



ROBUST

Unlocking Rural-Urban Synergies www.rural-urban.eu

School meals: Gloucestershire Living Lab

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School food procurement at GCC when we started

GCC contracts out its school food catering service to a commercial company - Caterlink.

Caterlink buys food, employs 500 cooks in Glouc, owns equip. in c.100 production kitchens/ 80+ schools without

Good system, currently Food For Life 'Silver' award for local sourcing, food quality, links with school community

<https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>

About 18,500 meals a day are supplied to nearly 190 primary schools who are opted in to the GCC-facilitated service (c. 80%)

Meal budget was around £2.30 per head

New contract issued in July 2021, won by Caterlink



Encouragements during ROBUST project

- Treasury policy to ensure public procurement supports SMEs, promoted initially through CCS. Ambition for regional food hubs
- Dynamic Food Procurement technology advances
- DFP piloted with BANES - 60 schools/20 producers
- Positive response from GCC (**heroes: Stephen Haywood, Carey Ives**) for our collaborative work, willingness by Caterlink to engage in the research project
- After COVID, procurement seen as a positive opportunity to support farm business revival
- Publication of the National Food Strategy

ROBUST aim: DFP inclusion in 2021 pilot for meat/veg

What did we do in practice

Themes	Activity	Governance innovations
Food	<p>4 procurement workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-Wales and Gloucestershire LL teams, Sept 19 • Senior procurement managers, GCC • GCC, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Crown Commercial Services • GCC Commercial Services, South West Food Hub, Caterlink <p>7 additional technical interviews; and participation within 2 Gloucestershire Food Policy meetings designed to share progress and gather expert feedback.</p> <p>3 Focus Groups on Dynamic Food Procurement (DPS) for farmers (GCC tenant farmers, NFU and FWAG members).</p> <p>On-line workshop on DPS with the National Farmers Union.</p>	<p>Wording of the school food contract (as a governance mechanism for rural-to-urban supply of local food) to encourage bidders for the 5-year supply contract to participate in the DPS regional trial, prior to national roll-out.</p>

Four LL Phases:

Envisioning, experimenting, experiencing, evaluating.

The RESULT of five years' work

'The Authority is currently working with South West Food Hub, the University of Gloucestershire and the Royal Agricultural University to increase the use of fresh, seasonal and local products via a robust dynamic purchasing system. The Service Provider shall work with the Authority to further these objectives.'

Some challenges

- Location of the first food hub in the South West and subsequent retreat of the CCS from its commitments...
- ...which meant the SWFH struggled to meet its funding goals and finally folded.
- Without SWFH and associated local authority commitment, GCC was not prepared to take risks (with a good service).
- NICRE report argued the business case was insufficient for the introduction of DFP in the Marcher Counties.
- Gloucestershire food partnership struggled (now revived).

Summary

Positives	Reflections
Caterlink service already very good – it works well, Food for Life, relationships.	Some local producers are hooked in but relies on key local suppliers.
SME support is a major political driver from central to local govt.	Complex to break into other public sectors, all have particular needs.
High demand – c.18,000 meals a day across c.190 schools (rural, urban, large and small).	Must be reliable – experimenting is risky ; safeguarding (food tolerance) is vital; academisation = op-outs.
Contract term was more or less parallel with regional DPS pilot.	GCC can only control school food and has a sub-regional mandate.
ROBUST provided some resource to support progress.	Time-limited project – legacy in the Glos Food Strat? (but back to 2006?)
University holds potential to support local economic development and well-being.	Requires new, multi-level governance alliances and multiple sector co-ordination (quadruple helix).

The scale and scope of innovation (Marques et al., 2018)

Table 1. Definitions of social innovation according to the scale and scope of change that they encapsulate.

Scale and scope of change	Examples	Relevant articles
Structural SI	Innovation in social institutions or relationships as a result of wide political/social/economic change	(Godin, 2012; Grimm et al., 2013; Henderson, 1993; Jessop et al., 2013)
Targeted radical SI	Activities that radically reshape how essential goods and services are delivered to improve welfare and that challenge power relations	(Gerometta et al., 2005; Membretti, 2007; Moulaert and Nussbaumer, 2005; Moulaert et al., 2005; Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012; Vaiou and Kalandides, 2016; van der Schoor et al., 2016)
Targeted complementary SI	New processes and relationships that can generate inclusive solutions to societal challenges	(De Muro et al., 2007; Garcia and Haddock, 2016; Han et al., 2014; Novy and Leubolt, 2005; Parente, 2016; Prasad, 2016; Semperebon and Haddock, 2016)
Instrumental SI	Rebranding of political agendas, community development, corporate social responsibility	(Foster et al., 2016; Gershuny, 1982; Goldsmith et al., 2010; Graddy-Reed and Feldman, 2015; Nordensvard et al., 2015)

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Source: Authors' research based on literature review.

Knickel, M., et al. (2023) Lost in a haze or playing to partners' strengths? Learning to collaborate in three transdisciplinary European Living Labs. *Futures*, 152, 103219.

In review: Keech, D. Maye, D. and Reed, M. Dynamic Food Procurement – linking digital advancements to school food in Gloucestershire, UK. Submitted to *Food and Foodways*.

Thanks for listening

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