



13th January 2023

Response by PLANED, to the Consultation on the ‘Food (Wales) Bill’

As a community development based charity that has delivered for over 34 years, initially in Pembrokeshire, and now across wider Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire as well, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee on the general principles and outline of the Food (Wales) Bill.

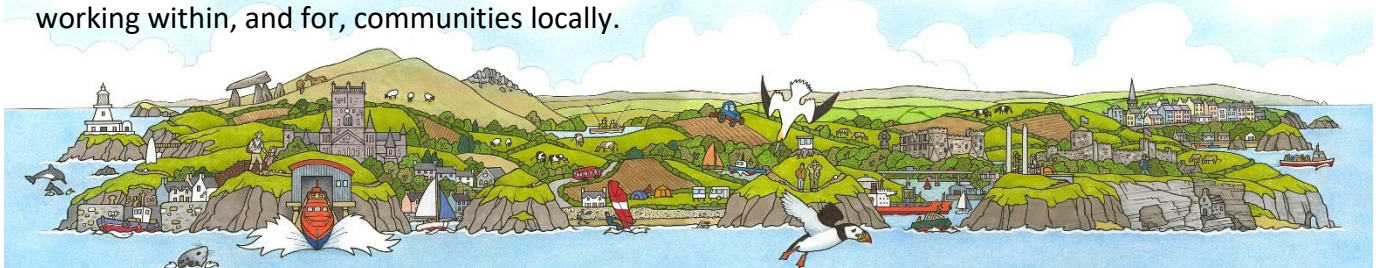
The food sector plays an increasingly important factor within our communities and to the local economy – particularly in more rural areas across West Wales. The work of PLANED currently is developing, implementing, and supporting the creation of Community Food Hubs which supports additional routes for suppliers to local customers with affordable, fresh local produce. This is soon to be further enhanced by the implementation of Fresh Food Vending within Pembrokeshire initially, and should Welsh Government continue to support, a transferable model for the rest of Wales to benefit in terms of the local economy, well-being, and low carbon.

In relation to the Food (Wales) Bill, we welcome the outline headline principles of a national framework through a Welsh Food Commission, with associated national strategy, and bespoke, local food plans to support and connect.

However, we have concerns that the one glaring omission throughout the document is the input directly, and meaningfully, of “community”.

The document consistently refers to ‘public bodies’ in relation to the input and direction set of the Commission; and more specifically, to the delivery, reporting, and implementation of Local Food Plans. There is no call upon the community based organisations currently driving innovation, implementation, and sustainability with local food producers, suppliers, and customers across our localities and communities in general.

Whilst public bodies have a key role in local food procurement, regulation, and engagement, they do not consistently have the direct roles within the wider food sector that many community development organisations such as PLANED in West Wales, and Menter Mon as just one example in North Wales, will have in relation to supporting current food projects delivered as a result of working within, and for, communities locally.



Therefore, we would strongly suggest the consultation on the Food (Wales) Bill needs to reflect and consider the specific inclusion within the document of those community based organisations who are not public bodies, and are innovatively, and consistently, working on supporting the local food sector in both production and supply, to be a key contributor and driver of Local Food Plans.

This would also align to concerns over timelines for correlating funding for the support of local food projects which the Bill currently does also not refer to in any specific detail, and will be a key impact on the success of many projects being delivered locally that supports the promotion and sustainability of food supply, production and innovation.

With focus on ‘communities’ specifically, for example, under **Section 17** – Local Food Plans, under point 3, a third caveat should be added to both A & B that states the Local Food Plan must contribute towards:

C.) the engagement and cooperation with community based organisations delivery and promotion of local food projects.

The risk is that some local government colleagues will continue to disengage with wider community led projects that are independent of local authorities, and therefore Local Food Plans will not accurately reflect or represent the consistent positive and innovative work being done within the grassroots communities sector.

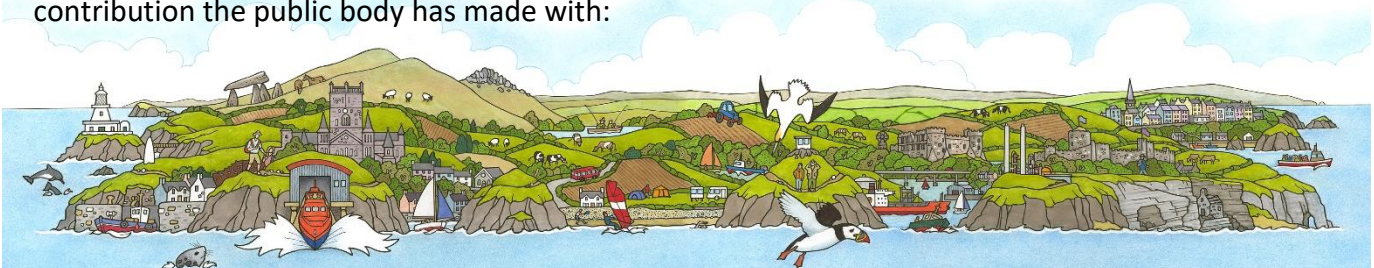
Under **Section 18**, the current Bill advises that the local public body in the development of the Local Food Plan “may” consult with “such other persons as the public body considers appropriate”. This is too vague.

Again, some local government colleagues may actively choose to ignore and discount those independent community based food projects that are currently active, and if a Local Food Plan is to be accurate and representative, then the consultation “should” make local public bodies consult with these community local grass roots independent projects and initiatives to better inform a more robust and meaningful Local Food Plan.

So we would suggest as a solution, that in section 18, the wording is changed from “may” to “should” in terms of consultation, and add an additional fourth bullet to read:

“community based organisations currently delivering and promoting local food projects”.

Similarly under **Section 20** and reporting on Local Food Plans, to be more representative and accurate, and additional bullet under point 1, we suggest that they should demonstrate the contribution the public body has made with:

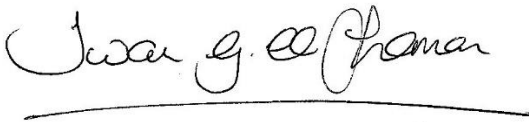


C.) Supporting food projects currently delivered by community based organisations

Finally, in terms of the Membership of the Wales Food Commission, we would also recommend that it is explicit in that at least one of the members should be specified in terms of being from an applicable and relevant community based organisation that is currently engaged in the delivery of local food projects that have the potential for transferability across Wales.

We hope the above observations and positive suggestions to further improve and accurately reflect the benefit and representation of Local Food Plans particularly, will be positively considered and received, and am happy to discuss further as necessary.

With kind regards,



Iwan Thomas

Prif Weithredwr PLANED Chief Executive

