



Company No: 5535254

# SUSTAINABLE GWYNEDD GYNALADWY CYF

## FOOD CONVENTION

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On the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 Sustainable Gwynedd Gynladwy Cyf organised a conference concentrating on local food in Gwynedd as an opportunity to celebrate local food. The conference was held at Talysarn Social Centre, The Old Station, Talysarn.

The aim of the conference was to highlight the work already being done here in Gwynedd to promote local food, and the efforts to bring ourselves as producers and buyers in the county closer to each other. The event attempted to recognise and raise awareness of activities in Gwynedd that promote the use of local food, and the environmental, economic and health advantages.

The conference was an opportunity for agencies in Gwynedd to learn about plans to promote local food in Gwynedd, and how these agencies can co-operate to educate others and stimulate them to make new plans in a similar vein. There were opportunities also to learn how the work of local agencies and businesses promote other projects in the area.

As food forms 26% of Gwynedd's ecological footprint, the event was an opportunity to examine ways of decreasing our negative effects when producing and distributing local food. Discussions and interactive workshops were held to discuss steps towards improving the footprint and so on.

A series of speakers were heard during the morning and practical workshops were held during the afternoon followed by a dinner using local food prepared by students of Coleg Meirion Dwyfor.

The day developed to be a very successful one with positive feedback from the audience on the day. Many interesting viewpoints were raised, promoting interesting and factual discussions in the afternoon's workshops. The following notes in this report will summarise the findings and outline what lessons were learnt on the day.

**The day's Chair was Bethan Russell Owen, Head Officer, Mantell Gwynedd. Each speaker was presented in turn by Bethan.**

**The first speaker of the morning was Steve Garrett, Glanrafon Farmers' Market, Cardiff. He outlined the following points:**

- purpose of the market :
  - "to sell Welsh and organic products
  - to help local producers find a direct market
  - to provide good food at a reasonable price to local people."
- started in 1998 for three weeks prior to Christmas – now 35 stalls each week and about 100 customers
- managed by voluntary group (Riverside Community Market Association), with about three active members (including business people with valuable skills)
- the first step was discussion amongst local people
- the venture was called a "food fair" initially so as to avoid the obstacles that occur regarding the licensing of markets
- initially a very low rent to the stallholders
- friendly relations with the stallholders
- friends in high places (deputy mayor) helped initially

- began with small grants
- the council's economic development department gave the group a grant to pay the license; later on all arrangements were made within the council
- in 2004 Riverside Community Market Association Social Enterprise Ltd was established to run the market, whilst the old group continued to run small projects within the community
- the market is now run weekly on the river bank in front of the Millennium Stadium
- initially the stallholders were wary about a weekly market, but it has worked out well
- now the venture has a 3-year licence and is going to appoint a manager/development worker
- when choosing stallholders it is ensured that there are no more than three of the same type
- the group was commissioned by the WDA to write a toolkit for urban farmers' markets; available from: [mail@riversidemarket.org.uk](mailto:mail@riversidemarket.org.uk)

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**David Darrell from the Rural Regeneration Unit (food cooperatives) came forward, and explained the following points:**

- pilot in Wales since April 2004, 75 food cooperatives established in disadvantaged areas
- at the moment the cooperatives buy only 5% locally
- David Darrell has been employed to find local sources for the cooperatives
- firstly horticulture needs to be promoted in Wales, as there are not enough vegetables available locally
- as transport is becoming more expensive, local food will become 'cheaper'
- a need for education to convey where food comes from

More information available about the Rural Regeneration Unit on [info@rru.org.uk](mailto:info@rru.org.uk)

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**Our last speaker of the morning was Margaret Smyth, Pentre Bach Holiday Cottages, Llwyngwriil, Dolgellau, 01341 250294 (local producer), winners of 2003 Wales Environment Award for Sustainable Tourism. She explained how the business had developed.**

- the business of accommodation for visitors and horticulture had been going on for 27 years
- producing vegetables (0.25 acre) and eggs and foods produced from these, and plants
- permaculture, but no organic certificate as this is too expensive for a small-scale business
- marketing:
  - selling the produce to the visitors and cooking for them

- selling in local farmers' markets
  - box schemes
  - supplier to the whole food cooperative (also a customer)
  - difficult to sell to shops as they want produce that looks perfect
  - generally, producers don't have sufficient time to advertise their produce, so it's not known where local food is available; but if restaurants etc are going to use local produce it needs to be easy to access
- human resources:
    - employ one person full-time, one part time and a volunteer through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms
    - difficult to obtain dependable assistants
    - college year doesn't help (should be from January to December so as to be able to arrange meaningful work periods)
  - open days, school visits
  - winner of several awards, including the Network Arena sustainable tourism award

For further details on Pentre Bach Cottages, go to [www.pentrebach.com](http://www.pentrebach.com)

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**The speakers were thanked by the chair, and the question session was opened. The audience raised certain points, namely:**

- (1) Economies of scale

- a. need for sufficient customers for an enterprise to be viable; this can cause the dilution of green principles
  - b. small markets survive by including crafts
- (2) A need for markets to survive as a business, no way of living on grants in the long term; so a need for members on the committee who understand business, marketing, etc.
- (3) Difficult for small businesses to afford an organic certificate
- (4) Problem for schools that there are not enough funds to arrange projects such as farm visits and no way for schools to apply for the majority of grants
- a. possible answer:
    - extend the Gwynedd ar y Cyd healthy menu project to include education about food
  - b. another possible answer:
    - SGG or similar body to apply for grants to pay for school visits (as happened once before when Ysgol Felinwnda visited Trigonos under SGG sponsorship)
- (5) Need to educate parents also
- (6) Only 2% of the food ecological footprint is transport; eating organic and less meat will have more effect
- (7) Problem with obtaining agricultural grants for horticulture
- a. Answer 1:
    - Possibilities occur that are not well known; contact David Darrell or Aberystwyth University for information
  - b. Answer 2:
    - Easier for cooperatives to obtain grants than individuals

**After the question session there was a break to enjoy lunch prepared by students of Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Dolgellau, under the supervision of Mrs Wena Elias, using local produce**



**In the afternoon the audience was split into different workshops, namely**

**Workshop by Judith Owen, Ysgol Gynradd Nefyn, that were doing a project on the school garden. She explained:**

- Garden at Nefyn school since three years
- Judith started the project; when it was successful she was supported by other members of the school
- motivation: children didn't know how vegetables grew
- vegetable and flower garden
- work in the garden is used to teach parts of the curriculum, such as science, mathematics, physical education
- learning without competition
- educating parents by setting the children homework: "Tell your parents to take you to ..."
- money a problem, but had won some in competitions
- difficulty with getting parents to help; older people come to assist

- Young Farmers' Club made the fences etc voluntarily under the Rural Life Scheme.

### **Important points arising from the project:**

- The children learn where food comes from
- Starting with the practical so that the theory makes more sense
- A good method of teaching things from the curriculum such as physical education without competition – gives everyone confidence
- Gardening is good for mental health
- Has been done despite the curriculum – need for the curriculum to change (hope in the new one)

### **Points important to the presenter:**

- You must be prepared to be adventurous
- Support is essential – no one can run a project on their own

### **Practical results:**

- Ysgol Nefyn is to receive a free polytunnel via BTCV's help
  - Caernarfon farmer's market project has created links with Glanrafon market
  - Message for SGG's strategic plan: consider a project that enables school children to visit farms
  - Message for SGG strategic plan: consider a project to motivate and support farmers to market locally (list of local producers, network of farmers that share resources and information and share marketing, ...)
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## **Food Cooperatives - June Jones' Workshop, Rural Regeneration Unit**

- June started to work on this project in 2006. A scheme of this type is already successful in Cumbria, and it is run in Wales by the National Assembly. The food cooperatives plan is part of the "Wales Health Plan". The aim of the scheme is to ensure that residents of Wales eat at least 5 pieces of fruit/vegetables a day.
- At the moment there are more than 100 cooperatives in Wales, with 3 in Gwynedd, namely Peblig, Abergwyngregyn and Pwllheli.
- Voluntary groups run the cooperatives with help in some places from Communities First. The groups meet in village halls, chapels, pensioner clubs and so on. Some cooperatives are run from private homes.
- The group decides who their suppliers of vegetables and fruit are going to be, and the bags cost £2. It is possible to get bags worth £1, £2, £4, and £6, depending on the customer.
- The produce is dependent on what can be grown at different times of the year.
- Part of June's work at the start of the project will be to visit the village/town asking the opinion of local shopowners, and then report back to the scheme's planning committee, who will then decide whether to go ahead with the scheme or not.
- The project brings the community closer together, and often other projects arise by discussion whilst the boxes are being shared.
- There is no profit in the scheme for groups.

### **Two important points:**

1. Pleased to note how many food co-ops are in operation
2. Two perspectives:
  - i) provide opportunity to eat more healthily
  - ii) local sourcing – regeneration of producers

## Other points:

3. Regeneration – educational element – age – younger generation prefer 'easy to cook' products
4. Co-ops – self-sufficient – take ownership
5. Not enough local growers – not enough local farmers growing produce
6. Co-ops help the community - credit unions – boost towards working on other schemes.

## Points important to the presenter:

1. Group's responsibility – the group is responsible for the co-op
2. Important to eat healthily

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**Get Cooking – Workshop by Llinos Owen, Policy Unit, Care Department, Cyngor Gwynedd, Health and Wellbeing Facilitator.**

## Two important points:

1. Need to think more widely than just young parents. Need also to provide cookery training for young people and children.
2. Need to ensure the support of key people in the community.

## Other points:

3. Danger of losing old skills – growing vegetables, smallholdings – a need for them to pass on their skills

4. Important to promote
- growing
  - cookery
  - tasting
  - living and eating healthily

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## **Glanyrafon Market**

### **Important points:**

1. Persistence
2. Committed
3. Opportunities (keeping an eye out)
4. Lateral thinking
5. Location
6. Using partnerships (knowledge etc)
7. Confidence
8. Learning from others

### **Points important to the presenter:**

1. Committed and able people on the committee
2. Councillors on board! (who you know!)
3. Partnerships
4. Trust and confidence in your organisation/project etc

### **Local strategy**

Two important points:

1. Food co-ops sourcing locally and the problems they face to do this
2. How do you measure a discernable improvement in health?

**Other points:**

3. The virtues of naked grains
4. Difficulty with lack of choice in box schemes
5. Local volunteer schemes can work
6. Encouragement for larger producers – need for a larger strategy
7. Communication between organisations and agencies
8. Extent of demand for local produce.

**Points important to the speaker:**

1. The need to be constantly looking for information/partners/support/agencies

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**Workshop of Ben Gregory, Dyffryn Nantlle's Food Project**

Llysiau Lleu was established in April 2002 with the aim of promoting healthy eating by encouraging the growing of vegetables. Support was received from the Assembly's Community Food Enterprises for two years, with additional funding from the Local Health Alliance and Communities First.

A partnership was formed with Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, Penygroes (housing association), Trigonos, Plas Baladeulyn, Nantlle ([info@trigonos.org](mailto:info@trigonos.org)) and local residents.

Since its formation, a number of events have been arranged

- In the winter of 2002/3 a series of classes on growing organic vegetables
- A visit to a compost scheme in Y Bala and a Food Co-op in Y Rhyl
- Community equipment/compost bins were bought
- Practical sessions on a smallholding were arranged
- A land inspection was done in the area where vegetables would be grown
- Links were formed with health agencies.

Since then, in 2004 a food cooperative was established to sell local fresh and organic vegetables, and by 2006 there were 20 members.

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**The conference was arranged with the help of Cyngor Gwynedd, Farmers' Union of Wales, and Galluogi Gwynedd through Mantell Gwynedd.**



**Thanks also to the Chairperson, Bethan Russell Owen, all the guest speakers, Carys Pritchard and her staff at Talysarn Centre, and the students of Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, Dolgellau under the care of Mrs Wena Elias, for arranging the lunch.**

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