

background and context

In 2010-11, Middlesbrough Environment City coordinated the development and launch of a town-wide Food Action Plan. The Food Action Plan was influenced by Middlesbrough's innovative Healthy Town programme, the One Planet Living framework and public health priorities.

Since then, Middlesbrough has been designated One Planet Living status, with a work programme to help local people live healthier and more sustainable lives in a way that often saves money. One of the ten One Planet Living principles involves a commitment to 'Local and Sustainable Food.' Evidence shows that production and consumption of food accounts for 25% of Middlesbrough's ecological footprint (the amount of land and resources required by Middlesbrough residents to maintain their lifestyle). Middlesbrough's footprint is typical of the UK's ecological footprint, which is equivalent to requiring nearly three Planet Earths to be sustainable and shows that we are not living within our means. The interventions and ambitions in the Food Action Plan address this concern.

The Food Action Plan, developed by the Middlesbrough Food Partnership, recognises that the production, procurement, consumption and disposal of food should be a cyclical process (See page 4). The actions set out in this plan cover all aspects of food issues that are important to the needs of Middlesbrough: health and nutrition; local and sustainable food; reducing food related waste; fairness in the food chain and tackling food poverty; education and skills; and a strong local food economy. It also outlines how it can support organisations, businesses and individuals in making better food choices and how people can get further involved.

During the development of this document, the Middlesbrough Food Partnership has been mindful of the need to tackle food poverty in the town and has aimed to prioritise interventions to ensure that everyone has access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food. This is a significant challenge for the foreseeable future and will remain a top priority for the Middlesbrough Food Partnership.

A broader challenge at the national and global level is sustainable food and food security. Global food production and food supplies impact upon, and are influenced by, many factors. These include climate change, global economic changes, population growth, food shortfalls, ethical production methods, fossil fuel uncertainties and energy costs. The relationship between these is complex. The danger is that over the next decade, food prices will rise above inflation meaning that the risk of food poverty in Middlesbrough will increase unless the town makes plans for what is predicted. The Food Action Plan considers the broader interventions that are required to address food security.

The aim of the Middlesbrough Food Charter is to bring community groups, businesses and policy makers together to set and develop local priorities around shared values. The Food Charter gives the whole community the opportunity to make a positive contribution to making Middlesbrough a healthier and more sustainable town for everyone.

Progress toward the actions within this document are monitored regularly and the Food Action Plan will be evaluated and reviewed in November 2019.

