Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND DRINK GROUP (SFADG)

Update – March 2026

Contents:

1. **GOOD NEWS – funding for local growing and cooking initiatives**
2. **DEFRA SECRETARY FOR STATE'S SPEECH TO THE NFU CONFERENCE** (24 February 2026)
3. **UK's LARGEST FARMER-LED NATURE RECOVERY PROJECT APPROVED**
4. **FARMGATE INFORMATION** (from Alan Chubb, Quoins Vineyard)
5. **THOUGHTS FOR LENT** (from Kate Nottage, CFBoA Biodiversity Group Chair)

1. GOOD NEWS – funding for local growing and cooking initiatives

SFADG engagement with the Wiltshire Council-led committee on increasing community resilience and developing everyday food security (Oct 2025):
Prior to the meeting, it was indicated that the CFBoA Sustainable Food and Drink Group approach to food security considers environmental sustainability as the cornerstone, with sustainable soil management and nature friendly farming as vital. This article, in the Sustainable Food Trust Daily News Digest, highlights that "Soil health is public health" and "The Power of Public Choice" (see **here**). The inequality of wealth which leaves many with little or no choice is a continuing conundrum, which we continue to consider and lobby on. Any discussion on food security and resilience crucially needs to include some of our local food producers and representation from food retail and hospitality sectors.

In the event, the importance of strengthening local food provision with community engagement, particularly sustainably produced fruit and veg, became the area of focus. Only 16% of our fruit is produced in the UK and 53% of veg. With our appetite for exotic produce and expectation of being able to buy the same produce all the year round, we have lost track of seasonality and what can be produced close at hand, in our own gardens, or by local farmers and growers.

Now, £10K of very welcome government and Area Board funding has been allocated to support the following inspirational proposals from our wonderful local growers and BoaCan:

1) Pilot scheme of Vegetable boxes (with some fruit) for the Hub
   Proposed boxes to be jointly provided by Kate Collyns, Grown Green @ Hartley Farm (Organic), and Jonathan Francis, Avonleigh Orchards (Biodynamic).
   Up to 10 boxes a week for food bank clients for 20 weeks from the beginning of July to the end of November.
   Signposting for clients wanting support to increase cooking and growing skills to be discussed.

2) Community festival days at Avonleigh Orchards
   The proposal is to have festival days linking nature and food connection with well-being, a sense of achievement and community, looking at families and attendees of all ages from all backgrounds. This project is seeking to give people the skills and confidence to grow their own food , as well as a connection to nature and others in their community.

   Below is a list of 3 proposed festival days throughout the year:

- A day in Early May, plug planting in the market garden. A lot of the preparation work will be done before the event, but the whole process will be explained and there will be some veg bed formation activity going. The main task will be planting up the market garden with plug plants that we have raised to coincide with the event. There will be education re the crops and their position in the crop rotation. This will promote a connection with the vegetables hopefully they will be eating throughout the coming season.
- A day in early July, thinning out fruit in the orchards and catching the vines in the wires in the vineyard. The latter task is a task where many hands make light work and a great sense of teamwork as it is an example where many work as one. Whilst in the orchard and thinning the fruit we can learn about the ecosystem and nature around us and bathe in its mindfulness.
- A day in early September, harvesting apples, sorting those for storage and those to be distributed to CropDrop and FareShareSW to be distributed to food pantries and community groups. We can also be pressing fresh apple juice so that everyone has juice to take home.

3) Community Teaching Garden at the Cowshed in Bradford-on-Avon. The proposed project by Anna Glasbrook and Alan Bell will function as an educational space for food growing and horticulture, providing a welcoming outdoor environment where children, adults, and volunteers can learn practical growing skills, engage with sustainable land use, and connect with nature. The space will be used for activities that are open to and benefit the wider local community.
Some funding has been allocated to help establish essential infrastructure (deer fencing), once a Community Interest Company has been set up.

4) 'The Avon Grub Club' is a BoaCan initiative funded by WC Area Board and CWLPET and with the support of the Trustees at the Bradford Town Football Club. We're hoping to run regular cooking/baking sessions for young people and families, to be shared in community meals. Also potential for gardening sessions. The project is still in the planning stages. (Contact Jim Lynch jim@boacan.co.uk).

Many thanks to Bradford on Avon Community Area Board; and. also to Caroline Le Quesne, Wiltshire Council, Engagement and Partnership Lead, Central (Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Warminster, Melksham, Devizes and Pewsey), for her enthusiasm and positive enablement.

2. **DEFRA SECRETARY FOR STATE'S SPEECH TO THE NFU CONFERENCE** (24 February 2026).

Read here: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/secretary-of-states-address-to-nfu26 .
Sets out the government's direction of travel on food and farming. Relaunch of Sustainable Farming Incentive will give priority to applications smaller farms of 3 – 50ha (hectares) initially.

3. **UK's LARGEST FARMER-LED NATURE RECOVERY PROJECT APPROVED**

More than 50 farms will be involved in the landscape recovery project, across 3,000ha of habitat, whilst continuing to produce food.
Read more https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2026/02/11/evenlode-landscape-recovery-project-begins-work-on-the-ground/
And listen to Farming Today - 12/02/26 Natural flood management, AI pest control, Oatly Supreme Court defeat - BBC Sounds

4. **FARMGATE INFORMATION** (from Alan Chubb, Quoins Vineyard)

You have been on a walk in the spring air along the Bradford on Avon Walking Wheel and there is a lot of farm activity but what is that tractor driver doing? What is he planting? Also, you remember that someone in the café had said that there had been some beaver activity around here but where?

Well, there is now an idea that will let you find out. The answer is to encourage farmers and businesses to post QR code plaques on their gateposts and footpath stiles that will allow you to photograph and download this day-to-day information onto your mobile. QR codes (Quick Response codes) are 2D, machine-readable barcodes that can instantly share data like website URLs. Scanned via smartphone cameras, they convert black-and-white grid patterns into instant digital content, commonly used in marketing, logistics not unlike barcodes and most businesses are already using them to pass on information on their products but not out in the field.

Myself and the Winsley Parish Council have been investigating the use of this initiative around Bradford on Avon. The idea was started by a group at Greensands Country north of Luton (for details see https://www.greensandcountry.com/2023/04/15/find-out-about-farming-in-greensand-country-with-new-qr-code-markers/ also at https://www.cotswoldfarmers.org/qr-codes).

There are two approaches to this. The first is to encourage local farmers and producers to register a QR code for themselves (this is free) get the plaques printed onto plastic discs (£6 @) attach them onto a gate post and link the code to their URL or website where they have posted regular information about what is happening in the field in front of gatepost. For example, the farmer could write what is growing (cereal variety, when planted, when to be harvested, cultivation practices, breed of cow/sheep, next month's programme) but no more than 100 words or so.

The other approach would be for there to be a central hub where information is texted or emailed by the public to a QR editor who posts the information as it comes in. This would work well for specific walks and wildlife areas where people could send in information about what they had seen recently The main advantage to using these QR codes is that they can allow regular updates on countryside activities rather than the placing of posters that can become out of date quite quickly. I have a code placed on my farmgate that informs passersby what I have just done in the vineyard in the last week as well as telling people that the mallards are back in their pond down the road!!

5. **THOUGHTS FOR LENT** (from Kate Nottage)

On your 'Food For Thought' leaflet [see here], which I really like, I'm sharing my thoughts with you:

At this time of year, though I don't practise an established religion, I try to use up the food I already have. So those containers of lentils, rice, pasta, and tins of beans, tuna, etc etc. How long has it been sitting there 'just in case'? Is it a food or a fossil???

So, I challenge my food creativity and work my way through the larder and the freezer. It's quite hard keeping up the resolution to not buy anything until what I have already has gone - but it is good for self-awareness....

ENJOY GOOD FOOD AND DRINK

If you wish to be on the SFADG circulation list, please contact Ros Edwards at climatechampions@gmail.com