



Belfast Healthy Cities Welcomes Sustainable Food Experts

On Monday 10 March, Belfast Healthy Cities hosted the 'Creating Healthy Communities: Sustainable Food' seminar, welcoming speakers from Northern Ireland, the UK and the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe Healthy Cities of Cork and Rotterdam.

The event highlighted a diverse range of local and international approaches to providing sustainable, locally produced food and stimulated debate on the many ways in which sustainable food can contribute to the health of the city.

Participants in the seminar heard how the opportunity to 'grow your own' increases the variety of healthy eating options available, particularly to those on low incomes as well as the contribution that local food production makes to urban regeneration and social cohesion. The seminar also reviewed how engaging a community in food production can increase the collective awareness of food poverty and the necessity of addressing the economic and environmental impacts of waste. Examples of this process were provided by Veronica Barry and Angela Blair from Sandwell, West Midlands, which has pioneered an approach linking food and economic regeneration. Cees Bronsveld from the City of Rotterdam shared an overview of creative approaches to introducing food production to the city through urban agriculture.

Participants in the seminar also heard about the importance of strategic support for local action from Dr Colin Sage, University College Cork, who spoke about creating a citywide food policy for Cork, which is also a WHO Europe Healthy City.

A case study focusing on the Belfast City Council Growing Communities Strategy developments on a local level

Joan Devlin, Chief Executive, Belfast Healthy Cities said

‘As the population of our cities increases, urban food sustainability is a key factor in supporting good health and wellbeing as well as reducing health inequalities within our society. Creative approaches can bring communities together to address a common issue, making use of existing assets and strengthening their resilience in the process.’

Other case studies presented included the Belfast Sustainable Food City vision and action plan from Sustainable NI; Love Food, Hate Waste from WRAP and Community Food Initiatives from Healthy Food for All

The seminar forms part of the Creating Healthy Communities seminar series organised by Belfast Healthy Cities in partnership with Public Health Agency.

Future sessions in The New Priorities for A New Phase: Creating Healthier Communities include Active Travel with Alexander Karl Lehmann, City of Copenhagen and Andreas Hildebrandt, VAG, Freiburg, Germany (25 March) and The Co-Production of Economics and Health with Dr David Stuckler- University of Oxford (11 April)