

Creating your Good Food Nation Planning Table: Who should be at your table?

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Membership of Relevant Authority Good Food Nation Steering Groups

In preparing to start planning for your first Local Good Food Nation Plan we recommend that you draw from the systems approach, and multiple outcomes, embedded within Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 and the first National Good Food Nation Plan. In addition, good practice examples from existing sustainable food partnerships and other allied planning activities will be useful. We advise that your Good Food Nation planning steering group – the main strategic planning group tasked with leading and delivering your first Local Good Food Nation Plan – should not sit within one unit/team/department. Currently, across the 46 Relevant Authorities, the Lead Good Food Nation Contacts, sit across a range of areas – including Community Development, Facilities and Strategic Planning – bringing a depth and breadth of seniority within their Relevant Authorities, combined with a wide range of expertise, networks, and connections to food.

There is no prescribed formula for who should be involved with, and leading on, this planning work. Rather, the following list is starting point, drawing from our detailed knowledge of, and contributions to, the development of the Good Food Nation Act, the lessons learnt from the National Good Food Nation planning process and ongoing dialogues, with the Scottish Food Commission and a diverse range of interested parties. When considering this list, it is important to be aware that departments/units/teams may be named differently at your local level and across different Relevant Authorities, including ones you may be collaborating with.

Not every department/unit/team will need to provide a member for your core Good Food Nation working/steering group, but all should be aware of the legislation, what it means at a local level and be able to provide broader input to the development of Local Good Food Nation Plan development.

For those colleagues who you identify as relevant to your Good Food Nation planning process, and in particular those who you would like to contribute to the work of your working/steering group, please direct them to the 'Understand' section of our Living Good Food Nation Lab Planning Toolkit which gives them an introduction to the Good Food Nation journey, including the Act itself, the first National Good Food Nation Plan and the duties this new food systems legislation places on Relevant Authorities.

Note

The following lists are arranged alphabetically; the order does not imply any level of hierarchy or priority for involvement/membership.

Health Board Representatives

Dietetics

Involvement of dieticians, from across multiple parts of the system, is critical in Health Board Plan development. In Scotland many primary care dietitians are employed by the health and social care partnership, rather than the health board directly.

Estates and Sustainability

Whilst there is limited recognition of land in the National Good Food Nation Plan, land and community assets are a critical element of the food system. There may be specific teams within estates that are most appropriate to engage with. The [NHS Scotland climate emergency and sustainability strategy: 2022-2026](#) covers the sustainable management of estates and land. There are strong overlaps between this strategy and the Good Food Nation vision. Many health boards have combined estates and sustainability teams, but if there are separate Estates and Sustainability should both be represented.

Procurement and catering (in patient and hospitality provision)

The food that Health Boards procure, cook and serve each day is a key and significant internal policy lever for the Health Board Good Food Nation Plan development. It is essential that catering and procurement teams are part of Health Board Good Food Nation working groups.

Public Health

According to [The Public Health etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2008](#) each Director of Public Health has ultimate responsibility for protecting public health across the Health Board and Local Authority. Public health expertise, therefore, plays a key role in Good Food Nation Plan development. as and provides a strong understanding of the importance of taking a systems approach to achieving the vision outlined in the Good Food Nation Act.

Waste

The [NHS Scotland Waste Management Guidance](#) is designed to assist NHS Boards. There is significant recognition of food in this guidance, which works towards meeting the aims presented in the Good Food Nation Act, particularly in relation to sustainability and climate outcomes.



Local Authority Representatives

1. Areas of Policy Expertise

Allotments and Growing

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) requires each local authority to prepare a food-growing strategy. Most Scottish Local Authorities have published their first food growing and/or

allotment strategy. It is essential that your local Good Food Nation plan connects to, is consistent with, and builds on this work and that allotments and food growing are recognised for the contribution they can make to, preparing and delivering your Local Good Food Nation Plan.

Biodiversity

Relevant authorities must explicitly “have regard to” Biodiversity when preparing for, and writing, local Good Food Nation Plans. In 2024, the Scottish Government published [Scotland's first Biodiversity Strategy to 2045](#), which recognises the role of local government in delivering its strategy.

Chief Executive's Office/ Strategy, Policy and Performance

Due to the cross-cutting nature of the Good Food Nation Act and the broad have regard duty associated, it is important that your Good Food Nation planning and steering group membership connects directly with overall strategic leadership, governance and risk management, strategic planning and key performance monitoring, and joint/integrated authority and community planning partnership work. Involvement of senior, strategic, policy, performance leaders (who often sit in the office of the Chief Executive or other senior officials) will ensure your Local Good Food Nation Plan is not developed in isolation and instead is strategically grounded, holistically framed and coherently aligned to other strategic priorities, plans, resource allocations and activities. This should also ensure that there is senior buy-in to, and advocacy of, your Good Food Nation Planning process and Plan.

Children and Young People

Child Poverty

The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) requires each local authority to produce child poverty action plans jointly with the regional health boards. As with Biodiversity, Child poverty is one of the primary outcomes that the relevant authority must ‘have regard’ for when developing their Local Good Food Nation Plan.

Education (School Age and Early Years)

The first National Good Food Nation Plan argues for learning and teaching based on the Curriculum for Excellence that is ‘designed to help learners develop their understanding of a healthy diet,



understand the role of food within social and cultural contexts and develop awareness that food practices and choices depend on many factors including availability, sustainability, season, cost, advertising, and the media.' It also recognises the importance of children and young people having 'frequent opportunities to participate in a variety of food-related educational experiences and activities.' Complimenting existing work in these areas is critical, and colleagues in education will also be able to provide expert support on how this can be done.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC was incorporated into Scots Law in 2024. All Local Authorities in Scotland are legally required to uphold the UNCRC. Teams that work within Local Authorities on UNCRC must be involved in Good Food Nation plan development. There is strong overlap between the requirements of the UNCRC and Good Food Nation vision. For instance, UNCRC Article 24 recognises children, and young people must have good enough nourishment from their food. Children and Young people must legally be consulted in Local Good Food Nation Plan development. Every relevant Authority must also "have regard to the importance of communicating in a way that is effective in engaging children and young people". Working with and complimenting existing activities in relation to this is critical.

Climate Change

Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, public bodies have duties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contribute to the delivery of the Scottish National Climate Change Plan. Whilst not a statutory requirement, each Local Authority must produce a Climate Change plan that presents the action they are taking in respect of their climate change duties. Climate change is also explicitly recognised as a thematic area that Relevant Authorities must 'have regard to' in determining the contents of its Good Food Nation Plan.

Community learning and development (CLD)

CLD includes youth work, community-based adult learning, family learning, and community development. CLD officers have a critical role in community engagement, which will be essential throughout local plan development, particularly planning for and during consultation.

Community Wealth Building

The Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026 requires public bodies to work together to use their economic levers to deliver sustainable growth and promote resilience in our local economies. (There is a strong overlap between Economic Development and Community Wealth Building).

Economic Development

Economic Development work to develop and promote economic development, inclusive growth and economic wellbeing. Economic Development is explicitly recognised as a thematic area that Relevant Authorities must 'have regard to' in determining the contents of its Good Food Nation Plan. (There is a strong overlap between Economic Development and Community Wealth Building).



Public Food – Procurement, Catering and associated Facilities

Public sector food procurement catering for schools, care homes and other public settings, provides a key internal policy lever to support realising the ambitions of the Good Food Nation Act.

The Scottish Model of Procurement defines value for money as the best balance of cost, quality and sustainability which this should be reflected throughout strategy development, reporting and procurement processes for contracting authorities and economic operators alike.” The Scottish Government is currently setting up a new Public Sector Food Procurement Taskforce

Public Sector Food Procurement Taskforce which will ‘help identify and address barriers for the public sector to source more locally produced food’.

2. Areas of Specialist technical expertise

Data analysis

To measure progress on the ambitions set out in your local Good Food Nation Plan, it is critical to benchmark the current situation in each Local Authority. There is an overlap between some of the indicators in the National Good Food Nation Plan, the indicators you decide to include in your Local Good Food Nation Plan and indicators associated with other duties that you are already collecting and reporting on, e.g. those used in your Climate Change Plans and Child Poverty Action Plans. Data analysts will be able to provide this expertise and oversight. The Living Good Food Nation Lab has developed a Local Good Food Nation Data Dashboard which has baselined this work.

Estates

Whilst there is limited recognition of land in the National Good Food Nation Plan, land and community assets are a critical element of the food system. There may be specific teams within estates that are most appropriate to engage with. For instance, those that work on Community Empowerment and Asset Transfers (under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015).

Finance

Whilst finance teams may not sit on the steering group, they play a key strategic role across the local authority. It is important that they are aware of the financial implications of this legislation.

Legal

This resource does not provide legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for independent legal advice. The Scottish Government state that all Relevant Authorities need to get independent legal advice to ensure they are meeting their legislative requirements.

Planning

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is Scotland's national spatial strategy. There are strong overlaps between this and the Good Food Nation vision, including a focus on just transition, community health and wellbeing, and circular economy. NPF4 requires planning authorities to prepare Local Development Plans (LDPs) which are part of the statutory development plan. Local Place Plans (LPPs) are community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land. Whilst LPPs are not part of the statutory plan development, they should play an important role in informing LDPs. The GFN planning process and NPF4's plan development processes both require robust and sustained community engagement.

Regulatory and Enforcement Services (Environmental Health Officers (EHO's), Marine Life, Livestock, Animal Welfare, Trading standards)

These categories of regulatory and enforcement services operate across the food system in partnership with key public bodies (including Food Standards Scotland, Health and Safety Executive, Environmental Standards Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland etc.) have an interest in, and role to play in your Local Good Food Nation planning process. Animal Welfare is explicitly recognised as a thematic area that the relevant authority must 'have regard to' in determining the contents of its Good Food Nation Plan.

Social Security/ Welfare Support Team

Economic wellbeing and child poverty are both explicitly recognised as thematic areas that the relevant authority must 'have regard to' in determining the content of its Good Food Nation Plan. Social Security and Welfare Support Teams will be able to provide local expertise in relation to both areas.

Tourism and Hospitality

Scotland Outlook 2030 Responsible tourism for a sustainable future, is Scotland's Tourism strategy. This recognises the significant role food, and drink plays in Scotland's tourism industry. Colleagues in tourism and hospitality should therefore be involved in Local Plan development.

Waste

The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 focuses on delivering system change in how we produce, use and consume goods and materials[1], including food. The Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland also gives Local Authorities increased powers in relation to circular economy practices and at a national level, there is explicit recognition of the connection between these two pieces of legislation. Individuals involved in the development of Circular Economy plans and waste strategies in Local Authorities, need to be aware of and engaged with, Local Good Food Nation Planning.

Existing mechanisms for partnership working

Whilst Section 10 (4)(a) of the Act requires that each Health Board and Local Authority produce their own Good Food Nation Plan, there is recognition of the importance of partnership working and some Relevant Authorities are already adopting a joint approach to their GFN Planning work. However, significant existing mechanisms for joint working already exist in Scotland. These include:

Community Planning Partnerships

Community Planning Partnership (CPP)- “Community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to people's lives”. CPPs are responsible for producing two types of plans that describe local priorities and planned improvements: Local Outcomes Improvement Plans, which cover the whole council area and Locality Plans, which cover smaller areas within the CPP area, usually focusing on areas that will benefit most from improvement. Community Participation is central to CPP's work. Early engagement with the CPP to understand how the legislative duties of the Good Food Nation overlap with the CPP's approach and plan developments is essential.

Integration Joint Boards

The work of Integration Joint Boards focuses on the integration of health and social care services. Social Care is explicitly recognised as a thematic area that relevant authorities must ‘have regard to’ in determining the contents of Good Food Nation Plans. It is, therefore, crucial that Integration Joint Boards are involved in local plan development. (The Highland region has a different process for integration of health and social care).

Health and Social Care Partnerships

Social Care is explicitly recognised as a thematic area that Relevant Authorities must ‘have regard to’ in determining the contents of their Good Food Nation Plans. It is therefore crucial Health and Social Care Partnerships are involved in local plan development.

Sustainable Food Places (SFP)

The Sustainable Food Places Network is a place-based systems approach to delivering food systems transformation. Not all Scottish Local Authorities and Health Boards are part of an SFP, but many are exploring how this approach could support the implementation of the Good Food Nation Act. This map shows which areas are members of the Sustainable Food Places Network. In some local authority areas, the Sustainable Food Places Co-Ordinator sits within the Local Authority, whilst in others they sit outside the Local Authority, often in the voluntary sector. Typically, some, or all of, the funding for partnerships comes from Local Authorities and/or Health Boards. Wherever the lead sits, it is crucial the SFP are part of the conversation at an early stage.

'Using the briefing materials developed by the Living Good Food Nation Lab as part of this Planning Toolkit, we recommend establishing with the Community Planning Partnership, the Health and Social Care Partnership and the Integrated Joint Board where their work fits into requirements of the Good Food Nation Act.

External partners

Working in partnership with organisations beyond the Relevant Authority is crucial to strong implementation of the Good Food Nation vision, and to ensure the Local Plan fully reflects local context. Many of these partners will have existing relationships with relevant authorities. Specific partners will be specific to geographical areas, but they may include:

Climate Hub

Climate Hub is the Scottish Government's new national network of Community Climate Action hubs. There are 24 climate hubs, which although do not directly map onto every local authority area, have a broad coverage across the country.

Community Councils

Community Councils are the most local tier of elected representation in Scotland. They are voluntary organisations set up by statute by local authorities and run by local residents to act on behalf of their areas.

Food Producers

As well as local businesses (which will vary according to area), there are a number of producer and industry organisations which may be appropriate to approach. National organisations include Scotland Food and Drink, The Food and Drink Federation (Scotland), NFU Scotland, the Scottish Organic Association Society and the Crofting Federation. There are also sector-specific organisations, such as Quality Meat Scotland and Seafood Scotland, and some areas have Regional Food Groups to market specialist products.

Higher Education Partners (local colleges or universities)

Whilst Higher Education partners do not have to produce their own Good Food Nation plans, they procure and serve food as well as being a critical site for food education, training and professional development. They, therefore, play a crucial role in achieving the Good Food Nation vision, both now and through capacity building in the future. Some relevant authorities have already developed strong partnerships with their relevant colleges and universities, who sit on local Good Food Nation steering groups.



Leisure Trusts

Leisure Trusts are often arm's length external organisations. There is likely to be some overlap between the Good Food Nation vision and their activities, especially as they are often providers of public food. However, this will be geographically specific.

Local community food organisations

Specific local community food organisations may include those working across the system from food growing to public diners. The Local TSI network, SFP Co-ordinator or Community Learning and Development Team will have local expertise on who these organisations are in your locality.

Sustainable Food Places

See above.

Third Sector Interfaces

There are 32 Third Sector Interface (TSI's) TSI's across Scotland – one in each local authority area. Their role includes supporting the third sector in building capacity, connecting partners, and being a voice of the sector. They play a unique connecting role within the third sector through being place-based, whilst being connected to a national network.

Useful examples

The Glasgow Food Policy Partnership and Food 4 Fife have both established working groups that extend beyond their Relevant Authorities. You can see membership of Glasgow Food Policy Partnership, [here](#) and Food 4 Fife, [here](#). As can be seen, membership is broad and extends across the food system. Whilst both examples list place-specific partners, these examples might provide inspiration for who to include in your locality.

Ultimately what your steering group looks like will be geographically specific and may also involve taking a regional approach, across a health board area or broken down by local authorities within a territorial health board. There is no correct approach to this outlined in the legislation, instead partnership working is recognised as a central means of delivering the Good Food Nation vision.

Appendix 1: Summary Checklist for Health Boards

Internal areas of work

Dietetics

Catering and Procurement

Estates and Sustainability

Public Health

Waste

Add any missing areas here

Existing partnerships

Community Planning Partnerships

Health and Social Care Partnership

Integrated Joint Board

Sustainable Food Partnership

Add any missing partnerships here

External partners

Add relevant organisations here



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Appendix 2: Summary Checklist for Local Authorities

Internal areas of work

Allotments and Growing

Biodiversity

Chief Executive's Office/ Strategy, Policy and Performance

Children and Young People

Climate Change

Community learning and development (CLD)

Community Wealth Building

Economic Development

Public Food – Procurement, Catering and associated Facilities

Data Analysis

Estates

Finance

Legal

Planning

Regulatory and Enforcement Services

Social Security/ Welfare Support Team

Tourism and Hospitality

Waste

Add any missing areas here

Existing partnerships

Community Planning Partnership

Health and Social Care Partnership

Integrated Joint Board

Add any missing partnerships here

External partners

Add relevant organisations here



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