"Alive with Local Food"

An Economic Strategy for the Forth Valley & Lomond

Local Food and Drink Sector

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Section 1: Vision & Executive Summary

Our Food & Drink Vision

"The Forth Valley and Lomond region is alive with local food. The region has a vibrant, thriving, and resilient local food and drink economy – one in which food producers, processors, and providers are enabled to contribute to a better food system for all.

The region is an excellent place to grow and develop food enterprises – where the diverse careers in food and drink are viable and valued, innovative and inspired, sustainable and social. The varied food offering has been crafted by our regions' landscape and local food producers, processors and providers – who take pride in food that nurtures both people and place."

The region has a distinct and flourishing food culture – with the many ways to experience, explore, and celebrate good food acting as a central draw for tourism, and a key contributor to well-being for residents. Visitors and residents enjoy an abundance of good food from across the region – food that is accessible, responsible, and delicious."

Executive Summary

The Forth Valley & Lomond Local Food Economy

The Forth Valley and Lomond area - comprised of Stirlingshire, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire – has a wealth to offer in terms of food and drink. We have plenty of productive landscapes and dedicated producers that support a range of arable and livestock production. We have talented food processors who transform primary produce into quality food products for everyone to enjoy. We also have a variety of food and drink providers – such as distilleries, markets, restaurants, farm shops, and cafes – who ensure great food experiences for visitors and residents alike.

Although our region has a strong base of food producers, products, and experiences there is a real desire, and opportunity, to develop the local food economy further. This development comes up against a myriad of challenges – farming in a changing climate, distribution across a rural area, recruiting and retaining staff, finding routes to market, and keeping up with shifting demand.

From the supply side, there are barriers to growth across the production, processing and provision of local food – from access to land, resources, and information - to a need for more skills, capacity, and collaboration. From a demand perspective, there are difficulties around the accessibility and awareness of local food – with a desire from individuals for more convenient and regular places to purchase local food, cafes and restaurants seeking easier ways to source locally, and better provision of locally

produced products at events or in schools. As the demand for local food from our region grows, the routes to market and support networks have to be in place to enable more food enterprises to thrive.

Alongside great potential for the future of food and drink in our region, there are also major social and environmental challenges surrounding food production, distribution, accessibility, and waste that must inform any action going forward. Locally produced and nutritious food is inaccessible for many, there is a lack of food knowledge and skills, and an increasingly unhealthy food landscape with which to contend. Our food systems are also becoming more environmentally unsustainable and insecure – with a lack of adaptability and resilience throughout the production, processing and provision of food in our region.

Although, by focusing on strengthening the local food economy - in thoughtful, comprehensive, and inclusive ways – we can positively contribute to wider economic, social, and sustainability ambitions. This will require commitment, collaboration, and courage from all of us. The Opportunities outlined below give us direction of where to start and what to prioritise on this path to a stronger and more resilient local food economy.

Alive with Local Food - Our approach

Alive with Local Food, created in partnership with Stirling Council and Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER, is a snapshot of our food and drink sector in the region from a strategic perspective – of where we are, where we want to go, and steps of how to get there.

The Strategy is meant as *a strategic road map for those who want to support a more vibrant and resilient local food economy*. The objectives and actions within, meant to strengthen the local food sector in our region, are relevant to a variety of stakeholders - from businesses and public bodies, to third sector organisations and communities.

Alive with Local Food has been informed through a variety of review, research, and direct engagement across different scales – speaking to local businesses, reviewing national policies, and learning from international projects. Food and drink producers, processors, and providers has given an invaluable perspective of the local food economy on the ground – illuminating the barriers to growth and potential solutions to overcome these challenges. The Stirling Food Summit, held in May 2017, provided a platform for engagement – with organisations, businesses and communities envisioning a better future for food for the region. The Good Food Stirling report has given us a regional overview, with recommendations that link food across health, knowledge, environmental, economic and social outcomes. We have also drawn from knowledge and work done by our partners over the years, as well as researching national and global food policies, practices, and projects.

Alive with Local Food recognises that developing a thriving and resilient local food economy is complex - with economic, social, and environmental spheres intertwined and interconnected. From this

understanding, we've taken a systemic approach to the Strategy – meaning that we support opportunities to grow the local food sector that also deliver on social or sustainability outcomes.

This comes in part from aligning with the national aspirations for Scotland to become a 'Good Food Nation' – "a country where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they buy, serve, and eat day by day." Aligning with wider national, regional, and local priorities allows Alive with Local Food to be more comprehensive, ambitious, and relevant for years to come.

Moving Forward – Opportunities

Alive with Local Food identifies four major Opportunities to realise our vision for food and drink – with clear objectives and actions associated with each. These are: 'A Vibrant Local Food Economy', 'Investing in People', 'Shaping a Resilient Future', and 'Showcasing & Celebrating'. Through these Opportunities, we aim to build on the strengths of our region, and overcome local challenges – informed by good practice that has proved successful elsewhere.

A Vibrant Local Food Economy

A vibrant local food economy is diverse and achieving, enviable in its viability, and creative in its collaboration. We want to strengthen the vibrancy of our local food economy - by increasing the number, strength, and success of local food producers, processors, and providers – ensuring their products get to market locally and further afield.

To do this, we will explore, enable, and encourage collaborative ways of working – between businesses, organisations and communities - to increase efficiency and effectiveness across the food and drink sector. We will develop the resources, skills, and networks to support an achieving local food economy – where more food and drink enterprises start-up, scale-up, and grow. We will enable more local food on local plates through supporting a variety of routes to market – to increase transparency and traceability within the supply chain, reinvest money locally, and reduce food miles.

Investing in People

Passionate, skilled, and well-supported people – who have access to thoughtful and appropriate resources – are at the heart of a thriving local food economy. We want to ensure that the regional food and drink sector is a prosperous and attractive career option, and that opportunities for this are visible and well supported. For this to happen, we need to enable the ambition, skills, and opportunities for all people to prosper through a strong local food economy.

We will do this through supporting skills development for food enterprises, enabling initiatives that positively change the perception of food work, and ensuring pathways to food careers are modern and relevant. We will also focus on an inclusive growth approach – encouraging the further development of a local food economy that enables social, health, and well-being outcomes for all.

Shaping a Resilient Future

A resilient local food economy means that the businesses, people, landscapes, and structures involved with our food are able to adapt amongst uncertainty and change. Encouraging innovation – through

peer-learning, experimentation, and partnership – can help shape a resilient sector food and drink sector that is responsible, sustainable, and thriving.

We will support food enterprises to become more resilient and innovative at all levels - through increasing efficiencies, embedding climate-friendly practices, and facilitating knowledge sharing. We will become a 'Good Food City and Region' by implementing the Sustainable Food Cities framework in partnership with others.

Showcasing & Celebrating

A strong and distinct local food culture – one that reflects the diversity of our region, the rich provenance of our food, and the quality of our natural larder – is key to a thriving local food economy. We want to ensure that there are ample opportunities across our area to celebrate local flavours - with many ways to experience, explore, and taste our regional food.

We will do this by strengthening our food tourism offering and regional food culture - aiming to make the region a destination for food and drink. We will support more authentic food and drink experiences and events – connecting visitors and residents to our regional food products, producers, and landscapes in engaging and inventive ways. We will also ensure that our local food businesses are showcased, represented, and well connected – making it easier for them to access resources and information, collaborate together, and collectively tell their stories to many audiences.

Section 2: Opportunities

The Opportunities, and the associated objectives and actions, detailed below will guide activity in the coming months and years to strengthen the local food and drink economy in the region. The timescales, in brackets next to each action, are classed as short (6 months to 1 year), medium (1 -3 years), or long (3 + years). Please note that many actions are ongoing, and although may start in one timescale could run into other timescales as the activity develops.

Opportunity 1: A Vibrant Local Food Economy

A VIBRANT LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

Objective 1.1 Increasing Collaboration
Explore, enable, and encourage collaborative ways of working – between businesses, organisations and communities - to increase efficiency and effectiveness across the food and drink sector.

1.1.1. ACTION - Develop and expand the current Local Food Business Network (short).
Explore more collaboration opportunities with the Local Food Business Network – such as a formal food business development group, regional branding or marketing scheme, or co-operative supply chain development.

1.1.2. ACTION – Deliver bi-monthly opportunities for local food business to network (short & ongoing). Host opportunities for networking amongst local food businesses - to enable collaborative working, business to business trading, communication, and peer-learning.

1.1.3. ACTION – Creation of a 'collaboration space' on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2) **(short & ongoing).** Ensuring an accessible and transparent space to highlight potential collaborations between food businesses, organisations, and individuals.

Objective 1.2 A Diverse Local Food Economy

To ensure a diverse and resilient local food economy throughout the region, we will encourage and support food enterprise that addresses gaps in our local food economy. Initially, our priority

areas include enabling new entrants to farming, increasing fruit and vegetable production, supporting direct routes to market, and increasing amount of locally produced food within value-added products.

1.2.1 ACTION: Identify barriers and solutions to increasing fruit and vegetable production across the area (medium). Work with current and aspiring food producers, and experts in food, farming, sustainability, and land management - will help to inform Action 1.2.2 below.

1.2.2. ACTION: Share innovative approaches to fruit and vegetable production that are applicable to our region (short & ongoing). We will do this through coordinating and hosting examples, visits and learning opportunities that showcase innovative and successful fruit and vegetable production.

1.2.3 ACTION: Increase the amount of value-added products being created from locally produced primary ingredients (medium to long) (such as locally produced dairy into cheese, grain into bread, oats into flapjack, meat into pies, etc). Do this by working with current and aspiring local food businesses to understand and deliver the skills, resources, and advice needed to realise value-added ambitions.

1.2.4. ACTION: Secure underutilised or unused land in the urban, peri-urban, and rural areas for use of food enterprises, particularly for new-entrants (medium to long). Explore this initially by working with Local Authorities, via their Local Food Growing Strategies, to identify suitable Council-held assets that could be used for food production.

Objective 1.3 Supporting start-up, scale-up, and growth

Develop and grow the local food economy across our region – by increasing the number, strength, and success of food producers, processors, and providers. Support food and drink enterprise to start-up, scale-up, and grow - through identifying barriers to growth for every scale and working with partners to address those barriers.

1.3.1 ACTION: Work with business support organisations to effectively support local food businesses of all scales to pathways to export (short & ongoing) (Scotland/UK/International). We will do this though hosting export opportunities, expertise, and resources on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2).

1.3.2 ACTION: Ensure that the local food and drink economy is attractive to investment (medium – ongoing). We will do this through regular engagement with Scottish Direct International, to ensure the local food and drink sector across the region is aware of, and can respond to, investment opportunities.

1.3.3 ACTION: Ensure that food-specific business development advice is accessible and fit for purpose at all stages of enterprise (short – medium & ongoing). – such as guidance on food

enterprise regulation, resources, or skills. Work with business support organisations to identify where gaps exist in food-enterprise-specific advice - and work in partnership to overcome these.

1.3.4 ACTION: Invest in, and help to develop, flexible and affordable commercial kitchen facilities for food enterprise start-ups (short – medium). This will help to enable a low-risk environment to trial and test out a food enterprise idea.

1.3.5 ACTION: Better utilise assets for food enterprise use, through shared-use and collaboration (medium & ongoing). We will do this by identifying and mapping Council-owned and partner assets, to be housed on the new Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2), which could be shared-use for food and drink enterprise activity. For example, assets such as relevant community centres, schools, land, or equipment.

Objective 1.4 Local Food on Local Plates

Enable more avenues for local food on local plates through supporting a variety of routes to market and retail opportunities. This includes supporting new routes to market for small scale producers, strengthening the existing routes to market to ensure local producer access, and enabling business to business local food transactions.

1.4.1 ACTION: Support, develop and strengthen direct routes to market for food and drink enterprises in the region (short – medium & ongoing). Building on the momentum and success of models such as the Stirling Food Assembly, work with partners to create resilient routes to market that work for our region, producers, and consumers.

1.4.2 ACTION: Enable business to business local food buying and selling (medium & ongoing). We will do this by creating a mechanism for wholesale/business to business local food purchasing – to make it easier for restaurants, cafes, B&Bs, caterers, and events to access local food.

1.4.3 ACTION: Work in partnership with Farmers' Market managers throughout the region to identify more locally-based suppliers, navigate local regulations, and maintain communication channels (short & ongoing). While balancing the need for the diversity and quality of Market offering, we want to ensure that local producers are given priority over those further afield.

1.4.4 ACTION: Increase visibility of routes to local market within the region (short – medium). We will do this by working with relevant business support agencies to ensure direct and indirect routes to local markets are identified and included in business advice and signposting. We will also include various routes to market on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2).

Opportunity 2: Investing in People

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Objective 2.1. Investing in Skills

Ensure that bespoke food enterprise specific skills resources exist, are well signposted, and accessible for aspiring food businesses and start-ups.

2.1.1 ACTION: Identify demand for skills, training, and development for food enterprises - and work in partnership to facilitate appropriate delivery of these needs (medium). We will do this by drawing on expertise of the Local Food Business network and other food enterprises, educational institutions, and employment organisations to identify skills gaps.

2.1.2 ACTION: Ensure opportunities for learning and skills development are well-promoted and accessible to those who work in, or aspire to work in, the local food economy (short & ongoing). We will do this through including a dedicated skills and learning section on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2), as well as continued signposting via the monthly Opportunities newsletter.

2.1.3 ACTION: Ensure regional participation in Nourish Scotland's "Making a Living from Local Food programme" (short to medium). This mentorship programme connects aspiring and new food business start-ups with experts in their field – facilitating knowledge transfer, resource sharing, and business development.

2.1.4 ACTION: Provide regular contribution to the "food career skills and education forum" – a partnership group addressing skills gaps and barriers to food career pathways for young people (short & ongoing). In particular, we will act as a link to our local food and drink businesses in the region for the forum.

2.1.5 ACTION: Create a Food Skills Academy community café in the centre of Stirling, in collaboration with education and employment partners (medium – long). This social enterprise would support hands-on experience and skills development - while providing a place for residents and tourists to enjoy good food.

Objective 2.2. Enable Pathways to Careers in Food

We will work to ensure that the regional food and drink sector is a prosperous and attractive career option – through supporting initiatives that positively change the perception of food work,

strengthen various pathways to food work, and support development of viable and rewarding food work.

2.2.1 ACTION: Increase participation of local food and drink businesses in the Founders4Schools initiative – which links local business leaders to young people, providing inspiration around a variety of career options (short – medium & ongoing). We will do this through increasing awareness of the Founders4Schools initiative and providing advice and support to enable businesses to participate.

2.2.2. ACTION: Increase the amount of food & drink businesses who are a registered Living Wage Employer (medium). We will do this through providing guidance, signposting and support to aid businesses through the process**.** We recognise the importance of ensuring that careers in the food and drink sector are prosperous – both to attract and retain a talented and skilled workforce.

2.2.3 ACTION: Enable participation in the "Food and Drink Operations" strand of Foundation Apprenticeships, which will improve educational pathways to valued work in the local food and drink sector (short – medium & ongoing).

2.2.4 ACTION: Inspire young people to develop food careers, through positively changing perceptions of food work (medium & ongoing). We will do this by expanding and strengthening initiatives - such as Royal Highland Education Trust and work experience placements - which enable children and youth to experience and connect with the local food economy.

Objective 2.3 Growing the Social Food Economy

We will support inclusive growth in our local food economy by enabling the 'social food economy' in our region. These are food and drink enterprises with explicit social aims and outcomes alongside economic ones, such as social enterprises and Community Interest Companies.

2.3.1 ACTION: Raise the profile of social enterprise as a viable and desirable business model for the local food and drink sector (short – ongoing). We will do this by providing resources, information, and case studies of the 'social food economy' on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2).

2.3.2 ACTION: Collaborate with partners to deliver relevant food and drink objectives of the upcoming Stirling Social Enterprise Strategy (medium). This will help to identify baseline data, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for action - to ensure growth of the social economy for the local food and drink sector.

2.3.3 ACTION: Ensure public partners are seizing opportunities to support and develop the social food economy throughout the region (medium & ongoing).

2.3.4 ACTION: Work in partnership to develop a project that combines food enterprise and social enterprise skills in targeted areas (medium – long). This will enable and empower individuals and communities to access the skills, experience, and knowledge to develop food and drink social enterprises.

Objective 2.4 Invest in Health and Well-being

Encourage and support opportunities within the local food economy that align with national and local health and well-being objectives. We will do this by working with food businesses and retailers to increase the availability and prominence of fruit and vegetables throughout the region – ensuring more accessibility for consumers, and more routes to market for local fruit and veg producers. Also, by supporting food and drink enterprises to be proactive in relation to healthy food – to develop new healthy products, or reformulate existing products – in order to adapt to trends or comply with nutrition requirements.

2.4.1 ACTION: Secure a 'Pledge for More Veg' from prominent food retailers, organisations, and public bodies while facilitating links to local producers (medium) - in collaboration with the Regional Food Partnership, the Veg City campaign, and local businesses. This will increase the availability and prominence of locally sourced fruit and vegetables at food providers across the region.

2.4.2 ACTION: Support food and drink enterprises in the region to respond and adapt to a shift to a more local, seasonal, and healthy food offering (short – medium & ongoing) We will do this through hosting workshops and development sessions for local food and drink businesses – such as reformulation of food products to reduce sugar, fats, or salt, or redesigning menus to incorporate more local, healthy, or seasonal foods.

2.4.3 ACTION: Ensure Healthy Living Programme grocers and retailers within our region include more locally sourced fruit and vegetables (medium). We will do this by engaging with retailers participating in the Healthy Living Programme regionally, to support them to include more locally sourced fruit and vegetables in their point of sales.

2.4.4 ACTION: Encourage and support markets, retailers or food service outlets that provide a healthier food offerings across the region (medium & ongoing). We will do this by working with Local Authorities to implement planning instruments or any other incentives to support food providers to offer healthier options.

2.4.5 ACTION: Combine local food and active travel in events and activities more often (short – medium & ongoing). We will do this by working with regional Active Travel Hubs, the Stirling Cycle Tourism Co-ordinator and other partners to host more Cycling & Food events and activities – combining both active travel and local food agendas.

Opportunity 3: Shaping a Resilient Future

SHAPING A RESILIENT FUTURE

Objective 3.1 Strengthening Resilience
We support actions which will enable our local food and drink businesses to make their operations more circular and resilient at all levels - through reducing waste, increasing efficiencies, and supporting knowledge transfer of successful models, practices, and tools. This will ensure a local food and drink economy that is adaptable to a changing future, is rooted in sustainability and resilience, and is informed about an ever-shifting food landscape.

3.1.1 ACTION: **Support aspiring or existing food and drink enterprises to explore markets that turn waste or surplus food resources into other products or enterprises (medium & ongoing).** We will do this by linking food businesses with experts in circular economy sector, providing resources on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2), and hosting collaboration opportunities via the bi-monthly local food business network meetings (Action 1.1.2).

3.1.2 ACTION: Facilitate knowledge transfer of sustainable and resilient practices in food and drink enterprises (short – medium & ongoing). Co-ordinate opportunities for exemplar food enterprises who operate in innovative, sustainable, and resilient ways to share best practice with local aspiring or existing food and drink businesses. This could be farm visits, step by step demonstrations of sustainable practices, or tutorials on how to use new technology.

3.1.3 ACTION: Enable a climate-friendly local food economy which is rooted in agroecology – one which is resilient and positively contributes to climate change mitigation (long & ongoing). We will do this by connecting our local food businesses with experts in sustainability, to identify practical ways that food enterprises can transition to more climate friendly practices. We will also host resources on climate-friendly models and practices on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2), covering all aspects of the supply chain – from production and processing, to distribution and waste.

3.1.4 ACTION: Support food enterprises in the region, in particular food producers and farms, to successfully navigate a changing funding, payment scheme, and subsidy landscape (short & ongoing). We will do this by acting as a communication link between our regions' local food businesses and government bodies, funding organisations and upcoming schemes. This will result in open and regular communications about funding streams, via our Opportunities newsletter (Action 4.3.3) and our Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2).

Objective 3.2 Becoming a Good Food City & Region

Support and achieve the aim of Stirling becoming a 'Good Food City and region,' within the context and interests of the local food economy. Specifically develop this ambition through implementing the Sustainable Food Cities framework in the region - a comprehensive way of realising positive food system change across six key issues - using a cross-sector and partnership approach. As part of this framework, work to support opportunities for our local food and drink businesses to access routes to public procurement.

3.2.1 ACTION: Assist the Regional Food Partnership to achieve the Bronze Sustainable Food Cities' award by 2020 for Stirling city and region (medium – long). We will do this by working in partnership with Forth Environment Link and the Sustainability team at Stirling Council, to co-ordinate and formalise a cross-sector Regional Food Partnership.

3.2.2 ACTION: Ensure continued representation of the local food and drink businesses and their interests on the Regional Food Partnership (short & ongoing). This will enable a strong economic development focus within the Regional Food Partnership, and provide a link between local food businesses and activities of the Partnership.

3.2.3 ACTION: Increase access to good food – including more local, organic, fresh and healthy food – in schools (short - medium & ongoing). Work in collaboration with Soil Association Scotland to support existing Food For Life Scotland procurement initiatives across the region, and expand the programme to Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.

3.3.4 ACTION: Enable more local food enterprises to compete in public procurement contracts (short – medium & ongoing). We will do this by providing resources on routes to public procurement on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2), and facilitate information and support sessions on routes to public procurement. This will help to increase accessibility to, and understanding of, public contracts for local food and drink businesses.

Objective 3.3 Encourage Innovation

Encourage and enable a culture of innovation throughout all aspect of the local food and drink economy in our region. We will do this by hosting examples of innovation within food enterprise, and exploring the development of appropriate technologies for the food sector.

3.3.1 ACTION: As an example of innovation, collaboration, and the future of food, launch the Borrowmeadow Farm & Food Enterprise project - by securing partners, finalising funding streams, and beginning development (short – long & ongoing). This project would serve as a future of farming demonstration model and collaboration opportunity (education, enterprise, community) - complete with café/restaurant space, large event venue, food enterprise start-up space, and budget accommodation on-site.

3.3.2 ACTION: Work in collaboration with the Institute of Aquaculture and Global Aquatic Food Security to demonstrate innovative sustainable food production (medium). For example,

trialing a city centre aquaponics and hydroponics operation in a shipping container, similar to Grow Bristol CIC.

3.1.3 ACTION: Identify and create mechanisms that harness smart and appropriate technologies to strengthen the local food economy (medium). Work with relevant digital and tech partners to find appropriate technological solutions for food enterprises, in particular to increase sustainability, embed efficiencies, or streamline logistics and distribution.

3.3.4 ACTION: Explore opportunities to harness green or surplus energy to heat greenhouses for local, sustainable fruit and vegetable production (medium). This could be working with food and land-based businesses who want to utilise excess biomass heat produced on-site.

Opportunity 4: Showcasing & Celebrating

SHOWCASING & CELEBRATING

Objective 4.1 Regional Food Culture
Deepen our regional food culture and identity - through showcasing the quality of our food and drink offering, ensuring more opportunities to taste our regional food and drink, and enable rich storytelling of our local food provenance.

4.1.1 ACTION: Work to increase the amount of local food and drink products and services at events and experiences (short - medium & ongoing). Increase the visibility of local food and drink through our business directory (via our Local Food Web Portal, Action 4.3.2), exploring a business to business wholesale mechanism for a convenient way to purchase locally (Action 1.4.2), and linking businesses with tourism/events spheres.

4.1.2 ACTION: Deliver actions and objectives of the Scottish Food Tourism Strategy that are relevant to our region (medium & ongoing). We will do this in collaboration with tourism and food and drink organisations and businesses across the area.

4.1.3 ACTION: Increase emphasis on quality food and drink across the region (medium – long). We will do this by exploring and evaluating a regional brand for food and drink in the region, and assessing promotion of quality assurance schemes such as 'Taste Our Best' across the region.

4.1.4 ACTION: Enable rich storytelling and effective marketing of our regional food and drink larder – including its landscape, products, people, processes, and provenance (short – medium & ongoing). This could be delivering 'telling your story' workshops to businesses in the region, or hosting resources/tool-kits on the Local Food Web Portal (Action 4.3.2).

Objective 4.2 Authentic Events & Experiences

Deliver a variety of authentic food events and experiences throughout the region which serve to strengthen our food culture and local food economy. Initially, these will focus on showcasing producers, the rural area, seasonality, and foraging.

4.2.1 ACTION: Compile and develop a programme of authentic and innovative food and drink experiences that will contribute to a diverse and inspiring food culture (medium & ongoing).

4.2.2 ACTION: Host a regional food event to celebrate and showcase local food and drink producers, processors, and providers (short). This could be a regional farm open day, family-friendly activities and learning, or a promotional campaign - all with the aim of celebrating and supporting our local food economy.

4.2.3 ACTION: Deliver a seasonal series of 'Harvest Dinners', in collaboration with local food and drink businesses and the tourism sector (short & ongoing) Every season, these ticketed events will create an evening of food and conversation which will showcase a different producer, sector, region, or theme – with a focus on celebrating the seasonality of our region.

4.3.4. ACTION: Contribute to the Festival of Foraging, in collaboration with Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER, local food and drink enterprises, and other partners (short). This unique event could include a ticketed pop-up dinner celebrating wild food from our area, a market with stalls selling produce that uses foraged ingredients, and guided foraging walks.

Objective 4.3 Signposting & representation

Strengthen the local food and drink sector through signposting to, representation of, and responding to, our local food businesses. Ensure the interests of food and drink enterprises are represented when opportunities for collaboration and partnership working arise within and outside of the food and drink sector.

4.3.1 ACTION: Embed a Local Food & Drink co-ordinator post within the region, who will act as an animator for the local food economy (short – long & ongoing). This resource will work to deliver the FVL Local Food Strategy in partnership with others.

4.3.2 ACTION: Creation and maintenance of a Local Food Web Portal. This website will act as an information, sharing, and resource hub to enable the growth of the local food economy across the region (short & ongoing). The website will highlight local/regional food initiatives, funding, resources, case studies, training, etc – including a comprehensive local food directory with regional producers, processors, and providers.

4.3.3 ACTION: Compile, write and distribute a monthly "Local Food Opportunities" e-newsletter (short & ongoing). This will ensure that local food and drink businesses regularly are updated on key resources, funding, opportunities, and news.

4.3.4 ACTION: Ensure the representation and participation of the local food economy at local, regional, national, and international level (short – medium & ongoing). We will do this through representing our local food and drink sector at relevant conferences, events, or meetings – and supporting businesses to participate in targeted events, campaigns, or summits. Such as the 'Showcasing Scotland' regional events, Sustainable Food Cities conference, etc.

Implementation and delivery

This Strategy is a partnership document - with objectives and actions delivered in partnership with public bodies, the third sector, agencies, businesses, and individuals. The Local Food and Drink Co-ordinator will help facilitate this partnership process – as well as selected delivery of key objectives and actions. Delivery partners include Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER, Stirling Council, Forth Environment Link, Clackmannanshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Forth Environment Link, Visit Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, and others.

Section 3: Background & Context

Key Drivers of Alive with Local Food

Alive with Local Food was created from a need to develop a more strategic approach to supporting the local food economy within the Forth Valley and Lomond region. A lack of an overarching, strategic plan to develop the food and drink sector was identified in the Forth Valley and Lomond (FVL) LEADER Local Development Strategy in 2015 – covering Stirlingshire, West Dunbartonshire, and Clackmannanshire. The FVL LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) met in November 2016 to discuss and ultimately approve a LAG-led project to address this gap. Jointly funded by FVL LEADER and Stirling Council, this project employed a Local Food & Drink Co-ordinator (LFDC) – Ashley Robinson - to develop and deliver this strategic approach across the FVL area. From April 2017, the LFDC has been in post developing this Strategy – alongside other activities that support the local food economy to become more economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. The Local Food and Drink Co-ordinator role is led and supported by a steering group made up of representatives from the FVL LEADER LAG. These representatives include Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER, Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Forth Environment Link, Visit Scotland, and Scottish Enterprise.

Informing Alive with Local Food

Through review, research, and direct engagement, this Strategy has been informed from a variety of sources. The review process has looked at Local Food Strategies from across the UK, as well as researching different food policies, practice, and projects locally, nationally and globally. This includes research done by our partners over the years – Stirling Council, FVL LEADER, and Forth Environment Link in particular – to help gauge the unique needs and demands of our region in relation to food. The Good Food Stirling report, commissioned by Forth Environment Link and completed by Nourish Scotland, is a key guiding piece of research, as it is the only bespoke research for the area that specifically delves into detail about the regional food context.

Direct engagement has also informed the Strategy broadly, as well as the delivery themes specifically, through discussion with various stakeholders and partners. Engagement with the informal Local Food Business Network, as well as speaking to a variety of food and drink producers, processors, and providers, has also helped to highlight barriers and gaps in our local food economy.

Much of the Strategy and delivery themes have been informed by the Stirling Food Summit, May 19th-20th, 2017. The aim of the event was to bring together a range of partners interested in how food in the Stirling area is grown, bought, sold, cooked and eaten – and ask how they envision a better future for food for the region. Held over two days, the Summit included some scene-setting and background, guided discussions to enable feedback for the Strategy, as well as time to eat together and celebrate and learn about food. The discussions were largely structured along the themes emerging from the Scottish Government's Good Food Nation ambitions, as well as the recommendations coming out of the Good Food Stirling report.

SOURCE: GOOD FOOD STIRLING REPORT, 2017

Review and Research

Overall perspective

Scotland's relationship to food and drink is one of contrasts. There is much to be celebrated and built upon, but there are also clear imperatives for change. Turnover within the Scottish food and drink sector is now worth £13.5 billion, up 35% in the last decade, and is one of the fastest growing sectors of the nation's economy (Scottish Government, 2017). There is a growing demand for food and drink that is locally produced and sold, with the number of Farmers' Markets in the UK doubling between 2000 and 2012, and one report suggesting that 39% of people had visited a farm shop in the last 12 months, with 47% planning to visit one soon (Sustainable Food Trust, 2018).

Yet, there are major challenges that face our region, and our nation, in terms of feeding ourselves fairly, sustainably, and securely going forward. The UK is only 60% self-sufficient in terms of food production – meaning less resilience in our food system and missed opportunities for home grown food production, processing and value-added food products (NFUS) . In terms of environmental sustainability and social equality, Scotland has "set ambitious domestic targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, tackle poverty and health inequalities and work towards a fairer society" (Nourish Scotland, 2016). Supporting a more localised food system, in thoughtful ways that deliver on multiple actions, can help to overcome some of these challenges while creating a vibrant local food economy.

Food and drink businesses report that the main barriers to growing the sector include “finance, staff availability and skills, management capacity, transport, processing capacity, and marketing” – with lack of knowledge and signposting within the supply chain a key gap in the sector (Nourish Scotland, 2014). Food and drink stakeholders in the FVL region also highlight the need for valuing food work differently - to attract and retain workers in the sector, encourage more innovative food enterprises, and to ensure appropriate skills pathways are available to young people (Stirling Food Summit, 2017). Local food businesses also highlight the need for more signposting to funding and resources, access to infrastructure and skills, food business development opportunities, and assistance navigating regulations and policy – all of which would help to enable start-up and address barriers to growth (LFBN, 2017).

Residents across the region also desire to buy locally produced and processed food and to support the local food economy – but need a variety of well signposted, convenient, and accessible ways to purchase local food more easily (Stirling Food Summit, 2017). Likewise, visitors want to sample food and drink that reflects the character of the region while out at events and experiences, within cafes and restaurants, or at their accommodation – with 49% of visitors to Scotland wanting to try local food while on holiday (Visit Scotland, 2017). With demand rising for food and drink that reflects our regional landscapes and people, we must ensure that starting, scaling, and sustaining food and drink enterprises across the region is straightforward and supported.

Spotlight on skills, staff, and uncertainty

Dedicated and passionate people are at the heart of our local food and drink economy. Yet national and local trends suggest that we are struggling to train, recruit and retain enough staff for the industry to thrive, with “work in food not always seen as an attractive career choice” (Scottish Government, 2014). How we perceive and value food and food work is a key aspect of this trend, with “our food culture in Scotland becoming more detached from food production” (Scottish Government, 2014) .

Exacerbating the problem is market and labour uncertainties such as Brexit, which are creating a difficult environment for recruiting and retaining staff. A recent NFUS survey has found that “key sectors of Scottish agriculture are under threat due to labour shortages” - with potato, field vegetable and soft fruit crop production particularly effected (NFUS, 2018). This comes at a time where the fruit and vegetable sector in Scotland has grown to nearly £300 million, and the Good Food Nation ambitions aim to increase the amount of healthy food, such as fruit and veg, eaten across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014).

With the food and drink sector offering a variety of engaging and meaningful careers, we must ensure there are relevant and modern pathways to working in the food and drink sector. Our food and drink sector needs to be an attractive, prosperous, and responsible career option for people – one where food workers are paid fairly, careers in food and drink are valued, and that food enterprise development and skills are supported.

Spotlight on security, sustainability and health

In terms of sustainability and efficiency, Scotland has ambitious targets relating to climate change and zero waste. By 2050, the Scottish government aims to reduce food waste in Scotland by 50%, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% (Zero Waste Scotland, 2016). With the 55% of food waste coming from Commercial and Industrial sectors, and 38% of this coming from Food and Drink

manufacturing – our food and drink enterprises have a significant role to play in hitting national targets (Zero Waste Scotland, "How much food waste is there in Scotland?" 2016). Increasing efficiencies in our food and drink sector makes environmental and economic sense – with an identified savings of between £500 million and £800 million per year for the beer, whisky and fishing industries alone ("Circular Economy, Sector Study on Beer, Whisky and Fish," 2015).

People are also confronted with a food environment that is, in a myriad of ways, dysfunctional. The current inaccessibility of good food, lack of food literacy, and unhealthy food environment contribute to a poor diet and health issues nationally. This has led to "levels of diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses associated with obesity [being] stubbornly high in Scotland", with a failure to "eat enough nutritious, healthy foods like fruit and veg, oil-rich fish and high-fibre carbohydrates." (Food Standards Scotland, 2015). Nationally, the Scottish Government is committed to creating an environment "where choosing healthy food and making healthy meals is easy and routine, and food contributes to wider health and wellbeing" (Scottish Government, 2014).

We need to ensure our industry is prepared for shifting market trends, and is resilient enough to adapt and respond to unpredictability in all its forms. For example, the markets for healthy food and responsibly produced food has shown impressive growth in recent years. One of six key trends that are influencing what people eat today is the "healthiness" of food - with consumers wanting "products that are natural and less processed" (Soil Association, 2017). Yet, less than 1% of arable land in Stirlingshire is used to grow vegetables, with only 9 hectares of land in fruit and vegetable production for human consumption (Good Food Stirling, 2017). Likewise, the demand for responsibly produced food and drink has grown – with the organic sector growth outpacing conventional, a 6% increase in organic sales in 2017, and the UK organic sector worth over £2.2 billion (NFU, 2017).

This mismatch of what is grown here, and what will need to be grown here for upcoming food trends and policies, means a more targeted approach to support is needed. There is a real opportunity support our local food and drink businesses to respond to these trends, while at the same time aligning with wider health and sustainability objectives.

Spotlight on local routes to market

Innovative routes to market for local producers are also emerging and growing across the nation – such as online platforms for selling. These can operate as a weekly 'click and collect' local food market - where local producers list their products online, shoppers select and purchase in advance, and then both come to a pre-arranged collection point to exchange goods. These can act as a key route to market for local producers - as they are an innovative, low risk, flexible, and convenient way to sell.

One example is the Stirling Food Assembly, on online platform connecting local people to local producers, operated by Forth Environment Link. In the two years of its operation, the Stirling Food Assembly has connected more than 40 local producers with over 2,000 members – selling almost 5,000 baskets of local produce to more than 500 Stirlingshire households - and generating around £100,000 for the local economy (Forth Environment Link, 2018).

While the Food Assembly model is set to no longer operate in the UK, the success of the Stirling Food Assembly has demonstrated the demand for local food and the power of selling direct to consumers. Thankfully there are a variety of different direct selling platforms to establish – so that we can ensure that local food continues to get onto local plates. Yet, having varied and flexible routes to market – that

work for both producer and consumer – is only one part of ensuring a strong local food economy in the region. We also need to invest in the future of our local food economy – enabling businesses to adapt to change and become more resilient, support pathways to fair and valued food and drink careers, and encourage innovative and collaborative business models.

Why focus on local?

While there is no 'silver bullet' solution to transforming the food system, enabling and supporting a more localised food system is a step in the right direction. Localised food production provides "substantial economic benefits to communities and regions in terms of direct, indirect, and induced impacts," with "the production of fruits, vegetables [and] dairy, even if not restricted to local sales, generating strong positive benefits to a regional economy in terms of annual output, gross state output, employment, and labor income" (Pinchot, 2014).

The Campaign to Protect Rural England has shown that supporting a local food economy increases job opportunities, with:

- Smaller independent local food outlets creating a job for every £46k turnover - three times the return on investment of supermarkets. This means local outlets support three times the jobs of national supermarket chains.
- Research on the effects on employment following the opening of 93 edge-of-town supermarkets showed that over a four-year period, there had been a net loss of 276 jobs in a 10-mile radius of each of the supermarkets, equivalent to a national total loss of over 25,000 jobs.
- Producers involved in the local food economy employed on average 3.4 full-time workers compared to the regional average of 2.3 per farm. (CPRE, 2012)

Short supply chains and direct routes to market are a significant boon to the local economy. For example, in the Food Assembly model, 90% of the sales price remained in the local community, going to the Assembly hosts and the producers themselves. Compare this to supermarket sales, where food producers are only receiving 15-25% of product sales price (Food Assembly, 2018). With 95% of food sales within Stirling occurring within supermarkets, and an average weekly spend of £2,500,000 – encouraging shorter supply chains and direct routes to market could significantly increase the amount of that spend that directly benefits the regional economy and its communities (Good Food Stirling, 2017). Estimates from the New Economics Foundation found that money spent on local food and drink has a multiplier effect of 2.5 – so a £10 spend in a local food outlet is worth £25 to the local economy (Nourish Scotland, 2014).

Supporting a stronger local food economy in our region also offers opportunities for increasing transparency and provenance in our food system, reconnecting rural and urban spheres, increasing access to fresh and healthy foods, and showcasing innovative businesses to inspire the next generation of food producers (Nourish Scotland, 2014).

Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Alive with Local food aims to align with relevant national, regional and local priorities. These priorities help us determine a coherent and comprehensive way forward for this Strategy – one that can

champion our local food economy in both urban and rural areas across Stirlingshire, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbartonshire.

National

Good Food Nation

While rooted in the need to support and drive the local food economy in the region, this Strategy recognises the importance of an integrated perspective - with economic, social and environmental outcomes interconnected and mutually beneficial. This arises from the desire for the region to embed the principles of a Good Food Nation, becoming an exemplar model for 'Good Food'. The Good Food Nation ambitions highlight that "we need to increase our focus on dietary, environmental, and community priorities, it is about bringing activity together, prioritising, and giving a much higher profile to these aspects of food." (Scottish Government, 2014). With this in mind, this document works to identify opportunities across our region which will deliver on multiple cross-sector outcomes wherever is appropriate, with a strong local food economy as the key driver for action.

Ambition 2030 & Tourism Scotland 2020

Ambition 2030, the industry-led food strategy developed by the Scotland Food and Drink Partnership, aims to double the value of the food and drink sector to £30 billion by 2030. The key aims of Ambition 2030 - of supporting innovation, increasing skills development, and enabling access to domestic and international markets – resonate with our regional opportunities and challenges, and are reflected within this Strategy.

Tourism Scotland 2020, the strategy for tourism growth for Scotland, recognises the importance of improving the customer journey through good food, with "the local representation of food and drink [being] an integral part of future tourism development strategies." It also highlights the importance of "Providing Authentic Experiences" within tourism, events, and festivals. A focus on developing and strengthening the regional food offering will play a central role in creating more authentic experiences for our visitors that truly reflect the provenance of our area.

Scotland's Economic Strategy

Alive with Local Food aims to create opportunities for all in our region to participate in the local food economy, whether that is through support for food enterprise skills in targeted areas, enabling more social food enterprises, or increasing access to healthy, seasonal food across the region. This aim aligns with Scotland's Economic Strategy (2015), which states that the Scottish Government's central purpose is "to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. This remains the Government's ambition to which all our efforts and actions are directed and is at the core of our Economic Strategy."

Regional

Alive with Local Food explores and supports initiatives that use a strong local food economy to deliver on key focuses of each Local Authority represented within our region. These include the shorter term Priorities set by each Local Authority, as well as the longer term Local Outcome Improvement Plans –

which will together steer the focus of each Local Authority in the coming years. This is why aligning Alive with Local Food with both of these is crucial to the success and legacy of this Strategy.

Food can be a powerful medium to deliver positive economic, social, and environmental change – and delivery on a multitude of priorities within Local Authorities. Alive with Local Food has reflected many elements of the LOIPs and Priorities – all outlined below - within the four Opportunities and the subsequent actions of the Strategy.

Local Authority Priorities

Stirling Council Priorities

Stirling council priorities, released in December 2017 and covering the next three years, touch on many of the key themes and objectives within this Strategy – from inclusive and sustainable economic growth to supporting the region to become a must-visit destination, among others.

Priority D is particularly relevant to this Strategy – as it includes delivering inclusive economic growth and promoting prosperity through a variety of measures. These measures are intended to improve infrastructure and attract investment, increase employability and enhance skills, and support a stronger landscape for start-up and growth of local businesses. This includes specific commitments to promoting social enterprises and co-operatives, supporting the development of the circular economy, and ensuring all local companies can compete successfully in public sector contracts.

Alive with Local Food will deliver on Priority D by strengthening and growing the local food economy in a number of ways. This includes through supporting food enterprise start-up and scale-up, enabling skills development and educational pathways to food careers, and focusing on the 'social food economy' – supporting more food-based social enterprises and projects. This also includes ensuring more local food on local plates – creating more numerous and robust routes to market for our local producers – from direct sales and business to business transactions, to increasing access to routes to public procurement.

Within Priority F, there is a specific commitment to 'make Stirling a Good Food City'. This language comes from the Stirling Food Summit, held in May 2017 – where private, public and third sector agencies as well as businesses and communities came together to learn about, celebrate, and discuss the future of food in the region. Specifically, the Summit was exploring the idea of Stirling becoming a 'Good Food' city and region – aligning with the national Good Food Nation ambitions, and achieved through the Sustainable Food Cities framework for change. Priority F also highlights the need for taking a collaborative approach to growing and supporting our tourism industry – through supporting business growth, and supporting a more robust culture and events programme.

This Strategy will support our area to become a 'Good Food City & Region' through actions to support a more resilient and innovative local food economy. This includes working towards a bronze 'Sustainable Food City' distinction for Stirlingshire, as well as developing the Borrowmeadow Farm and Food Enterprise project. This Strategy also includes specific objectives of strengthening our regional food culture, providing more authentic food event and experiences, and showcasing our local food provenance.

West Dunbartonshire Council Priorities

Outlined in the West Dunbartonshire Council Strategic Plan 2017-2022, the core commitment is to reduce inequalities, tackle the root causes of poverty, and promote equality for all through three strategic priorities. These priorities are to ensure a strong local economy and employment, support individuals, families and carers to live independently and with dignity, and enabling meaningful community engagement with empowered citizens.

Within supporting a strong local economy and improving employment opportunities, there are three outcomes of increasing skills for life and learning, increasing employment and training opportunities, and growing the economy. Success in this capacity would see improved business support, narrowing of the poverty related attainment gap, more environmentally sustainable local regeneration, growth of small and medium-sized local enterprises, and better pathways for youth people.

Alive with Local Food aligns with these priorities through the overall aim of growing and strengthening the local food economy throughout the region – including a focus on improving food business support, skills development, educational pathways to food careers, and growing the social enterprise presence within the food and drink sector.

Clackmannanshire Council Priorities

At the time of writing, Clackmannanshire Council is completing a new corporate strategy to replace the previous guiding document of "Taking Clackmannanshire Forward: Corporate Priorities 2012 – 2017". This had outlined the priorities of 'Better Services, Better Opportunities, and Better Communities" for the region. Within Better Opportunities, the Council aimed to "improve life chances for individuals and families, create a more positive environment for local businesses and employers" and highlighted the need to "invest to create the right environment for everyone in Clackmannanshire to succeed to their maximum potential". As well, the Council pledged to ensure Better Communities through keeping "Clackmannanshire at the forefront of green, recycling and sustainability initiatives", and working with "residents, traders, property owners, local groups and all stakeholders to enhance our towns and villages in a sustainable way" (Clackmannanshire Council, 2012). The new corporate priorities will align with the recently released Local Outcome Improvement Plan for the region – more information on this is below.

This Strategy aligns with these priorities in a variety of ways - on the basis of growing, developing, and strengthening the local food economy across the region. A focus on fostering more resilience and adaptability within the local food economy, and developing more robust short supply chains, specifically aligns with the desire of Clackmannanshire to be at the forefront of green and sustainability initiatives.

Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs)

Local Outcome Improvement Plans, or LOIPs, are key plans that each Local Authority are required to produce as part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. These have been produced for each Local Authority through a community planning bodies called Community Planning Partnerships. These are designed specifically to help "… local public services to work together and with local

communities to plan and deliver better services that make a real difference to people's lives" (Scottish Government, 2016).

The Local Outcome Improvement Plan objectives across the three local authorities within our region are focused on increasing prosperity, supporting people to be achieving and healthy, fostering resilience, and ensuring empowerment to enable everyone to thrive.

Prosperity is a common theme across the LOIP's:

- "Prosperous: People are part of a prosperous economy that promotes inclusive growth opportunities across our communities" (Stirling)
- "Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses and people and ensure fair opportunities for all" (Clackmannanshire)
- "Our local economy is thriving" (West Dunbartonshire)

Many of these wider objectives surround *achievement and health*:

- "Healthy: People are healthy and live active, full and positive lives within supportive communities" (Stirling)
- "Achieving: People are skilled and supported to make a positive contribution to our communities" (Stirling)
- "Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life" (Clackmannanshire)
- "Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential" (Clackmannanshire)
- "Our children and young people are nurtured" (West Dunbartonshire)

And also, *resilience and empowerment*:

- "Resilient: People are part of safe and caring communities within an attractive and sustainable environment" (Stirling)
- "Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish" (Clackmannanshire)
- "Our residents are empowered" (West Dunbartonshire)

Increasing prosperity is embedded throughout the Strategy, in particular within 'A Vibrant Local Food Economy' – which focuses on growth of the local food economy through collaboration, diversity, supporting enterprise, and strengthening short supply chains. Growth of the local food economy will also come from 'Showcasing & Celebrating' - developing a more robust regional food offering with more food experiences and events, and more locally produced food available to residents and visitors. Ensuring achievement and health within our region is reflected in 'Investing in People' – through actions relating to increasing skills and educational pathways to food work, and enabling more food-based social enterprises, and make it easier for food businesses to be healthier. Resilience is also a key theme within Alive with Local Food – including assisting food producers in our region to shift to climate-friendly food production and practices, fewer food miles through more local food on local plates, and increasing food security through shorter supply chains.