**Salford CVS Annual Conference**

**30th October 2024**

**Salford Community Stadium**

Afternoon workshop: **Green Shoots**

Number of attendees: **11**

Facilitator: **Martyn Willcock**

Panel members: **Jannine McMahon – Green Teach, Sam Payne – Manchester Urban Diggers, Jenny Griggs – Natural England**

Panel speaker notes: **Helen O’Brien**

**Jannine McMahon, Green Teach**

Jannine works at Green Teach Community Farm and Sustainability Hub based at Chat Moss. They have created a peri-urban local food growing site. This started due to disconnections in farming and in 2014 they launched a school summer camp where they delivered educational sessions about food. Green Teach use a community supported agriculture model, like the one used by Incredible Edible. During Covid they worked with a variety of organisations to collaborate on different project areas. Local farming draws down emissions. The next plan for Green Teach is to become a community owned farm. This will be the first one in Salford.

**Sam Payne, Manchester Urban Diggers (MUD)**

MUD set up Plat Fields Market Garden in Fallowfield, which was a disused bowling green in 2017. The project grew and includes shelter and poly tunnels. They sell vegetables grown on site as donations to develop the project. In 2023 they have over 1,000 unique volunteers, over 11,400 volunteer hours, have given out over 2,400 free meals, and held over 50 events. This has resulted in 95.7% improved wellbeing and 80% more connection. They have produced over 1,000 litres of compost a month and two tonnes of vegetables per year. MUD now have two more community gardens in Beswick and Whalley Range. They have managed to get the community involved via events and they benefit from a good mix of people within their team. Sam explained that food crosses cultures and that’s how it brings people together. Lots of groups and events use the spaces. The climate crisis has resulted in a lower crop yield this year and there is unpredictability of sowing seeds.

**Jenny Griggs, Natural England**

Jenny is the Senior Reserve and Development Manager at Natural England. Her work is currently overseeing Chat Moss. Jenny talked about the history of Chat Moss and the use of the land. Natural England are working with Moss Lane Farm and looking into how they can grow crops and protect the peat soil. There are promising paludicrops for Manchester and they have been looking into ideas of what types of crops they can grow that suit the landscape. A group of seven partners have come together to turn the moss lands into a nature reserve and bringing the land back to the local people.

**Q&A**

**Martyn Willcock, Salford CVS**

Jannine, what other examples do you have of the land trust and your inspiration?

Jannine – The land was under threat through Brexit. Farmers have to convert to organic farming and now are under threat of land developers who want to buy the land. In order to put the land over to the community, it will stay in land ownership forever. The Community Supported Agriculture are looking at a co-op culture which helps with access to land.

**Martyn Willcock, Salford CVS**

Sam, have you made any changes to the crops you grow due to changes in climate?

Sam – I don’t think we’ve done any massive changes as we always experiment with crop growing. The market garden income has declined due to poor crop yield.

Jenny – I volunteer in a market garden, and we have lost early crops but the later crops have been better. We have learnt from this and we grow later now.

Jannine – This is the first year that our market garden couldn’t produce any carrots. It was too wet and cold. The land managers group use a drone to plant seeds on the land so to keep the soil structure which is disturbed when using tractors.

**Andrew Swarbrick, RHS Garden Bridgewater**

If you were in charge of the country, how would you get food growers in communities?

Sam – I’d create access to land for people in cities who want to grow but can’t due to cost and location. Roots to market is also very important. Supermarkets are dominant and dictate the price of food, there needs to be an option to ethically buy local vegetables. No one knows how to grow vegetables commercially and there needs to be an educational push to get more people into farming.

Jannine – All the elements fit together. By following the Incredible Edible model, you use different growing spaces to grow different things such as urban spaces in schools compared to large areas like Chat Moss. Eventually the education comes with it. We link in with the Department of Education. Schools talk about food in nursery, reception and year one but not when children are older. This needs to happen from the grass roots down, grow seeds and eventually policies will change.

**Practical actions**

* Explore a food grow network
* Express the need for the right to grow with an open letter to Salford City Council, which is signed by different organisations so to reduce the barriers to grow in Salford