partnerships in this context.

Nevertheless, evidence from interviews and reports show that there was little by way of negative influences of SFC at the city level. The main issues raised concerned specific features of the award scheme, duration and resourcing of campaigns, and a wider sense of the gulf between aspiration and capacity at the local level.

13. Conclusions: critical pathways and implications moving forward

SFC has evolved into a mature and increasingly stable network of 50 active member cities and other geographical areas. Phase 2 of the programme has moved beyond proof of concept to show evidence of impact in a range of areas. While the interim evaluation report (Hills and Jones, 2017) was able to document the influence of the national scheme for a selection of city members, this stage of the evaluation has been able to create a more comprehensive picture of the range and reach of these influences. SFC has had a determining role in shaping changes at the local level. These can be understood as 'critical pathways' where, in the absence of SFC, it is highly likely that action in most SFC cities would only consist of fragmented initiatives addressing a limited range of sustainable food issues with limited impact.

A number of cross-cutting themes highlight how SFC has helped support change. These show that there have been particular benefits with respect to the continuity and evolution of support for network members, and the coherence of the framework in a field that tends towards fragmentation. SFC is creating a common language for change around a highly complex issue that is, itself, in a state of change. It is plausible that the sustainable food city agenda would have been subsumed by alternative policy framings in the absence of SFC.

Implications for SFC arising from the evaluation

SFC is at an important point in its development. Having consolidated the overall mission and developed a highly active national network of members, there are emerging areas for the attention of the programme. Some of these areas reflect circumstances that would face any initiative at this stage of maturation, while others are linked to specific features of place-based sustainable food issues.

Regeneration. SFC will hope to support the energy and enthusiasms of those who have led the way in adopting the programme at city level. These people are especially valuable, not least for their depth of lived experience, their skills in making practical actions and their ability to influence others. At the same time, SFC will be looking to bring in wider circles of actors who can contribute fresh perspectives and broaden the reach and impact of SFC. In a context where most issues are complex, slow to change and emotive, SFC may seek to develop a community of practice that can attend to the personal and career development of its network members.

Data and effective action. With the development of the programme, SFC is also outgrowing its original information management systems. SFC and its wider network is increasingly generating a considerable volume and variety of data. While some systems work well, much of this information could be better gathered, organised and shared to support effective learning and action for every level of the programme.

Tailoring to scale. SFC now works with partnerships operating at different scales of governance, from city regions to sub-local authority municipalities. Moving forward SFC will need to further optimise the programme for a variety of members, and possibly, following the case of London, increasingly work with nested multi-level partnerships. In addition, the

matter of how - mainly urban - local partnerships engage with their rural hinterland is both a matter of scale and a potentially important field for action.

Civil society. SFC partnerships are working extensively within civil society, much of which involves bottom up involvement from highly local and informally constituted community groups where food issues are one aspect of a broader set of social activities. SFC has the opportunity to help facilitate this depth of civil engagement. An important aspect of this is to foster ideas and sense-check the strategic work of partnerships and national leads.

Partnerships and political processes. SFC local partnerships, with national support, have started to demonstrate effective influence on local policy actions. With the very real prospect of further influence on policy, SFC will increasingly need to navigate its relationship with democratically mandated political processes. This is a common issue to all non-politically affiliated third sector agencies, but one that is particularly pertinent when an agency gains increasing strategic success in the public sphere.

Pluralism and political neutrality. With the growth of partnerships, SFC is increasingly bringing diverse voices to the subject of sustainable food in urban and place-based settings. As this 'big tent' becomes bigger, SFC will need to become even more adept at accommodating a plurality of ideas and helping to build meaningful consensus for action. Inevitably this will involve hard questions of what falls outside the tent. One of the greatest challenges involve the points of engagement with the mainstream agri-food system.

Coordinators. The SFC local coordinator role is pivotal to the success of the programme. However, it is a position that would stretch the influence, skills, experience and resources of anyone. As the programme evolves it would be helpful to give attention to the coordinator role and to explore the potential to build greater clarity and guidance about the nature, scope and priorities for the role. It would also be helpful to consider how to provide opportunities for coordinators to engage in professional development of relevance to their leadership role and the programme priorities.

Meta-learning. At the end of this seven-year period, where the programme is at the threshold of a new phase that will potentially involve new arrangements for the management and delivery of the programme it would be valuable for the national partnership team to create a space that would enable their learning and experience to be captured and explored.

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