



*"...local people creating the food system they want."*



[www.highlandgoodfood.scot](http://www.highlandgoodfood.scot)

**The  
 Pebble Trust**



# Highland Good Food Conference Report 2021

## Contents

<b>Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Phase 1 – The Conversation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Phase 2 – Highland Good Food Conference</b>	<b>7</b>
Participants	8
Main Themes	9
The Conference Day by Day	15
Day 1 – Vision Setting	15
Highland Good Food Vision and Values	15
Provocations	16
Day 2 – People	19
Provocations	19
Day 3 – Land & Infrastructure	22
Provocations	22
Day 4 – Finance	25
Provocations	25
Day 5 – Taking Action	28
Provocation	28
Project Group Presentations	29
<b>Conclusions &amp; Next Steps</b>	<b>34</b>
Highland Good Food Movement	35
Action Plan	36
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>38</b>
Team	38
Funders	38
<b>Final Remarks</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>40</b>

# Overview

## Introduction

The first Highland Good Food Conference ran over five consecutive Monday afternoons in January and February 2021. It attracted over 90 delegates from all parts of the Highland food sector, including the public, private and third sectors, united by a drive to make the system better for the planet, the people and the producers. The conference forms part of a wider Highland Good Food Conversation, engaging local people with different aspects of food production and selling. That conversation started in August 2020, and will continue beyond the conference; the conversation is carried out through the [Highland Good Food Conversation](#) website, social media, and a range of podcasts and blog posts.

## The Conference

Each of the conference afternoons was a mixture of group discussion and short talks. The talks, or “provocations”, were five minute presentations by a wide range of doers and thinkers, designed to stimulate new thinking about local food issues. Some of the group discussions were of a general nature, where delegates were assigned to random groups with the aim of making new contacts and sharing different perspectives. In addition, delegates each chose a project group to develop an action plan for a specific project and these project plans were presented to the whole conference on the final afternoon.

## Key Themes

A number of key themes were reflected in delegates’ contributions throughout the conference. They were:

- **Collaboration**
  - Working together, sharing resources;
  - Cross-sectoral cooperation – between producers, retailers, schools, colleges, community growing projects, hospitals and GPs.
- **Resilience**
  - Ensuring food security in times of pandemics and climate instability;
  - Diversity of producers and retail outlets;
  - Increased self-sufficiency for the Highlands, supported by public sector procurement;
  - Essential services, e.g. abattoirs, needed at a local level;
  - Healthy food needs to be universally available and affordable;
  - Circular economy thinking to minimise resource use.
- **Education**
  - In schools – growing and preparing food, and making sure good, local food is served;
  - Training – better training for careers in agriculture and hospitality;
  - For adults – nutrition, environmental impact, growing, preparing and cooking.

- **Sustainability**
  - Better practices for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
  - Addressing the biodiversity crisis;
  - Better public sector support for these changes.
- **Community**
  - Getting more people growing for multiple health and educational benefits;
  - Young people have a key role in shaping their own future;
  - A smarter approach to food poverty – nutritious local food should be available to all;
  - Shortening supply chains so that customers recognise and value well-produced food;
  - Celebrating local food and valuing indigenous skills.
- **Health and well-being**
  - Making a good diet available to all incomes;
  - Engaging with the NHS to highlight the importance of diet;
  - Using the powerful social and cultural significance of food to build relationships and improve well-being and mental health.

One additional theme that links all the above is their inter-connectedness – a food-related project typically has implications for health, education, the local economy and the environment. That demonstrates the need to approach food issues across all sectors.

### Provocations

There were a total of 17 provocations, themed to cover developing a vision (Day 1), people (Day 2), land and infrastructure (Day 3), finance (Day 4) and taking action (Day 5). They were wonderfully diverse, informative and, as we hoped, provocative. They are summarised in the sections of this report dealing with each day's session – but any attempt to condense them further for this section would be counter-productive!

### Project Groups

The topics developed by project groups were:

1. Develop a producer-owned retail co-operative
2. Develop a Highland-wide online food hub
3. Work towards a world-class restaurant sector in the Highlands
4. Develop a lobbying policy group ensuring the Highland voice is heard
5. Work towards every school in the Highlands growing, cooking and eating their own food
6. Develop a Highland-wide community food growing network
7. Work to “big-up” small farms in the Highlands
8. Develop a Highland circular/ zero waste food economy
9. Marketing and promoting local Highland food as a brand
10. Create a thriving glasshouse sector in the Highlands
11. Working towards seed sovereignty in the Highlands

Their conclusions are summarised in the detailed part of this report, with full details in the appendix and videos of the presentations available [here](#).

These are by no means the only priorities for Highland Good Food, and we expect more to emerge as more people engage.

### Conclusions and Next Steps

The conference has generated a new Highland Good Food Movement, which needs coordination and support. We anticipate a small group, the Highland Good Food Partnership, will support working groups to take forward the projects set out in this report, together with others as they arise.

Members of each working group will participate in the partnership and some from the partnership will join the working groups to make sure all decisions are widely supported and all parts of this new movement understand what all the others are doing. We will need a new incorporated body to act as a vehicle for the movement which is a high priority to enable us to apply for funding.

We will continue to engage with the wider public, and will develop a programme of podcasts, blog posts and events to develop interest in Highland Good Food.

We have already taken the first steps to making the vision a reality. We have been awarded funding from [Sustainable Food Places](#) (SFP) to set up the Highland Good Food Partnership. We are also in discussion with [Scotland Food and Drink](#) to take on the function of a Regional Food Group, which will further support a collaborative approach to production.

We are delighted with the positive response to the conference and the energy and enthusiasm shown by delegates – but of course it is only now that the hard work of making the vision real starts. We hope you will join us!

## Foreword

*The plan was to make the most of five of the shortest Monday afternoons in the Highland winter. Everyone across the north of Scotland faced strict restrictions on their movements as the country battled the pandemic. So, with the backdrop of short winter days and Covid-19, something of significance began at 1pm on January 11th. Using a suite of digital platforms (unimaginable even five years ago), people from crofts, farms, estates, homes and offices across the north joined together to begin the Highland Good Food Conference.*

*More people than expected showed up on week one and even more in week two. A fast-paced, engaging rhythm was quickly established. Three and a half hours passed quickly listening to provocateurs ably provoke thinking on a widening range of ideas. Then there was the opportunity to meet up with others, often for the first time, through the magic of being beamed into virtual meeting rooms. Quickly, a set of projects emerged from the participants and a crucial part of the Conversation was underway. Week by week the momentum around those projects grew. Groups started to connect between Mondays, the pace picked up and the ambition grew.*

*You will see from this report the breadth of territory covered and what actions will follow.*

*A climate emergency, a global pandemic and growing interest in a Scotland characterised as a place of well-being meant the timing of this conference was just right.*

**-Dennis Overton, Chair of Scotland Food and Drink**

## Introduction

Over the last year we have all witnessed how precarious our food system is and how, during this crisis, it is our local food producers and retailers who have innovatively and passionately risen to the challenge of getting food to us all.

This crisis, along with the climate emergency and the biodiversity disaster, has made many of us stop and think. It has resulted in a surge of energy and interest in the local food sector, with many keen to see a food system that is better for the planet, better for people and better for producers. To build on this enthusiasm and awareness [The Pebble Trust](#) and [Transition Black Isle](#) decided to jointly fund phase one and two of the Highland Good Food Conversation. The conversation was launched in August 2020 with the aim to bring people together from across the Highlands who are interested in sustainable local food, to develop a vision of good food for the Highlands, and to identify key actions to take forward. The main purpose being to inspire and facilitate people to take real action to change our food system for the better.





During phase one, the aim was to engage a diverse range of perspectives and learn about the different challenges and possible solutions across the sector. We explored the big topics around local food via a new 'Highland Good Food' [podcast](#) and [blog](#) series, a social media campaign, and online resources through our [website](#). It was an opportunity to hear from inspiring, progressive doers and thinkers; from farmers to food campaigners, and from crofters to fishermen. We developed a large community on social media, have had over 3,000 downloads of our podcast and now have just under 300 email subscribers.



The heart of the Conversation was phase two; a virtual conference spread over five half-days in January and February 2021. The conference united delegates through a common goal and vision of what good food will look (and taste) like, here in the Highlands by 2030.

On each of the days we collectively tackled a particular topic through a mix of facilitated discussions and inspiring provocations;

**Day 1 – Vision setting – What does a Highland good food system look like?**

**Day 2 – People – How do we keep people at the heart of our food system?**

**Day 3 – Land & Infrastructure – What needs to happen to make producing local food sustainable?**

**Day 4 – Finance – How is a local food system best funded?**

**Day 5 – Taking action – What happens now?**

During the conference, delegates formed project groups each focussing on a different aspect of our food system, and developed ways that their group can contribute to realising the good food vision. The themes for these projects were identified by delegates on day one as part of our vision setting exercise.

Having the conference spread over the five weeks afforded the organising team time and opportunity to pull in expertise to support evolving project ideas. For example, Simon Kenton-Lake ([Peas Please](#) Officer at Nourish), Lucianne Waddle ([Food for Life](#)) and William Clark ([Zero Waste Scotland](#)) all contributed to our discussions.

The model of five minute provocations proved popular with delegates as it allowed several big ideas to be shared at each session and they encouraged delegates to be brave and think big. The task of the provocateurs was to inspire the delegates to challenge mainstream thinking and to feel empowered to act as leaders.

## Participants

Throughout the five weeks, over 90 delegates from all corners of the Highlands and further afield joined the conference. The diversity of delegate backgrounds added great value and depth to the discussions.



Diagram 1 - Summary of conference participants



Throughout the five weeks six key themes emerged. Everyone was eager to collaborate and work together to prioritise resilience, diversity and regenerative approaches. Much comes under each of these and some actions which arise in order to realise them can be achieved by the Highland Good Food team and those who want to be actively involved. Others require a more systemic approach with policy changes essential to achieve these.

The key themes are:

## 1. Collaboration

It is essential that we work together in order to achieve the Highland Good Food vision. Collaboration will enable and strengthen:

- Sharing: resources, knowledge, stories, tools, seeds etc**  
 Sharing knowledge and learning between producers and growers, for example, can enable them to better prepare for and tackle issues, save on resource spending and encourage change. Another example of this is community growing initiatives such as community gardens. By sharing resources such as expertise, success stories and more, they can give each other support to start up and momentum to continue.
- Retail co-operatives and food hubs**  
 Through collaborations between producers, producer-owned co-ops and food hubs can be set up and organised as an alternative, shorter supply-chain route to market. Here, producers can also collaborate to ensure that certain foods are grown between them so that their co-op has a diversity of produce. Consumers can also collaborate to set up their own co-ops, and order food in bulk together to benefit from economies of scale.
- Collaborations between sectors**  
 For example, producers can work with the hospitality sector - restaurants, cafes, hotels - as well as hospitals and schools to create relationships and encourage provision and availability of healthy local food everywhere.

"We need compassionate collaborations to strengthen the community."

- DELEGATE

"We could have an inclusive network where individuals and groups can support each other."

- DELEGATE

- **A resource hub**

By working together we can create a resource hub where all information that would ever be needed about food producers, community food groups etc across the Highlands can be found in one place. For example, one resource could be a small-producers map where consumers can find a grower near them and where one producer can find another nearby to share and collaborate with.

## 2. Resilience

It is crucial that the Highland food system is resilient, to ensure food security in the face of events resulting from climate change and to ensure a vibrant and healthy population. A resilient Highland food system can mean:

"We can create a resilient and agile system that is innovative, collaborative, adaptable and connected."

- DELEGATE

- **Local abattoirs and processing facilities**

This enables all processing of food to be carried out locally, creating resilience as we will not be dependent on somewhere else to complete this. It will also improve the local economy as more jobs can be created to carry out this work locally and, in regards to local abattoirs, can improve animal welfare.

- **Public Procurement**

The public sector, especially the Local Authority, needs to lead by example by favouring local and seasonal produce. They can demonstrate that change is possible and promote improved diets, through the [Food for Life](#) programme, for example.

- **Diverse retail channels**

By having a diversity of these; online markets, in-person markets, food hubs, veg-box deliveries etc, local food becomes more physically accessible and adaptable to different situations.

- **Affordable and accessible**

Making good food more affordable removes one of the barriers that prevent people from accessing healthy local food, moving closer to a healthier Highland population.

- **Increased self-sufficiency of the Highlands**

Being self-sufficient means we become more resilient, for example, against the changing climate. If we can no longer gain access to food imports, we would still have all the food we need grown and processed right here in the Highlands.

"If good food is available to everyone and everyone is involved then the food system can be fun, healthy and resilient."

- DELEGATE

- **Circular Economy (zero waste)**

By using 'waste' or by-products as a resource for further food production our reliance on inputs coming from elsewhere decreases. For example, using residual heat from a brewery to heat a glasshouse, or using food waste and turning it into compost for further growing.

- **Prioritising locals over exports**

We can become more resilient by focusing on growing and producing food that will stay in the Highlands to feed the people here. Once we have fed everyone here then we can think about exporting elsewhere.

### **3. Food Education**

The most common theme to arise throughout the conference is the need for good food education. This is important for everybody and can happen through:

- **Good food in schools**

By adding food education in age 3-18 curriculum children can learn how to grow and prepare food from a young age. This is important as it results in children being outdoors more which can improve their mental and physical health and can encourage them to pursue careers in food production.

"We need to engage the next generation with practical, hands-on education."

- DELEGATE

- **Educating consumers: nutrition and environmental impacts**

Educating consumers about all aspects of the food they buy can enable them to make informed choices (where possible). Ideas of how to achieve this include labelling which displays information such as the carbon cost of the product as well as nutritional information.

- **Growing, harvesting, preparing, cooking**

Teaching everybody these skills makes individuals as well as communities more resilient. This type of education can also remove some of the barriers to eating local and healthier food.

- **Training**

Training and education on regenerative, sustainable agriculture can take many forms: courses at the University of Highlands & Islands, rural training programmes, mentoring, apprenticeship schemes, peer to peer learning, etc. This can encourage new entrants to begin their career with these practices as well as support existing food producers to transition to more sustainable methods.

"There should be education for farmers about more ecological practices and the importance of biodiversity."

- DELEGATE

### **4. Regenerative / Sustainable Agriculture**

With the agricultural sector contributing significantly to the climate and ecological crisis, it is essential that farming methods transition from intensive and exploitative to regenerative and sustainable. Main points that came up under this theme were:

- **Supporting small farms**

Smaller-scale producers are more likely to produce food in harmony with nature. These producers also increase diversity in our agricultural sector as by having lots of small-scale producers, as opposed to a few large-scale, there are a wider range of things being produced and different methods of production involved.

- **Climate change adaptation and mitigation**

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector we must farm in a way that does just that; reducing the use of fossil fuels and implementing methods of carbon capture. Planting trees, such as in agroforestry, can contribute to both climate change mitigation (as it stores carbon) and adaptation (as it helps against some climate events such as flooding).

"Our food system must be free of pesticides and supportive of soil health and pollinator populations."

- DELEGATE

- **Financial investment from the public sector / government**

Small-scale farmers are chronically under-supported financially. With better support new entrants can better access land and get help covering start-up costs, new resources better suited to climate-friendly farming can be made more accessible and more jobs could be created.

- **Payment incentives**

Governments could introduce a reward system where farmers are paid to sequester carbon and promote biodiversity - offering an incentive for new entrants as well as encouraging existing farmers to transition to better practices.

## 5. Community Engagement

A lot of solutions lie within the community. Delegates believed in people power which is why they thought it important to:

- **Involve young people**

It is important that the voice of young people is heard and that they are included in the good food movement in the Highlands as the decisions we make today impact their future the most.

"A good food system integrates community into everything- growing, harvesting, cooking and eating- so that we can enjoy being together and in nature."

- DELEGATE

- **Get more people growing**

This includes both individually and as part of a community. There are multiple benefits to growing such as improving emotional, physical and mental health, developing an understanding and appreciation of the value of good food, and connecting individuals with others in their area.

- **Restructure / replace food banks**

Food banks are sometimes seen as a temporary fix to the problem of food insecurity. Community food initiatives can be part of the solution. For example, by teaching people how to grow, harvest and cook through community projects some challenges forcing people into food poverty may be relieved. Community food growing initiatives such as community gardens and allotments can improve access to fresh food and community kitchens can enable people to cook the food they have grown.

- **Connect producers and consumers**

A relationship between producer and consumer is beneficial to the producer, as they will develop loyal customers, and to

"We need to take cues from our indigenous food system and work out the best things to take from it to incorporate today."

- DELEGATE

the consumer, as they can grow to trust their local producer. These relationships may be developed through farm visits for customers and [Community Supported Agriculture](#) models.

- **Value indigenous wisdom**

We can be inspired by our culture and heritage through the knowledge and experience of what has happened in the past to help guide the decisions we make for the future.

## 6. **Health and well-being**

Food is crucial to our health and well-being not only through the nutrients that it provides us with but also through how it connects each and every one of us. Some of the health and well-being benefits of a good food system which were highlighted include:

- **Nutrition**

Fresh food is more nutritious which is why eating locally-produced food (as opposed to that which has come from afar) that is accessible to everyone can help to improve the health of the Highland population.

- **Addressing food inequality**

To improve the health and well-being of the Highland population we must remove barriers that prevent people from accessing fresh, local, healthy food, especially the money barrier.

- **Healthy food prescriptions**


If the NHS could give out healthy food prescriptions, people may be better able to access help to improve their diet. NHS, nutritionists and local producers could work collaboratively to come up with these prescriptions.

- **Green therapy**

By encouraging people to grow their own food and interact with growing they can benefit from mental therapy that being outdoors and connecting with the landscape around them offers.

- **Socialisation**

Food connects each of us; it brings us together in celebrations and day-to-day when we share meals and through community growing. Being around others and building community are great for our health and well-being.



"We can create positive change to help encourage healthy wellbeing and lifestyle changes for the people of the Highlands."

- DELEGATE

## HGF Conference Big Ideas

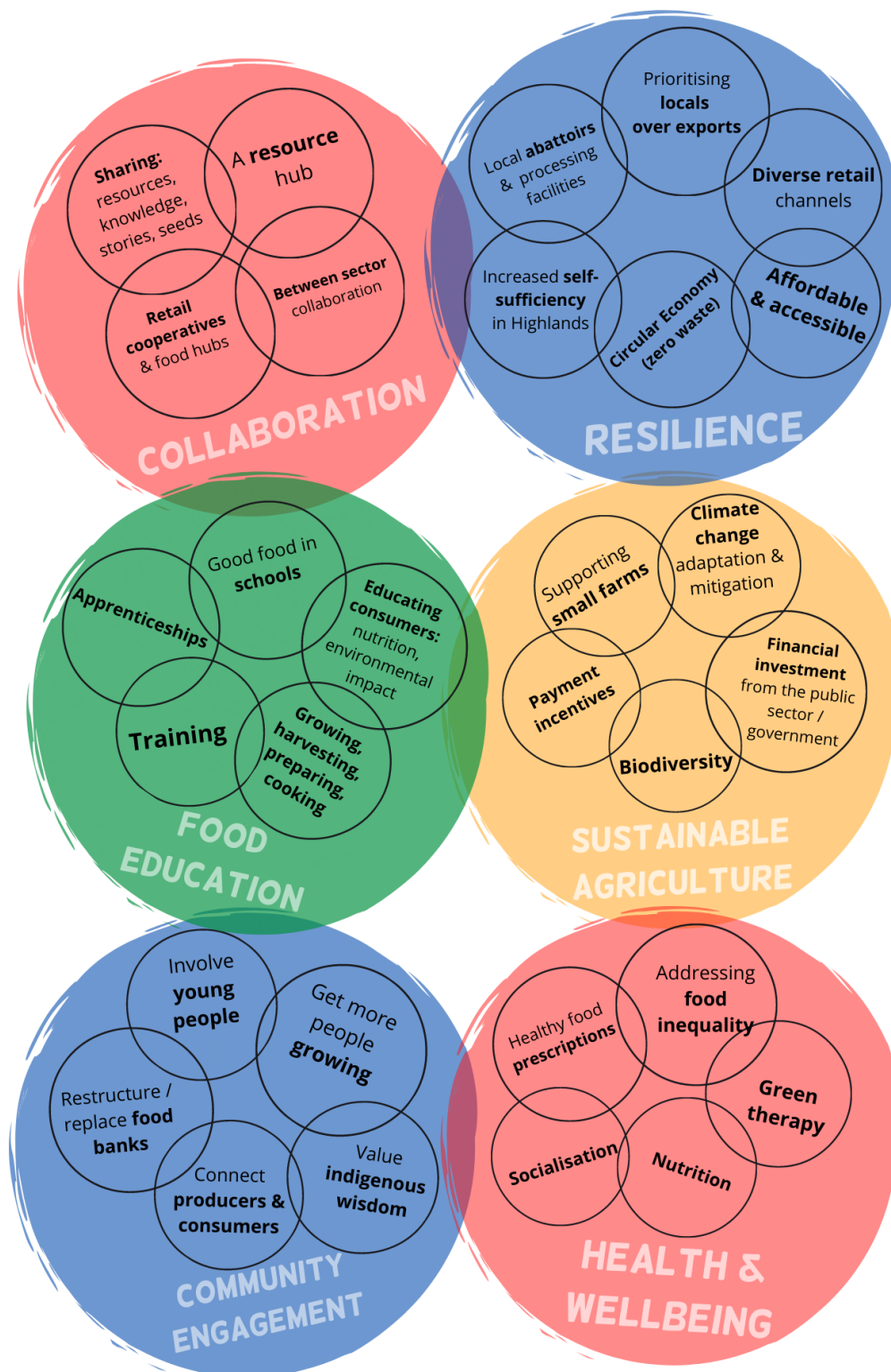


Diagram 2 - Summary of main themes

## The Conference Day by Day



To kick off the conference we collectively imagined what a Highlander's diet could look like in 2030 as well as defining what values we want to underpin a good food system; equality, fairness, regeneration and connection to name just a few. This set the scene for the rest of the conference as it enabled us to think about what we can do in order to achieve this vision we had created.

## Highland Good Food Vision and Values

Our collective vision is a Highland good food system that is a resilient and regenerative network of small farms and producers built on diversity, interconnectedness and fairness to support health and well-being for all of life.

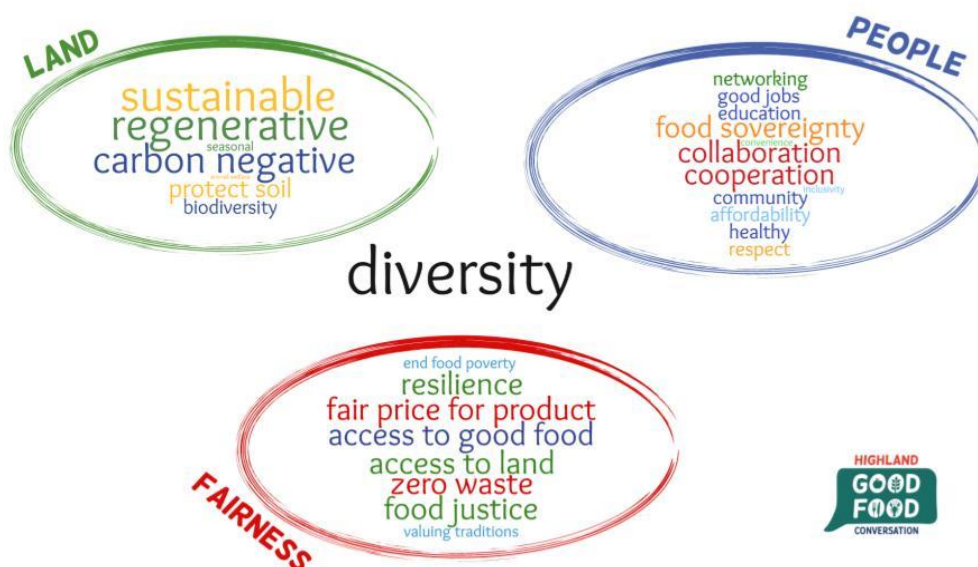


Diagram 3 - The Highland Good Food vision and values created collectively as a result of Day 1 discussions and ideas.


## Provocations

We had five provocations on Day 1 to help with our vision setting process:

### Pete Ritchie – [Nourish Scotland](#)

Pete shared with us his idea of creating a glasshouse sector in Scotland.

He explained how glasshouses would extend the growing period in the Highlands to year-round and would enable us to grow mediterranean vegetables right here. This would reduce the emissions from food miles of transporting these vegetables to the Highlands as well as the large volume of water used to grow these foods elsewhere.




**"Glasshouse growing**, to grow Mediterranean vegetables should be made an integral part of a green recovery in Scotland. There is plenty of water and energy in Scotland to do this - we have a great opportunity to be the Mediterranean of the North!"

- PETE RITCHIE

It's also important for climate adaptation to find ways to grow the vegetables that we have outsourced elsewhere, such as Spain, as higher temperatures and risk of drought in these warmer regions threaten the current production of food there.

Pete proposed we build 400ha of glasshouses which would be powered by Scottish wind energy and could provide 100 full-time, year-round jobs.

### Craig Dalzell – [Common Weal](#)



"Let's go back to the start and identify what we want to achieve in terms of local produce, production and supply, then we can think about what kinds of supply chains and procurement we need to create that outcome. This could mean creating a network of hubs and co-ops supporting local producers and more investments in things like farmers markets."

- CRAIG DALZELL

Craig spoke to us about some of the barriers preventing people from eating local food. The first barrier he explored is the mainstream supply chain. Supermarkets will not stock a local farmer's produce even if they produce enough to feed the entire village where the supermarket is located. Instead, they want their shelves to be identical across the country, resulting in large-scale producers gaining the contracts, crowding-out small local producers and limiting our ability to shop and eat locally.


Craig also explained the issue of public procurement as another barrier to accessing local food. A local farmer with enough produce to supply their local school is unable to do so as local authorities want suppliers who can supply all schools in the local authority area, again crowding-out these small producers and suppliers.

### Lynn Cassells – [Lynbreck Croft](#)

This provocation questioned, “Is ‘local’ an idealism or a reality?”

Lynn focussed on the importance of helping people to make informed food choices and how local food, that supports farming with nature, can contribute not only to nourishing bodies but to community relations, supporting the local economy and discouraging depopulation.


Lynn stressed that the importance of local food is talked about much more than people actually buy their food from a local producer and made a point that as a society we need to start acting on our words, beginning with consumers supporting local farmers who farm in harmony with nature.



“The produce may look different from the supermarket version and it may be a bit more expensive but it will be far more valuable in multiple ways than anything else you can ever spend your money on. If you want to see a change in how your food is produced and if you really believe in the social, economic and environmental impacts that local food can bring then we can work together and turn what is currently an idealism into a reality.”

**- LYNN CASSELLS**

### Sheila George – [WWF Scotland](#)



“We need to develop a new rural policy to reward public goods such as large scale nature restoration on the land. A healthy environment underpins good food production - it's not either/or - and how we act today will influence our farming and food production in the future.”

**- SHEILA GEORGE**

Sheila's provocation focussed on how land use and management is crucial in meeting Scotland's climate and nature restoration commitments. She told us that 43% of high nature value farmland is found in the Highlands, highlighting the important role our farmers and land workers have to manage crucial habitats which many species depend on.

Sheila told us of the battle nature has against some farming as intensification of practices increase and agricultural policies giving big payments to the most productive farms have caused

a big decline in these special habitats. Meanwhile, smaller scale, traditional and nature-friendly farms are chronically under-supported.


Sheila acknowledged the great position for change that Scotland is in and the strong foundations that are already in place; the world class academics working to improve farming and trailblazing farmers and organisations here showing the rest of the world how things should be done.

### Stuart Black – [Highlands and Islands Enterprise \(HIE\)](#)

Stuart demonstrated the importance of Scotland's food and drink industry in supporting the economy due to the huge number of businesses and jobs in this sector.

He touched on some big issues in the sector at the moment such as the pandemic and Brexit and introduced us to a list of organisations working on a recovery plan to support local businesses, including HIE. For example, HIE has created a lot of support for small businesses making a shift to online selling as a response to the pandemic.

Stuart also pointed out the potential for strong connections between local food production and tourism in the Highlands to make sure restaurants, cafes and hotels provide local good food.



"We need to be sustainable and locally-focused in order for the food and drink industry in Scotland to continue to be a success."

- STUART BLACK



Day 2 was about people and how to best keep them at the heart of our food system; the people who produce the food, the people who eat the food and all those in between. We discussed ways that our food system ensures our culture and communities flourish and came up with some ideas on how to improve food equality and deal with the nutritional crisis in the Highlands.

### Provocations

Provocations on Day 2 were from a diversity of women across the sector with their own ideas on how to keep people at the heart of what we do:

Karen Davidson – [Social Farms & Gardens](#)

"Let's take a step back. Food needs to grow and it needs people to grow it. The solution? **Get everyone involved in taking part in growing and looking after something in their local environment.** A garden is a solution that leads to more solutions as it provides a multitude of life and opportunity."

- KAREN DAVIDSON

Community food growing and its importance was the focus of Karen's presentation. Karen highlighted the need for more community engagement which would allow citizens who want a better food system to contribute and believe that we can make change happen.

Karen highlighted that food is the biggest gateway to change as it is a common thread linking together all 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#). This led us to ask, how can we get food the mass engagement that it needs?

Karen suggested that by getting people to grow food and take part in direct climate and nature action that the seed for food system change will be planted. In the process people will learn a wide range of skills and improve their health and well-being. This can all be achieved through community growing and collective action.

## Cara Cameron – Highland Produce and [Lochview Rural Training](#)

Cara's provocation highlighted the lack of local rural skills training for young people in the Highlands.

She pointed out that by providing rural training more young people will follow careers working the land and supporting their communities and local economies. She also made a very good point about the importance of listening to young people's voices and addressing issues in this generation, otherwise we will lose young people in rural areas and have an aging population and a loss of land use.

Cara concluded that by working with young people and providing rural training we can create jobs in a greener, sustainable future.

"If we don't get knowledge and education out there and do it right it will have a great impact on the environment and sustainability.

**These rural skills are fundamental for our communities.** We saw this through Covid-19; when our local producers stood up and said to their communities, 'we are here'."

- CARA CAMERON

## Cate Bulmer – NHS

Cate certainly provoked some thinking with her provocation on the nutritional crisis in the Highlands. She explained how health issues related to poor diets have increased exponentially over the past decades and that poor diet is currently the biggest risk to disease and disability in Scotland.

"This isn't a choice. Responsibility is put on the individual to make healthy food choices but you can't do this with a low income.

**The knowledge, resources, time and money to get a better diet makes it inaccessible to people."**

- CATE BULMER

The causes she told us are economic; those lower on the socio-economic scale tend to have poorer diets, weigh more and experience more diseases.


Cate pointed out that there is not enough fruit and vegetables grown in Scotland for every person to eat five a day and similarly to Karen Davidson, proposed that a solution to the health and food crisis is to get unemployed people into jobs growing the large amount of healthy food that is required.

### Ceri Ritchie – SAC Consulting, SRUC

Ceri talked business. Her provocation gave advice on how to communicate and work with people in order for your business to succeed.

She spoke of how to communicate with consumers; her biggest piece of advice was to clearly communicate with them why you do what you're doing and have this at the front and centre of the business to enable consumers and collaborators to see themselves as part of your story.

She also talked about the importance of people within the business and how it is key to find people with the right skills to find out what the consumers need, produce this and convey the story of the business.



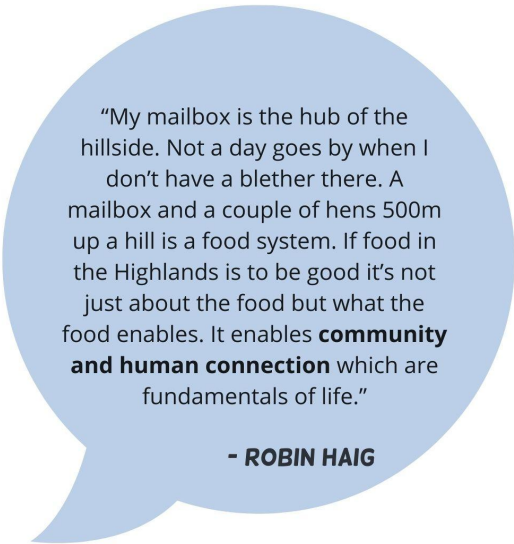
"Your business needs to be seen to provide a solution to a real need. It's not enough to just be enthusiastic, you need the skills and knowledge to get it right. **People are central to the story.**"

- CERI RITCHIE

### Robin Haig – Young Crofter

Robin shared with us a wonderful story about the history of crofting and the strong connection she has to the land as a crofter. One thing Robin does on her croft is run a microscale egg production with 20 hens and 10 customers. Working on the land and looking after the hens, she explained, is great for mental health and giving a feeling of fulfillment. But this is not the only benefit of her egg production.

She explained how the process of her ultra-short supply-chain, where customers contact her directly and then pick up their orders from a mailbox at the end of the road, enables a strong relationship between them, which she believes is key to a good food system.



"My mailbox is the hub of the hillside. Not a day goes by when I don't have a blether there. A mailbox and a couple of hens 500m up a hill is a food system. If food in the Highlands is to be good it's not just about the food but what the food enables. It enables **community and human connection** which are fundamentals of life."

- ROBIN HAIG



As intensification of farming practices increase, contributing heavily to the climate and ecological emergency, it is crucial that we discuss ways to produce food more sustainably, regeneratively and in harmony with nature. We explored what local and national policies are needed to encourage more growers and producers to produce food this way as well as to realise the Highland Good Food vision established on Day 1.

### Provocations

Provocations on Day 3 took us through the importance of changing and strengthening some of our production and processing methods and provided ideas of how we could do that:

#### Ana Allamand – [Soil Association](#)

Ana's provocation was about communication, in particular the use of language, as a key tool for change. Her provocation referred to using this tool to talk about regenerative agriculture with people who do not understand the terminology or those who are not warm to the idea of this practice.

She gave some very valuable advice on how to listen carefully to someone who does not share your ideas or values and use their words to get across your meaning and ideas. By trying to understand where another person is coming from and acknowledging what is important to them before communicating, real changes in the community can be made.

"Language is one of our best tools for change. My Dad didn't see farms as anything more than something that produces fruit. **But farms are the infrastructure that forms the basis of society.** What is more infrastructure than healthy soils, clean air and healthy food? When I reframed this to my Dad and told him that he provides infrastructure for society, his attitude changed."

- ANA ALLAMAND

#### Mike Rivington – [The James Hutton Institute](#)

Carbon management, and its benefits beyond climate change mitigation, was the topic of Mike's provocation. He set the scene with some interesting stats and explained how the global system is out

of balance; emissions are increasing and the global ecosystem's capacity to absorb greenhouse gases is decreasing.

"Change in the global food system needs to mean a change in the way we manage land to **increase carbon capture in the soil** itself and also in the products we grow on the soil."

- MIKE RIVINGTON

He further explained the benefits of high carbon in soils, such as improving water retention – therefore reducing flood risks – and helping to promote biodiversity.

Mike proposed that a greenhouse gas accounting and labelling system be developed to show consumers the impact of different foods, in particular the lower carbon and ecological footprint of local food, so that we can make an informed choice in a supermarket to buy a lower carbon item.

### Martin Kennedy – [National Farmers Union Scotland \(NFUS\)](#)

Martin told us about how food production, climate change mitigation and environmental enhancement are at the top of the agenda for farmers today.

Martin shared how he believes the agricultural sector in Scotland can continue to improve soil health through livestock. He explained that 85% of agricultural land in Scotland is unfavourable and that anything other than livestock farming is very difficult here. He told us that the benefits of proper grazing management on this land include increased organic matter in soil, meaning better carbon capture, and a reduced risk of wildfires as vegetation is kept in check.

Martin proposed that we push for policies based on farm activity, such as improving productivity through better soil management, and not just on the amount of land someone owns, as so much land already lies empty.

"Climate change and how we deal with it will dictate our futures for the years to come. The agriculture sector is willing to change to show that instead of being seen as part of the problem that we can be the solution."

- MARTIN KENNEDY

"What I suggest is something different; a more inclusive and participatory network. Everyone here chooses one variety of plant and learns everything there is to know about its seed, **becoming its seed keeper**, expert and storyteller."

- COL GORDON

### Col Gordon – Inchindown Farm

Col's provocation was on a topic no less important but less commonly discussed: seed saving.

He told us all about how seed breeding has become increasingly centralised over the past decade, with only a few seed producers left in the UK. He highlighted that seeds bred far away from the Highlands are not at all suited to the

conditions here and had us asking ourselves, what happens to the seed system if something happens to one of the few distributors that are left?


Col's proposal was clear: a Highlands & Islands Seed Saving Network. He affirmed his idea by explaining how by doing this our Highland community will become more resilient with both our seed and food supply.

### Flora Corbett – [Mull Abattoir](#)

Flora's provocation was about the importance of local abattoirs.

She told us that the number of these in the Highlands over the years has fallen from 25 to just a few. This has resulted in farmers travelling further with their livestock to slaughterhouses elsewhere as the waiting list for those few in the Highlands can be unsurprisingly long.

Fiona pointed out that as a result of this, travel emissions from the sector increase and animal welfare decreases. These are crucially important issues that show the need for increased support for local abattoirs.



"We benefit the community by providing farmers with a local killing and butchery service which is also better for animal welfare. However, like a lot of Highland & Island farmers we are dependent on grants for survival. We've been pushing for **slaughterhouses to be seen as public good** by the Scottish Government. We need noncompetitive grants or subsidies to support local abattoirs, to keep them running and support their staff."

**- FLORA CORBETT**



Financial support provided to small producers and growers, more often than not, does not cover costs or support our food providers enough. It can also be very difficult financially for new entrants to come into farming as the costs of starting up can be discouraging. Further, there are currently no government incentives for producers to transition to more agroecological practices.

### Provocations

Provocations on Day 4 explored innovative ways that money can be raised to relieve some of the financial issues in the sector:

#### Suzy Russell – [Community Supported Agriculture \(CSA\)](#)

“There is a need for: better funding to help CSA farms to set up, a society that values farming, a farmers wage as high as a lawyer, **a whole systems approach to produce and deliver food for everyone** and a healthy planet to support these systems.”

- SUZY RUSSELL

Suzy introduced the CSA Network in the UK and explained the model and criteria met by CSA farms.


She told us that the strength of the CSA model has become very apparent during the pandemic. The model is resilient - incomes have largely continued to come in, and food has gone out, demonstrating food sovereignty in action. Suzy explained that it is thanks to the member commitment that CSA's have been able to continue to offer a secure income.

One important aspect of the CSA Network that Suzy shared with us is that, rather than expanding themselves, existing CSA's are supporting neighbouring businesses to start up. This is important as it creates a move towards having a CSA in every neighbourhood. However, Suzy highlighted that some enormous barriers still exist.

## Jo Hunt – [Knockfarrel Produce](#)

Jo talked about the importance of finding a source of funding to pay small farmers, in particular those with agroecological practices like his, in order to incentivise existing farmers and crofters to switch to better farming for the planet and to encourage new entrants into the sector.

Jo shared with us that even though his croft is carbon negative and a CSA that he earns a shocking £2.72 per hour. He explained that current subsidies and government support do not cover any income for the croft which is unfortunately the case for small farmers across Scotland.



“People invest in their pension pots for a better and more secure future. Local food development can achieve this better than any pension fund by **paying farmers to lock up carbon, create jobs and provide healthy food.**”

- JO HUNT

He proposed a unique idea that one way to get these funds is by people investing 25% of their pension pot towards developing these better practices. Would you put 25% of your pension pot towards better food production and receive your pension not in pounds but in a healthier and more secure future with real outputs?

## Richard Lockett – [Dingwall Wind Co-op](#)

Community land ownership was the focus of Richard’s provocation as he believes this can play a big part in funding a Highland good food system.



“**Shared land ownership** is an excellent way to create a community with shared interest. A community of owners have a financial and emotional investment in how the land is managed and who it is managed by.”

- RICHARD LOCKETT

He told us about his part in setting up the first community-owned wind turbine in Scotland on his farm in Dingwall and how significant funds were raised by doing this.

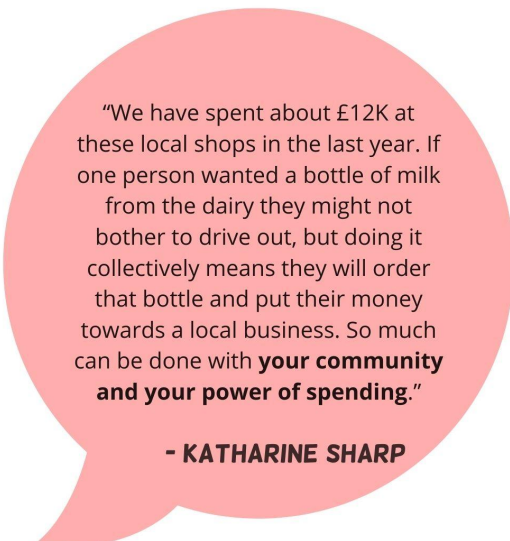
He set out what community land ownership could look like; a suitable piece of farmland becomes available, people buy shares in a land coop and the coop buys the land. They appoint a board of directors with certain expertise, for example farming expertise or community engagement, and set out agreed principles for the use of the land, such as allowing regenerative agriculture only. The land use would generate a rental income which would give shareholders a reasonable return.

Richard admitted it can sometimes be tricky to come up with a common agreement between owners, however, we can not make real change alone. We can work through problems like this, or at least it is certainly worth trying.

## Katharine Sharp – Abriachan Community Sharing

Katharine's provocation was an inspiring example of how communities can work together to make change.

Abriachan Community Sharing began shortly before the first Covid-19 lockdown when a member of the village offered to pick up some milk from the [Black Isle Dairy](#) for a neighbour. This quickly expanded to picking up orders for everyone who wanted milk from the dairy to then coming together to do joint orders from other local food businesses across the area.



"We have spent about £12K at these local shops in the last year. If one person wanted a bottle of milk from the dairy they might not bother to drive out, but doing it collectively means they will order that bottle and put their money towards a local business. So much can be done with **your community and your power of spending.**"


**- KATHARINE SHARP**

Katharine explained the multiple benefits of this: reduced emissions as only one person needs to drive to the shop, bringing the community even closer together, and in terms of the theme of finance, using the power of spending by the community to support local businesses.

Katharine had us asking ourselves, what possibilities are there within our communities when we come together to work collaboratively?

## Brian Cameron – Elchies Farm

Brian told us of the importance of taking opportunities and preparing yourself to be ready to do this when one presents itself.



"Be prepared for the opportunity to come along. If you are prepared for it then you can seize it! Opportunities like these have a psychological aspect - **they enable us to meet people when often farming can be very lonely.**"

**- BRIAN CAMERON**

He gave us a personal example of how by meeting with and talking to other farmers in his area, they discovered that farmers markets were not a model they liked due to being out all day and paying to be there. They decided instead to bring the customers to them by collectively creating a Speyside producers hub. The hub has a market that lasts two hours every three weeks which is much more suited to these producers.

Brian advised us not to be stuck in the paradigms of what has been done before.



On the final day of the conference we asked ourselves, ‘What can we do now to realise the Highland Good Food vision by 2030?’ Project groups which were formed by delegates and worked in throughout the conference each presented exciting plans which focussed on actions that they can take now to contribute to the realisation of the Highland Good Food vision as we move forward beyond the conference.

### Provocation

Our single provocation to kick us off on the final day was from our steering group member Dennis Overton who gave us some inspiring words as we looked forward:

Dennis highlighted the three drivers of massive change that farming, fishing, food and drink in the Highlands are heading into in 2021. These are: the climate emergency changing how we farm, the biodiversity disaster that we must stop, and a shift from an economy fixated on growth to a well-being economy.

“These changes are already underway. We have a choice; to passively ignore them or to use them as a great opportunity for food and farming in the Highlands. **Making positive change is one of the most rewarding things we can do in life.**

This change will come not only by talking, action must follow and we have 11 action groups from the conference ready to do this.”

**- DENNIS OVERTON**



Below are summaries of each project idea developed over the five weeks. Original documents of each group's action plan can be found in the [appendix](#) of this report. You can also watch videos of each group's presentation from the conference [here](#).

### **Project 1 – Develop a Producer Owned Retail Co-operative**

This group is focussing on creating a food retail hub owned and run by producers. The hub will have production facilities attached, such as a butchery and kitchen, which means that the supply chain is kept short and communities are more resilient.

The hub would ideally be in a central Highland location which will make distribution across the Highlands easier.

The core values underpinning the concept are: to provide more local food to local people, increase food security, connect the community with their producers and to create a model that may inspire other producers to replicate.

The group aims to reach out to 100 Highland producers across the area to find out the interest in such a project - either in owning and running it or by supplying the hub with their produce.

### **Project 2 – Develop a Highland-wide online food hub**

The main aim of this group is to have a food hub in every community in the Highlands. The model would be online ordering from producers by customers, food sorting at a community site and pick-ups by the customers.

This, like Project 1's plan, would reduce the length of supply chains, support independent producers and other local businesses, promote sustainability and enhance health by ensuring that more of the great food growing in the Highlands is eaten in the Highlands.

There would be a small central support hub liaising with and between the network of community food hubs across the Highlands (see diagram in the [appendix](#)). The hub itself would operate on a

not-for-profit basis so that the local producers and outlets would be able to receive a larger share of the sale price of their produce.

### **Project 3 – Work towards a world class restaurant sector in the Highlands**

This group aims to create world-class restaurants across the Highlands by 2030 with an emphasis on locally-produced ingredients. The group defines world-class as an irresistible draw to Highland restaurants due to the exclusivity of fresh Highland ingredients.

These restaurants need to do a number of key things which include presenting the finest ingredients possible. These will be local and traceable; the customer should be informed about the source of their meal as it is served. They will work with the supply chain of local producers to ensure produce is consistent, of high quality and at a fair price.

The people of the restaurant sector is a separate but important aspect of this group's idea of a world-class restaurant sector in the Highlands. They believe that staff training has room to improve and that management must lead by example to affirm that a career in this sector is one worthwhile.

### **Project 4 – Develop a lobbying policy group ensuring the Highland voice is heard**

The aim of the policy group is to bring the voice of the Highlands to the ear of the policy makers and show them what we can do to achieve a good food system.

The group aims to communicate evidence that the good food vision in the Highlands works. They will collect stories and case studies on good food from across the Highlands and share these with other lobbying groups such as NFUS, RSPB, NatureScot and Nourish, to show them how our vision and goals align with their own.

To start with, the group may not have a voice directly with policy makers as they are too small and too new, but by getting stories into the ears of these other lobbying groups we can show them how their own policies can be put into practice and get these lobbying groups to speak to policy makers on our behalf.

The eyes and ears on the ground will feed good food stories and case studies into a central policy hub. The hub will then feed back to these communities information about how policy is changing, what we need political pressure on right now, new research and funding which might assist local projects.

### **Project 5 – Work towards every school in the Highlands growing, cooking and eating their own food**

This group's vision is that all schools in the Highlands will be growing, cooking and eating their own food by 2030.

They envision that from nursery to tertiary education children will learn not only how to grow and prepare their food, but how to do this sustainably, focussing on nurturing the soil, storing carbon and supporting biodiversity.

The time made for outdoor learning will not be extra curricular, but an integral part of the learning system which will have huge benefits for physical and mental health and well-being. Outdoor learning will also be crucial for the recovery from Covid-19 as we return to schools this year, as being outdoors provides the opportunity to learn in a safer way.

Extra benefits of this project are the connection schools can create with communities through growing, the support for children to have careers on the land and the help in the fight against climate change as we teach the next generation how to grow and look after the land in a regenerative way.

### **Project 6 – Develop a Highland-wide community food growing network**

This group aims for every community, where there is a desire for it, to have a community food growing initiative by 2030.

The group will work to increase the number of community growing initiatives across the Highlands in communities where these are desired. This will promote the benefits of these initiatives such as improving health and well-being, creating connections in the community, increasing the availability of nourishing food in the community and increasing community responses to the climate and ecological emergency.

The group also aims to connect all existing community food growing groups across the Highlands in a network where they can provide support for one another, share resources such as tools, seeds, information and expertise and help other groups to get started. The network will also share success stories which can serve as motivation for new groups to start up or existing groups to continue.

The network will be hosted on a platform where people can view a map to see where the community groups are across the Highlands and where all the resources for help and support will be accessible.

### **Project 7 – Work to big-up small farms in the Highlands**

This group is creating a Highland-wide network of growers, crofters, farmers and primary food processors with a shared belief in regenerative agriculture and socially responsible business models.

This is a support network for existing producers and new entrants who are looking to find a way in. It will create a collective voice of producers, with individuals sharing stories which can also feed back into the policy group. The group hopes to create pathways for producers who wish to transition to more agroecological and regenerative practices by sign-posting training opportunities that exist in other organisations.

They will also work to help build the skills and knowledge within the network and provide a place for sharing resources such as tools and machinery, where logistically possible. The network will be based

online but in time will include producers visiting each other's farms for learning and collaborating experiences.

### **Project 8 – Develop a Highland circular/ zero waste food economy**

This group aims for 100 Highland villages and districts to have community composting of food waste by 2025.

They hope to have 40,000 participating households reducing their edible food waste (using up all edible parts of food for consuming) as well as stopping residual food waste (stuff that has to go to waste e.g. egg shells) from going to landfill.

By creating community composting the group hopes to create 20 green jobs as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfill sites, create compost that can be used in local food growing and encourage a behavioural change in the population.

The group hopes to install 100 [Big Hanna](#) composting machines into participating areas at a community facility, ideally schools, as this is a great place to kick-start community and school engagement in food.

### **Project 9 – Marketing and promoting local Highland food as a brand**

This group explored the idea of setting up a local Highland food brand which would encompass food, drink, tourism, restaurants and cafes.

Membership would be a subscription with a price low enough to be inclusive to all businesses.

The group hopes to have more input from others to develop the idea further and are continuing meetings with experts in the sector.

In the meantime, they are also working to create a business-focussed database and network of producers and suppliers to reinforce business links in the Highland food and drink industry.

### **Project 10 – Create a thriving glasshouse sector in the Highlands**

This group is working to create a glasshouse sector in the Highlands, inspired by Pete Ritchie's provocation, to provide year-round growing of vegetables.

The group aims to explore the use of renewable off-peak electricity (electricity at a cheaper rate as it runs through off-peak hours e.g. midnight to 7am) and natural methods for growing.

At the moment, the group believes that the area around Inverness airport will be the best location for their one hectare glasshouse for a number of reasons. One reason is that this is where the Co-op have their Highland distribution hub, with deliveries going out to their 23 stores across the Highlands- a distribution method that the group could use. Areas not reached by the Co-op network

could have a further hectare of growing ground over 20 smaller glasshouses, set up by businesses or communities working collaboratively and cooperatively with each other and the larger glasshouse business.

The benefit of this project is to displace imports from elsewhere as the climate becomes less stable, to reduce water use in warmer countries such as Spain where we have outsourced most of our vegetable production over the years and to improve access for local people to locally grown vegetables.

### **Project 11 – Working towards seed sovereignty in the Highlands**

This group aims to create a more resilient seed system in the Highlands and was inspired by Col Gordon's provocation from Day 3. They hope to achieve this by creating a Highlands & Islands Seed Saving Network.

The group wants to connect seed saving groups that already exist in the Highlands and even across Scotland in order to create more resilience in the seed system, with seeds that are more uniquely suited to our topography and weather.

They imagine this happening in a two-pronged approach: ex-situ preservation which will involve a series of semi-centralised seed libraries where seeds are catalogued and stored in proper conditions over a long time and in-situ preservation where farmers and gardeners grow and save varieties.

This method is similar to the US [Seed Savers Exchange](#) which the group will base the network on, including a centralised online platform where the exchanges can take place.

An important part of the process is that the seeds are grown and new seeds harvested every year to adapt to changing climates which will become more pronounced.

**These project groups have continued to work towards their goals post-conference and a key role for the Highland Good Food Movement going forwards is to ensure everyone is working together to achieve the good food vision. This is not an exhaustive list and it is anticipated that new actions and projects will emerge as the movement evolves.**



This conversation has provided us all with an opportunity to reimagine our food system and to work together passionately and collaboratively to make it a reality. We have sparked hope and belief that we can have a food system that is fair to all. It is clear that people want to move towards a well-being economy; a local economy that allows all of life to flourish. This approach not only addresses the climate and nature emergencies we face but also offers a solution to our nutritional and health crises too.

Our key next step is to build on the momentum and ideas generated through phase one and two; to transition from a 'Conversation' to a 'Movement'. There are scores of keen folk out there who want to drive the Highland Good Food vision forward and to take action to transform our food system. Together we will create the change we want to see. We all have a crucial role to play in this journey; our power is going to be in working together.

It is imperative we now get a governance structure in place to support the **Highland Good Food Movement**. As a first step, the existing steering group will apply to [OSCR](#) to create a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in March 2021. The steering group members will form the initial Board of Trustees.

Going forward the Highland Good Food Movement's aim is to support the delivery of our good food vision for 2030 – a food system that is a resilient and regenerative network of farms, producers, retailers, educators and community groups, built on diversity, interconnectedness and fairness, to support health and well-being for all of life. We will support a network that connects everyone under one banner to drive forward action.

Recently we were awarded funding from [Sustainable Food Places](#) (SFP) to set up the Highland Good Food Partnership. This partnership will provide the strategic lead that supports grassroots action. Perhaps the most valuable part of being supported by SFP is not the money but the opportunity to share our journey with other food partnerships across the country and to grow together, sharing best practice and resources along the way. Another opportunity that presents itself and fits well with several of the main themes and projects is the option of applying to [Scotland Food and Drink](#) to set up a regional food group. The aim is to submit an application within the next month.

Below is the proposed model for the movement - its circular, non-hierarchical nature aims to engender equality and teamwork, whilst promoting a constant flow of communication to allow an agile and flexible approach to an ever-changing world.

## Highland Good Food Movement

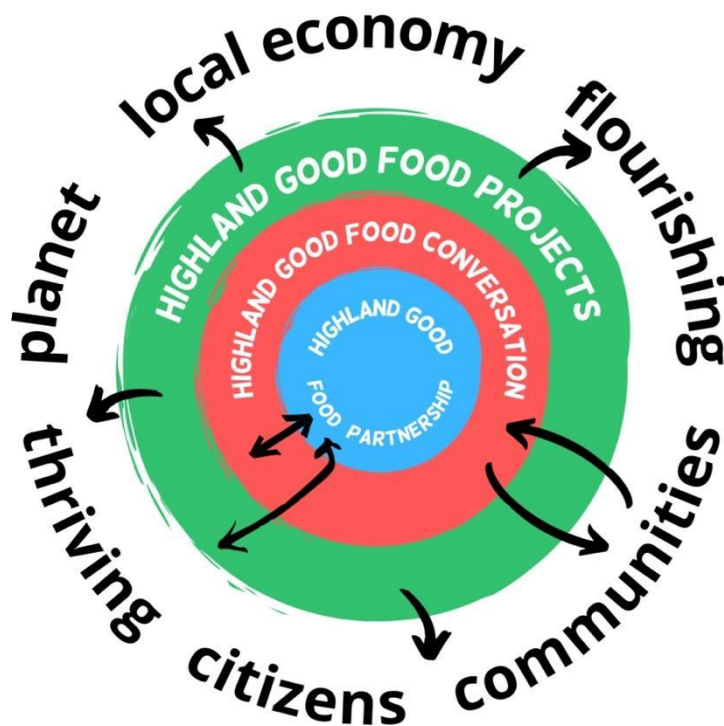


Diagram 4 - Highland Good Food Movement Model

**Highland Good Food Partnership (HGFP)** – The role of HGFP is to connect all the action under a shared vision. It will take the lead from those on the ground and membership will be cross-sector, including representatives from project groups. Both the [Sustainable Food Places](#) and [Regional Food Groups](#) aims will be driven through this partnership. This part of the movement will also have a policy role.

**Highland Good Food Conversation (HGFC)** – The role of HGFC is to be the voice of the movement. This team will lead on communications, arrange events and provide a supporting role to project groups, for example completing funding applications.

**Highland Good Food Projects** – The project groups will drive forward action on the ground. Each project must fit with the HGF vision and support the priorities of people, planet and local economy. Projects will be grouped together in themes to avoid duplication of effort and encourage cross-fertilization of ideas.

## Action Plan

Over the next two months, the key actions are establishing the [SCIO](#) and the Highland Good Food Partnership. Part of this will include bringing all interested parties together to agree priorities and a detailed work plan.

The table below highlights our objectives for the coming months:

Objective/Outcome	Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
Obtain group updates and ascertain way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with project groups</li> <li>Agree way forward</li> <li>Establish working groups, sub-groups and HGF Partnership membership</li> </ul>	Mid-March	Emma
Set up Highland Good Food <a href="#">SCIO</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constitution</li> <li>Trustees</li> <li>Application</li> </ul>	Apply by end of March	Martin
Highland Good Food Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership</li> <li>Terms of Reference</li> </ul>	May 1st	Emma
Secure funding to support working groups and wider movement	Apply to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Sustainable Food Places</a> for coordinator</li> <li><a href="#">Regional Food Groups</a> for coordinator</li> <li><a href="#">Growing Great Ideas</a> fund</li> </ul>	May/June  May  April 9th	Partnership
Complete stakeholder analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify who we have engaged so far and who is missing</li> <li>Detail level of interest and power of each stakeholder</li> </ul>	April 9th	Emma
Strategic environmental and sustainability assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desktop research to identify related plans, policies, programmes and initiatives.</li> </ul>	May 7th	Emma (and Josie)
Map out Highland food sector activity		May 7th	Josie
Establish working groups and sub themed group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet groups that overlap or are linked</li> <li>Establish working group categories and sub groups</li> </ul>	Beginning of April	Emma

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify members for partnership</li> </ul>		
Maintain HGF Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 month communication plan</li> <li>Conference podcast</li> <li>Update branding and website</li> </ul>	End of March	Emma (and Rachel and Josie)

# Acknowledgments

## Team

It has taken a team of extremely passionate, motivated and experienced players to bring this idea to a reality. Guiding and driving the mission forward is the The Highland Good Food steering group, whose membership comprises:

- Martin Sherring – Pebble Trust trustee and Transition Black Isle director
- Emma Whitham – MOO Food founder and Pebble Trust trustee
- Neil Sutherland – Owner and CEO of Makar and Pebble Trust trustee
- Keith Masson – Highland Council Climate Change and Energy Team Manager
- Col Gordon – Farmer at Inchindown Farm
- Josie Fraser – Climate and good food activist
- Dennis Overton – Chair of Scotland Food and Drink and Founder of AquaScot

The Highland Good Food operations team has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to creatively engage the wider Highland community in this crucial and time-dependent conversation. The team is made up of Emma Whitham, Rachel Butterworth and Josie Fraser. Between them they have delivered phase one and phase two, along with help from student volunteers, Rachel Eddie and Charlotte Gray from UHI Geography BSc and Hannah Georgeson QMU Nutrition BSc.

During the conference 12 individuals from various backgrounds volunteered as facilitators to guide delegates through their five-week journey of the conference, not only during the conference afternoons but also through various additional communications in between.

## Funders

Our thanks to the two organisations which have funded the Highland Good Food Conversation to date, Transition Black Isle and The Pebble Trust, both of which demonstrated commendable trust in what, at the time, was a completely unproven idea.

[Transition Black Isle](#) is about helping Black Isle communities thrive in the face of climate change. They support local food and drink producers, help people grow more food, encourage non-car travel, support energy saving and promote reduction of single use plastics. Before the pandemic, and hopefully again in the future, they ran weekly community markets on the Black Isle. They hope the conference will lead to good local food becoming the norm, rather than an occasional treat.

[The Pebble Trust](#) has a vision of a more sustainable, equal and low-carbon society, where constraints on fossil fuels lead to a more localised economy with stronger, more resilient, communities, and where human activities take account of climate change and the wider environment. The Trust identified local food as a key factor in a just recovery from the pandemic.



*This conference was one of the most exciting things I have ever been involved in, and the feedback forms clearly show that the delegates shared my excitement. I am really proud of the work Emma, Rachel, Josie and the rest of the team put into organising it, but the excitement came from the delegates themselves, their shared vision and enthusiasm.*

*Emma and I spent two years, on and off, developing the idea of this conference. From the outset we always saw it as a way to catalyse action to improve our food system, but until now we only had the vaguest idea of what that action might entail. Now, as we have been trawling through all the conference material and writing up this report, some of the jigsaw pieces are falling into place, and in many ways that is even more exciting than the conference itself.*

*What does the emerging picture show? During the few weeks of the conference a group of people took collective ownership of an ambitious project to make the Highland food system better for the environment, for people and for producers. This group has come together to form an informal partnership, with representatives from the public, private and third sectors. The onus on us now is to formalise that partnership and give it the structure it needs to help us all achieve our collective vision. That structure will develop over time, but we need to make sure it allows grass-roots involvement and collaboration across sectors, and avoids some kind of elite telling everyone else what to do! We need to source funding for the core function, and for those projects that need it. We need to identify the people who haven't so far been involved in this process, and engage with them. And we need to keep communicating amongst ourselves and with the wider Highland Good Food Movement. Lots of this is going to seem a bit process-based, and we realise that may be frustrating for those who just want to get on with the projects they developed during the conference. So, a top priority is going to be to bring together representatives from the project groups to work out what they can be getting on with whilst we get our structures and funding in place. We encouraged conference delegates to be ambitious in developing their projects, and we now have to apply the same ambition to make it all happen.*

**- Martin Sherring, Chair of the HGF Steering Group**

## Appendix

The appendix contains project groups 1-10's original action plans.  
You can access the appendix [here](#).