



Rhondda Cynon Taf Sustainable Food Strategy
Taith Bwyd – The Food Journey
2025-2030



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1. Our Vision

“Every person in Rhondda Cynon Taf can easily access nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food”.

2. Introduction

This Sustainable Food Strategy: Taith Bwyd 2025-2030, outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's (RCTCBC) priorities in relation to sustainable food and its intention to co-ordinate and collaborate through the Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Food Partnership Network. This strategy builds on the work undertaken by the partnership since 2021, and works towards realising the Taith Bwyd strategic vision that:

“Every person in Rhondda Cynon Taf can easily access nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food”.

The RCT Food Partnership Network and Sustainable Food Places

The RCT Food Partnership Network grew out of the community response to COVID 19, and is a network of community groups, organisations, public bodies, businesses, and individuals. Coordination of the partnership sits with RCTCBC. In 2021, the RCT Food Partnership Network became a member of [Sustainable Food Places](#), a network of place-based local food partnerships across the UK that are committed to working together to create change to the current food system. The RCT Food Partnership Network achieved the Bronze Award in 2023, only the 4th place to receive the award in Wales. The Taith Bwyd Strategy is a commitment by the Council and the RCT Food Partnership Network to work towards the Silver and Gold awards.

As a member of Sustainable Food Places, the RCT Food Partnership Network has adopted the framework of Sustainable Food Places. It recognises that acting on food is a vital part of tackling the UK's biggest social, economic, and environmental challenges; by forming diverse and robust cross-sector partnerships, it forms a collaboration to create lasting change by agreeing on priorities and actions for the local area. The framework outlines 6 Key Issues to be addressed by food partnerships to create a fairer and more sustainable food system in their communities.

Sustainable Food Places: Six Key Issues



1. Good Food Governance & Strategy



2. Good Food Movement



3. Tackling Food Inequality and Nutritious Food for All



4. Thriving Local Food Economy



5. Sustainable Catering & Procurement



6. Food for the Planet

Over recent years, funding provided by the Welsh Government and Sustainable Food Places has supported the Council and the RCT Food Partnership Network to provide direct food support and co-ordinate the distribution of community grants to food projects and residents.

National legislation has been considered in the development of this strategy, and key ways in which Taith Bwyd supports them are outlined in Appendix A.

A key driver in RCT is the [Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2030: 'Working with our Communities'](#), which identifies four Wellbeing objectives that Taith Bwyd contributes in the delivery of:

- People and Communities: Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives;
- Work and Business: Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's Economy;
- Nature and the Environment: A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT environment and nature;
- Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language: Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present, and future.

Taith Bwyd also contributes to the Council's [Think Climate Strategy](#) by its intention to promote sustainable, local food in services and communities.

Regionally, the Strategy contributes to the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Service Board's Wellbeing Plan](#), with the aim of providing access to nutritious, high-quality food locally to create communities that are healthy, inclusive and cohesive.

Taith Bwyd has been designed and co-created by communities across the County Borough and captures the changes to the food system that the people of RCT want to

see. Building on achievements of the RCT Food Partnership Network, The Food Summit: The Future of Food in RCT was held in July 2024. Attendees included representatives from food pantries, community growers, Council officers, the Future Generations Commissioners Office and food businesses. The Summit, facilitated by Cwmpas, held workshops throughout the day where participants worked together to discuss the Sustainable Food Places' 6 Key Issues and to generate ideas and actions that the RCT Food Partnership Network could take forward. The aim of the day was to capture the voices and knowledge held across the food system, and to design a strategy and supporting action plan that is based on the needs of RCT's communities.

A key message from the Summit and the Sustainable Food Strategy Steering Group is that in order to change the food system in RCT, there needs to be a change in understanding the value of food throughout the food system. Food holds intrinsic value far beyond its monetary costs, serving as a cornerstone for our health, the environment, and local economies. Nutrient rich food is essential to maintain physical and mental well-being, preventing chronic diseases, and fostering a healthier society. Sustainable food practices, such as organic farming and reduced waste, contribute significantly to environmental preservation by conserving resources, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting biodiversity. Moreover, local food systems strengthen community ties and boost local economies by supporting farmers, creating jobs, and ensuring fresher, more nutritious produce.



Collectively, these factors highlight the profound impact of food on our lives, communities, and the planet.

The RCT Sustainable Food Strategy: Taith Bwyd is Rhondda Cynon Taf's collective movement towards a sustainable and fair food system, where everyone can access nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food (see Appendix B).

Success will be measured, not only in improved access to nutritious sustainable food in RCT, but through strengthened social connections, improved health outcomes, and the enduring commitment to stewarding the land for future generations. It isn't a finite journey with an end, it is a journey of constant learning, sharing, and improving. It will serve as a model of how communities everywhere can empower and build food systems that are just, resilient, and sustainable.

3. The Local Picture

Rhondda Cynon Taf is a local authority in south-east Wales that is home to 239,000 people. It is the third largest local authority in Wales by population. The County Borough is situated in the south Wales valleys, characterised by its stunning natural landscapes.

It is vitally important that we work collaboratively with relevant partners to develop a more strategic approach to food poverty including the establishment of a Food Prosperity Network and a Food Response Pathway that have been successful in some other areas and which provides a more sustainable way ahead."

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Senior Leadership: Food Poverty Report, 5th November 2020

RCT has some of the most deprived areas in Wales, with 23.4% living in poverty compared to the 21.5% Wales average.¹ People living in the most deprived areas have a lower life expectancy and spend more time experiencing poor health than those living in less deprived areas². The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 records that Rhondda Cynon Taf has the third highest lower super output areas (LSOAs) ranked in the 50% most deprived LSOAs in Wales (WIMD, 2019). Additionally, 22% of pupils in the County Borough are eligible for Free School Meals compared to the Wales average of 20.3% (School Census, Welsh Government, 2023).

¹ [National Survey for Wales](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthinequalities/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesbyindexofmultipledeprivationimd/2018to2020)

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthinequalities/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesbyindexofmultipledeprivationimd/2018to2020>

Local organisations across the County Borough have opened their doors to members of their communities to access food through a variety of food services. There are around 35 different foodbanks and pantries that open across the week providing vital support for those living in food insecurity.

'It's harder to eat healthy in the towns and villages of Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) than in other places. And that's just not fair.'

Resident of CTM Health Board. in conversation with Public Health 2024

Diets high in processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy fats are linked to rising rates of a wide range of health conditions which increase the risk of a wide range of diseases such as cardiovascular conditions, type 2 diabetes, and strokes. Healthy foods, especially fresh produce, lean proteins and whole grains, are often more expensive than processed or fast foods. This can be prohibitive, leading people to choose cheaper, less nutritious foods. The number of people overweight and living with obesity is on the rise in the UK. It is estimated that 64% of adults are overweight or obese in the UK and there has been an upward trend since 2015 to 2016.³

Locally, this trend in increase of diet-related ill-health is evident. In 2022-2023, only a third of adults reported having a healthy weight and only a fifth of adults reported eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day⁴. Additionally, over a quarter of all children in RCT are overweight or obese (26.8%).⁴

A survey conducted by Public Health Wales found that the food environment that we live in and have access to, rather than lack of knowledge, is the biggest barrier to action on weight.⁵ 29% of participants recorded that 'too many temptations' was the biggest barrier stopping people from taking action to maintain a healthy weight. Public Health Wales have concluded that education on nutrition or eating healthily is not the prime barrier to a healthy weight, and that access to unhealthy choices in our environments is. In RCT, there are 107.49 fast food outlets per 100,000 population, which is the 6th highest in Wales⁶.

'Providing food at source greatly reduces the fuel needs for transportation and provides jobs to residents. Local food eliminates the reliance on international trade routes.'

Carbon Reduction Associate working with Down to Zero, 2023

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/update-to-the-obesity-profile-on-fingertips/obesity-profile-short-statistical-commentary-may-2024>

⁴ Public Health Wales. Child Measurement Programme 2022- 2023

⁵ <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/time-to-talk-public-health/time-to-talk-public-health-panel-publications/publications/time-to-talk-public-health-august-2024-survey-results/>

⁶ <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/child-measurement-programme/additional-reports/fast-food-density-in-wales/>

The current food system with its reliance on global supply chains and abundance of produce available at any time has a drastic effect on our environment. The [Waste and Resources Action Programme](#) estimates that in the UK we wasted 10.7 million tonnes of food in 2021.⁷ Globally we use more land, energy, and resources than we need to sustain ourselves, whilst paradoxically millions go without enough food to feed themselves. Tackling food waste, promoting sustainable food and farming, and forward-thinking procurement policies supporting local suppliers, is intrinsic to tackling the climate emergency. In RCT, promoting climate-friendly actions and food choices can make a difference to the land we live on and that we leave for future generations to thrive upon.

4. Key Priorities

Priority 1: Provide Good Food Governance

Transforming RCT's food culture and food system requires a joined up strategic approach and committed long term collaboration between individuals and organisations across every sector and every level, from community grassroots and third sector organisations to businesses and Council leaders. Effective governance creates a framework for development, ensuring food systems are equitable and inclusive to all. Through collaborative efforts across local government, public health, and community organisations, RCTCBC will promote affordability, sustainability and nutrition ensuring access for all residents.

Priority 2: Create a Good Food Movement

Increased public awareness of food issues and opportunities for widespread public participation in food-related activities is integral to building a good food movement within the County Borough. Public involvement transforms food from a commodity into a shared responsibility, energising a movement that connects people with the values of good food and community well-being.

Creating opportunities for residents and visitors in RCT to get involved with food-related activities encourages participation and fosters a sense of ownership over the local food system. This engagement builds a collective commitment to improving food access, supporting local food producers, and reducing food waste.

⁷ <https://www.wrap.ngo/resources/report/food-surplus-and-waste-uk-key-facts-updated-november-2023>

Priority 3: Tackle Food Inequality and Provide Access to Nutritious Food for All

Good food is a right not a privilege, and everyone should be able to eat healthily every day, no matter who they are, what they do or where they live. Tackling food inequality and ensuring access to nutritious food is essential for promoting both individual wellbeing and broader social equity.

Working towards a more equitable and healthier food system supports the development of sustainable local economies and healthier environments, ultimately contributing to a more just and prosperous RCT.

Priority 4: Promote and Support the Local Food Economy

A thriving local food economy strengthens communities by supporting local farmers, businesses, and consumers. It fosters resilience by keeping money circulating within the region and creating local jobs.

By prioritising local food production and consumption, we can help mitigate the climate crisis by actively reducing reliance on global supply chains and reduce our carbon footprint due to shorter supply chains, creating a more resilient food system. Moreover, increasing awareness of where food is grown and how it is made increases stronger connections between producers and consumers, increasing trust and transparency in the food system.

Priority 5: Transform Catering and Procurement

Working towards changes within Catering and Procurement provides a uniquely powerful lever for promoting good food. Each week thousands of people are fed by food procured within the Council and other anchor institutions across RCT.

By setting an example of procuring food that is locally sourced, nutritious and good for the planet, we can positively influence the eating habits of our residents. Committing to sustainable food procurement and catering, large organisations can set a precedent that impacts the health and wellbeing of our communities and the planet throughout their lives.

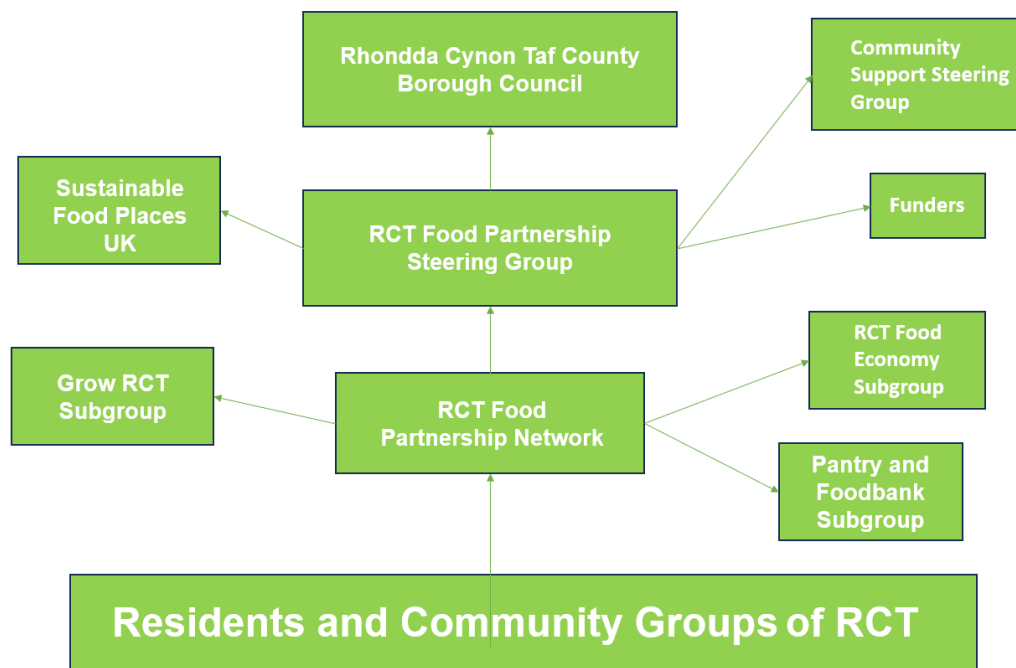
Priority 6: Promote Food for the Planet

The global food system is having a devastating effect on the environment we see around us. Promoting climate friendly actions and changing food policies can significantly contribute to carbon reduction plans by minimising the carbon footprint of food bought and promoting long term environmental resilience.

By changing what individuals and institutions choose to eat, we can transform what, how and where food is produced and thus help to minimise negative impacts on climate and biodiversity. At the same time, by tackling food waste, we can ensure that all good food goes to those who need it.

5. Implementation and Review

This is a 5-year strategy, and its implementation will be driven by the RCT Food Partnership Steering Group and Network. Engagement and progress monitoring of the Strategy will take place as set out in the structure below. The Steering Group will be responsible for collating and monitoring progress against each of the key deliverables as outlined within Action Plan (Appendix C).



Progress on the delivery of the Strategy will be reported quarterly to the RCT Food Partnership Network, and annually to the Community Support Steering Group, RCTCBC Cabinet and Committees (as relevant), as well as in line with the requirements to external funders. The strategy will be reviewed by the RCT Food Partnership Steering Group and Network bi-annually.

Appendix A: Connection to existing local and national frameworks

The Strategy complements local and national frameworks in the following ways:

Strategy/Programme	How Taith Bwyd Complements
Welsh Government Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales	Supports by making the healthier choice the easy choice, and by encouraging people to feel enabled to make positive lifestyle choices to sustain or maintain a healthy weight. Supporting a healthy community food environment.
Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015	Sustainable food pathways. Creating a healthy, prosperous, resilient, equal, cohesive, globally responsible, and vibrant Wales.
Welsh Government Food Matters: Wales – Food Policy at the heart of our lives, our communities and our nation	Supports in meeting national food-related policies.

Appendix B: Contributions and Acknowledgements

The RCT Food Partnership Steering Group:

Name	Organisation
Rhiannon Edwards	RCTCBC Sustainable Food Coordinator (Chair)
Nina Finnigan	Bryncynon Revival Strategy
Matthew Reardon	Welcome to our Woods
Helen Walters	Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Tom Addiscott	Down to Zero
Katie Padfield	FareShare Cymru
Janis Werritt	Cynon Valley Organics
Chris Edwards	RCT Climate Action Network
Jocelyn Kych	Pete's Shop
Shelley Wright	Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Claire Turbutt	Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB

With thanks to RCT Food Partnership Network and all those who contributed at the RCT Food Summit:

Community Organisations/Third Sector Organisations		Businesses/Social Enterprises:	Wider Strategic Partners:
Arts Factory ASD Rainbows Blaenycwm Chapel Bryncynon Strategy Canolfan Pentre Capcoch Primary School Cwm Taf Garden Cwmparc Community Association Cynon Valley Organics Dant y Llew FareShare Cymru Fern Partnership Friends of Caradog Primary School Friends of YWMP Drive Gelli Life for Living Gilfach Goch Community Association	Penderyn Community Association Pentre Comrades Club Ponty Little Lounge Pontyclun Bosom Pals Pontypridd Foodbank Pontypridd Town Council Ramoeth Foodbank RCT Climate Action Network RCT Heart Heroes Rhondda Foodbank Rhondda Fach Community GArden Shift Together Stiwdio 37 Taff Ely Foodbank Tir Pontypridd The Cwcommunity BBB Ty Mynydd Residents Association Ty Pentre Eglwys Community Hub	Castell Howell Down to Zero Food Adventures Love Treorchy Micro Acres Wales Our Aberdare Pete's Shop Your Pontypridd Valleys Veg	Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Citizens Advice DTA Wales Cwmpas Cynon Taf Housing Association Interlink Newydd Housing Association RHA Wales Social Farms & Gardens The Future Generation Commissioners Office Trivallis

Appendix 1

<p>Glyncoch Community Centre Grow Rhondda Hirwaun YMCA Hope Church Llanharan Pantry Lee Gardens Pool Manage Money Wales Merthyr Cynon Foodbank Mothers Matters New Life Church</p>	<p>Valleys Kids Welcome to Our Woods Ynysybwl Community Centre Ynysybwl Regeneration Project Yr Efail Y Siop Fach Sero</p>		
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Appendix C - 'Taith Bwyd' Strategy Action Plan

This is a working document that will be updated continuously.

Key:

- Short term – 1-2 years
- Medium Term – 2-3 years
- Long Term – 3-5 years
- Ongoing – continually carried out across timeline of the strategy

Priority 1: Provide Good Food Governance			
Key Actions	Key Deliverables	Timescale	Measure of Success
Maintain a robust, diverse, and inclusive Partnership and Steering Group that is knowledgeable, and guides the delivery of the strategy, reporting progress on the key priorities as set out in the strategy.	Ensure the Steering Group and Partnership represents the food system across RCT and that members are heard and valued, with new members recruited when needed, and attendances and discussions recorded.	Ongoing	# of SG members # of new members # of bi-monthly meetings
	Establish specialised subgroups for key areas of interest and as identified by Steering Group members e.g. pantry and growers' subgroups	Ongoing	# of meetings per subgroup #of members per subgroup
	Encourage collaboration and cooperation across partners within the network.	Ongoing	# of joint food related activities and events # of consortium food related funding bids # of funding bids secured and amount (£)
	Use of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the work of the Partnership against the vision and key priorities.	Ongoing	# of case studies per annum (personal and project)

Priority 2: Create a Good Food Movement			
Key Actions	Key Deliverables	Timescale	Measure of Success
Empower, educate, and inspire our communities, adults and children alike, to understand the food support available to them, learn new skills and engage with food projects locally, and advocate for them to prosper in the environment around them.	Support community organisations to put on food related activities that are open to the public across RCT	Medium Term	# of open access food related activities # of attendances
	Promote and increase knowledge of cooking and locally grown produce in partnership with learning providers such as ACL	Short Term	# of learning sessions provided # of attendees
	Encourage community groups that are interested in community growing projects to join the RCT Growers Network	Short Term	# of new members of the RCT Growing Network
	Create a network of mentors through Grow RCT for the public to gain knowledge of how to grow produce in their own gardens	Short Term	# of mentors # of case studies
	Engage those awaiting allotments plots by identifying opportunities to get involved with community gardens and explore opportunities around micro plots	Medium Term	# of people engaging with community growing opportunities Case study around Micro Plots
	Provide support and signpost to advice for community groups to secure land for growing activities, including through the Council Asset Transfer process.	Medium Term	# of successful community asset land transfers

Priority 3: Tackle Food Inequality and Provide Access to Nutritious Food for All			
Key Action	Key Deliverables	Timescale and monitoring	Measure of Success
Support our communities through a robust network of community food projects, promoting increased access to healthy food options, and advocating for a fair and equal food system in RCT.	Develop and expand the network of foodbanks and food pantries in RCT to share best practice and knowledge	Medium term	# of Community Pantries in RCT # of Pantry Subgroup meetings # of members of Pantry Subgroup
	Ensure people know where people can go to access food support and what types of support are available	Short Term	Comprehensive webpage resource created for RCT residents, groups and businesses to access
	Be a collective voice for communities in RCT to policy makers to ensure that food insecurity is addressed in national policies	Short Term	# of collective responses to consultations on food access and food policies
	Celebrate community organisations and businesses that offer healthy food options	Short Term	# of businesses and community groups recognised as having good sustainable food practices on our website

Priority 4: Promote and Support the Local Food Economy			
Key Actions	Key Deliverables	Timescale and Monitoring	Measure of Success
Ensure communities have access to locally produced food, and showcase and celebrate local food enterprises to increase visibility and awareness	Create more opportunities for small food businesses to bring their products to market and consumers	Short Term	# of events that bring together buyers and suppliers # of attendees
	Explore the viability of food cooperatives in RCT	Long Term	# of commitments to engage # of engagements and events/workshops
	Explore opportunities to create farmers markets and pop-up events around the county	Medium Term	# of partnership events with Development and Prosperity
	Provide opportunities for local businesses to collaborate to reduce food miles and support the local economy	Medium Term	Create a digital Local Supplier Directory # of new local food businesses added to the directory

Priority 5: Transform Catering & Procurement			
Key Actions	Key Deliverables	Timeline and Monitoring	Measure of Success
Champion policies that put good food on the public plate and improve connections and collaboration across the local supply chain	Council Procurement to review current public procurement suppliers to ensure we are procuring food from local and sustainable suppliers where practicable, including exploring opportunities to provide local and environmentally friendly meals through Catering Services.	Long Term	# of new actions committed to review the Councils procurement pathway
	Create a pathway to support sustainable food suppliers to get into public procurement	Medium Term	Pathway created # of new local suppliers

Priority 6: Promote Food for the Planet			
Key Actions	Key Deliverables	Timeline and Monitoring	Measure of Success
Increase public understanding of food systems impact on the environment and inspire community and business in climate friendly actions and choices	Work with the RCT Climate Action Network and develop joint projects around food and the environment	Medium Term	# of joint events and projects completed
	Celebrate climate friendly actions taken by organisations and businesses	Medium Term	# of case studies
	Support community groups to become zero waste organisations	Medium Term	# of actions committed to becoming zero waste